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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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

FIRST SESSION, 39TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2009

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Prayers.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Statements

PRIORITIES IN HEALTH CARE

N. Letnick: I rise today to discuss the sustainability of our public health care system. As we enter the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Canada Health Act, Canadians are wondering if their health care system is sustainable in its current form, given the pressure of challenging economic times and the passing of the baby boomer generation.

[L. Reid in the chair.]

What once began as a negotiated promise — that no Canadian would be forced to face bankruptcy due to hospital and physician care — has now become, in the minds of many Canadians and citizens around the world, the promise of free, first-dollar health care coverage to all, based on need alone.

This personification of the perfect health care system, however, was not the case 25 years ago. With the introduction of shorter hospital stays, better medical practices and technology — especially drugs, whose share of the health bill has gone from 9 percent in the mid-'70s to over 17 percent — and a proliferation of private medical alternatives, today's reality is significantly different from the myth that has become the universal, portable, accessible and comprehensive Canada health care system.

As a nation, we are now investing close to 11 percent of our GDP, or \$172 billion in 2008, into health care — compared to \$37 billion in 1984, the year the Canada Health Act was passed.

When this fiscal picture is combined with the perception of public health care — that wait-lists are too long, that the quality is better in the private sector and that fiercely independent boomers are headed into retirement and old age — is it any surprise that Canadians believe our current health care path is unsustainable?

Governments around the country are seeking new ways to finance and deliver health services, ever bearing in mind the fundamental tenets of our birthright as Canadians: access to quality and timely free health care based on need alone. The Canada Health Act is the quintessential Canadian compromise.

Universal health insurance was first introduced in Saskatchewan in 1944 and throughout all of Canada by '58. In '62 Saskatchewan led the way again and offered universal health insurance over the protest of local physicians who were supported by others, including members of the American Medical Association, who considered the province of Saskatchewan a beachfront against public health insurance in the United States.

[1005]

In 1968 Canada again followed Saskatchewan, offering a 50-50 cost-sharing split with the provinces if they delivered health care that was comprehensive, portable, universal and administered in a public, not-for-profit manner.

In '77 the federal government negotiated its way out of the 50-50 split and instead moved to a system of block funding. After some time, in the midst of rising provincial health care costs and low physician remuneration, many doctors opted out of the public insurance program and instead billed their patients directly at fees higher than the system allowed.

By the early '80s Canadians were subject to a shortage of opted-in public sector physicians, and in 1984 the Canada Health Act was adopted in response. The Canada Health Act offered provinces funding if they met the four principles previously mentioned, as well as an additional principle of accessibility — essentially prohibiting user charges or extra billing by all physicians beyond negotiated fee schedules.

The stated goal was to create a single-tiered, comprehensive health care service for all Canadians. However, Canada's public health care system was never designed to be comprehensive or universal. By definition, a comprehensive health care system would include coverage for all health-care-related services and products, including such examples as dental, eye, ambulance, drug and other medically necessary technology required and produced in or out of hospitals. Our public health care system does not.

The Canada Health Act only guarantees free access to medically necessary services and products within hospitals and licensed professional medical services outside of hospitals. Thanks to the Supreme Court decision in Quebec in the Chaoulli case, what is and is not medically necessary is no longer an absolute but must take time to service also into account. Also, with the exclusion from the act of several groups, like Workers Compensation, a built-in second tier has always been in place.

Like most OECD countries, Canada's health system has always been a hybrid public-private partnership arrangement with a pay-as-you-go, publicly funded health insurance program financed mostly through progressive taxation.

At 70 percent of total health care spending, public funding covers the most serious and expensive services with private funding focused on goods and services usually deemed not medically necessary. With advances in medical technology, budget constraints and the use of hospital internists,

hospital stays have decreased and shifted the cost of accessing care from the public to the private domain, especially in the area of other professionals and diagnostic imaging.

In the end, Canada cannot afford a fully comprehensive and accessible health care system that promises youthful and healthy bodies from conception to resurrection. The more we shift resources to health care, the more we shift the burden to other areas not measured as direct health system outcomes, such as morbidity and mortality. It is estimated that currently in B.C. over 40 percent of all provincial revenues are used to fund the Health ministry.

In the real world of scarce resources, choices must be made and provide individuals and governments with the highest total utility. Challenging as it will be, unless governments wish to see all their revenues channelled into health care, governments across all OECD countries must undertake serious review and reform.

But it's not only up to government. Patients must also become more responsible for their own health. Good health is not free. Eating right and exercising takes time and money — time to shop well, get educated, prepare healthy meals and the time away from income-generating activities to run, bike or many other health-promoting investments. Not frequently said, but often thought is: is it equitable that those who work at staying healthy must subsidize those who do not?

The best way to reduce overall health service is to reduce the overall use of health services. This involves healthy lifestyles, early detection and treatments, and efforts to mitigate the social determinants of health.

Our present system, which gives physicians complete control over deciding what is medically necessary, results in — by some estimates — as much as 30 to 40 percent of the cost of all services which have little or no evidence of effectiveness. Provincial systems need to be accountable and transparent, clearly stating which services are medically necessary and setting out time frames for the provision of these services.

As the Canadian Supreme Court ruled in Quebec, citizens should be allowed to purchase additional services or insurance to cover items deemed not medically necessary either in scope or in timeliness. The current system of block or global funding does not reward efficiencies and penalizes failure to deliver services to patients.

Urban hospitals should be allowed to move from base funding activity into activity-based funding, and health care's managers should be accountable for the quality of the services they provide under their control.

[1010]

A. Dix: I thank the member for Kelowna–Lake Country for raising these important questions in the House today. I think it is always interesting. I heard some of the comments of the member for Kelowna–Lake Country which suggest that it is, in fact, the public role

in health care that makes it unsustainable when what we know is that the fastest-growing areas, the most expensive growing areas, are those areas beyond, as he notes, the public health care system.

The member refers to prescription drug costs — which, of course, in recent years have declined. The public share, the Pharmacare share, of prescription drug costs in British Columbia has declined since 2001 from about 51 percent to 36 percent. The absolute number of the expenditure has gone up, of course, in that time, but the share has gone down. That's largely as the result of a private sector that is, in that case, rapacious and taking money out of the economy, and our ability to control those costs in that particular case is advanced, in fact, by the public role in the system.

You know, if our one view of health care reform is to narrow the scope of public health care, then we're in, I think, great trouble because all that is being really suggested is that we off-load costs from the public system onto the sick. If we define and if reasonable people define a service as medically necessary, then by narrowing the scope of that service, of course, we have the effect of doing just that, of saying that it's a commodity just like the others and that the sick have to pay a greater share.

The member talked about the social determinants of health. I'll give a personal example. In my own case, I became a type 1 diabetic while I was training for a marathon. I was in the best physical shape in my life, and that befell me — right? So the idea that people get sick because of some fault of their own is, I think, a dangerous idea.

Yes, we have to encourage public policies that ensure that people have equal opportunity to stay well, have access to athletic endeavours of all kinds, be they walking or be they grand athletic events like the Olympics. We have to make sure of that. But the suggestion that the sick pay more runs contrary to all of the evidence — all of the evidence from the Romanow commission, from the Kirby commission, from the Conversation on Health, from the Seaton commission.

All of the studies we've made in the past have suggested, in fact, that often there isn't a level playing field. There are many health ailments that we don't have cures for or that befall people just because they befall them. Beyond that, it is wrong to suggest...

It's particularly wrong to suggest, it seems to me — at a time when governments across Canada have been reducing the non-health social expenditures dramatically as a share of GDP, after all of the evidence that shows that the social determinants of health are important; even the member alludes to that — that all of us have equal access to healthy outcomes. All of the evidence suggests otherwise.

I think, just as every significant review of public health care has suggested in the last 20 years in Canada, that in fact the single-payer health care system is the most efficient way to distribute health care services. All

of the reviews have shown that. All of the reviews have suggested that the overall cost, say, of prescription drug expenditures would be reduced with a greater federal role. In fact, it's the position of the current provincial government to advocate for that at the federal level as well.

So the suggestion that the future of health care, as the member has just suggested, lies — I think what he's implying — in narrowing the scope of public health care, in pushing costs from the health care system onto the sick is, I think, an unfortunate role for the health care system and for the economy.

I'll just say, finally, that we've had this approach which suggests — contrary, again, to all the evidence — that a privatized system, a more American model, will lead to more efficiency, that competition in market forces in health care will lead to more efficiency in the system. This has always been the suggestion. To pursue that suggestion requires, I think, almost an effort to avoid considering all the evidence.

[1015]

We have as a country benefited from single-payer health care. All of the reports suggest that an expansion of single-payer health care will increase efficiencies in cost, and I suggest those things the hon. member might consider in his final response.

N. Letnick: I'd like to thank the member for Vancouver-Kingsway for bringing up some very important issues in the debate.

To suggest, as he did, that my paper or my presentation is to infer that the sick should pay more — it is actually quite the contrary. What I'm suggesting is that we need to circumscribe our provision of health services to those who don't have the most needs so we have more money available to those who do, like those who are sick. So I think we're agreeing on that point.

Also, as far as the single payer, I agree a hundred percent. A single payer is much more efficient than multiple payers. You look at what's happening in the States. They are paying up to 15 to 16 percent of GDP for their health care services, and most of that is because they have all the multiple payers and multiple administrations that are taking money out of the system. So I also agree.

What I'm saying is that we need to look at what services we provide. Do they all need to be provided instantaneously? Can we not agree as a society that maybe a hip or a knee, or whatever, can wait a few months? Every time we look at making changes, the opposition comes up and says: "Whoa, it's a change; therefore, it's not good." What I'm saying in my paper is that we need to review everything we do, not only in terms of what we offer but in the timeliness of what we offer.

But we can't let the feds off the hook, and I'm sure the member would also agree to that. We also have to look at maybe getting some of that money back from the feds.

It used to be a 50-50 cost share. Perhaps we should move back to a 50-50 cost share.

The best medicine we can give our Canadian health care act is a little fiscal discipline on behalf of all governments. A statement clearly identifying the level of public spending on health care that we are prepared to support as a percentage of GDP would encourage our governments to intensify their efforts to support Canadians beyond what they're doing right now.

We need to look at making sure we have an internationally competitive tax regime, reducing government obstacles to business success and investment and placing greater emphasis on an educated, productive and healthy population who understand they are also accountable for their own health, which may mean some lifestyle changes.

In conclusion, if I was allowed to make one amendment to the Canada Health Act, I would amend the public administration provisions of the act to include governance and accountability. The Canada Health Act has become a straitjacket on the provision of health services, and it requires some flexibility if provinces are to modernize or at least replicate better health delivery mechanisms from within Canada and around the world.

Provinces need flexibility in the act to prototype different delivery and administrative protocols so that they may be evaluated in real time within the Canadian health setting. Economic models are good, but without pilot projects the full consequences of an action cannot be foretold. Some flexibility is needed to promote innovation without fear of financial penalty under the act or inability to discontinue a practice due to potential NAFTA challenge if it is found incongruent with the principles or objectives of the act.

Thank you very much. This has been very good, and obviously, we can't fix health care in seven minutes. I look forward to future debates with the member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

ISLAND TRANSPORTATION

M. Karagianis: I think everyone, pretty much, has ascribed to the premise that we need to find ways to get more people out of their cars and to address the issue of a greener and cleaner future. We've all accepted that climate change is the challenge of our generation to resolve, so it would seem to me that we are all jointly looking forward to ways to reduce our dependency on the automobile.

What happens in a community where you have ready-made solutions right at hand? What happens when you have a perfect transportation corridor that already exists that runs through a series of communities, where you have municipal buy-in on the existence of this corridor, where our municipalities have said: "This looks like a superior transportation corridor right here running

through the spines of our community. Let's start planning around that corridor. Let's start planning hubs of activity, where if this corridor were to produce a commuter rail system for us, we would then begin to develop the density around those areas that would, in fact, support that rail"?

[1020]

What if we had huge buy-in from communities all along this rail, where everyone was anticipating and waiting for this opportunity to present itself? Well, in fact, we do have that very perfect and ready-made solution right here on the south Island, and that is the E&N rail corridor as supported by the Island Corridor Foundation.

It only takes just a small stretch of the imagination to see that this commuter corridor could present the most amazing opportunities for those people who are forced to drive back and forth into the city every day to in fact find a stress-free way to get onto a commuter rail, have a cup of coffee, read the newspaper and perhaps peruse the briefing of the day before they arrive downtown here at the Legislature to do their work. In fact, it's the opportunity to leave your car at home and arrive in a stress-free, relaxed environment in 20 to 30 minutes in downtown Victoria.

There it is, ready-made for us, the E&N rail corridor. We know that elsewhere across most of the urban developed areas in North America and into Europe, this is an integral part of every other transportation network that exists in most cities. So one would say: "Why, here on the south Island, have we not embraced this commuter option more readily? Why are we, in fact, still talking about it as a concept, a dream, something that we have to imagine as being possible?"

The reality is that every single day we have rail stock that runs the wrong way. It comes down the Island at the wrong time of day and goes up the Island at the wrong time of day. When people are moving through this community either to work at the Dockyard, to go to university, to pursue their jobs downtown in the core, we actually have a train that's leaving town and heading up the Island.

Later on today, when people are leaving the corridors, leaving the university or Dockyard or downtown to head out into suburban communities, we have rail stock that's rolling into town against the traffic.

So it seems to me that we have the most perfect transportation link available to us. While we are busy planning new transit expansion to make sure that buses also serve the huge corridor of traffic that moves back and forth through this community — it's a huge, giant T — we see more and more of our suburban residents moving slightly further up the Island. But we do certainly see that the suburbs are feeding down into the corridor every day.

We have this massive movement of people across town from the university or the Dockyard and the base

— one of the largest employers here. We have this huge mass of people moving back and forth every day. Here we have the most perfect transportation solution available right down through the centre of that, and that is this rail corridor.

What it would take for us to develop that is but a fraction, a tiny fraction, of the kinds of costs we've seen expended to produce the same kinds of transportation options in the Lower Mainland or in other cities. In fact, it's a minimal amount of investment to get the rail line restored, repaired and ready for rolling stock. Then we could see, quite easily, trains making the progressive movement back through the community at the same ebb and flow as transportation currently is using.

We would see trains coming down the Island from Duncan, from Shawnigan Lake, through Cowichan. We could see those picking up commuters along the rail through Langford and Colwood, depositing people at the base where they work or further downtown here where they could easily access their jobs.

We could see that with a minimal amount of investment. In fact, it seems to me that this would be a bargain. Compared to the kind of billion-dollar investments we've seen in the Lower Mainland, we actually have a pretty simple, economical and fiscally responsible option right here at our fingertips. It is the hope and wish of communities all along this corridor that we would simply get on with making this a reality.

[1025]

I talked with the mayor of Langford just recently, a few days ago, and we talked about how absolutely simplified the solutions would be for rolling stock to start moving down that rail corridor into the city every single day and then heading back out later in the afternoon to move commuter traffic back and forth. We would see the reduction immediately of hundreds and hundreds of cars.

Now, I realize that in some cases we are not quite at the density we need to be to make this an option that has a huge, positive business case and bottom line the year it opens, but I have every confidence that if we build it, they will come. Those communities that are now planning on building huge-density hubs around the rail line in anticipation of us doing this.... This will happen faster than we can imagine.

We actually need to make this forward investment in the community now, and I think it's a bargain considering the kinds of options that are offered in other communities.

R. Cantelon: May I first extend good wishes to the member for Juan de Fuca. I understand that he was going to speak today, and I'm sorry that he's not here, although he was ably substituted here today by the member for Esquimalt–Royal Roads.

In sympathy, I guess I have a bias. During my university days I earned my money as a front-end brakeman. The

magic of steel wheels on steel rails and riding across the countryside to the clackety-clack of the tracks is something that gets in your blood. I've long had an interest in the E&N Railway and have been supportive of their efforts to advance the cause and the opportunities of the E&N Railway.

Much has been done. I've recently met with Brian Smith and Doug Backhouse, a friend of mine working on the downtown revitalization of Nanaimo. Most recently I met with Graham Bruce, who has taken on the role of executive director of the Corridor Foundation. Recently we had a very productive meeting with the Minister of Transportation that sets steps and benchmarks that we need to achieve in order to make this a viable situation.

As the member for Esquimalt–Royal Roads has mentioned, there are some issues, such as density. She alluded to investment, and it's a considerable investment. The rail is at a point now where it needs to be upgraded to travel standards. It needs to go from 80-pound rail to 110-pound rail so that it can carry not only passengers, which I appreciate was the main focus and concern of the member opposite, but also freight rail.

There have been initiatives looking at coking coal coming from the Cumberland area that has an opportunity to expand our economic opportunities, but the track and the ballast need to be upgraded in order to carry this, as well as, perhaps, track extensions. I can tell you that there is a lot of excitement, and the rail thing won't go away.

I met with a very enthusiastic man from Qualicum Beach who is running a speeder over the Alberni track, on those beautiful trestles that go above Cameron Lake. It's got to be an exciting event. I'm invited to take part in it, and I intend to.

The groundwork is being laid, and it's really part of a broad transportation scheme of the government — \$14 billion. We're all concerned about greenhouse gases, and this will remove 4.7 million tonnes of greenhouse gases from the air. I support the idea that commuter rail could be and should be an option, but the track needs to be upgraded.

Much is being done as we speak now and sit here. The railway station in Nanaimo, which was so unfortunately ravaged by fire, has been.... There's \$875,000 going in to renovate it and to make it part of the old city quarter as its centre.

We see many other things moving forward. The government has committed \$5 million to support studies and efforts. Firstly, \$4.5 million of that \$5 million will go to subsidize the municipalities, who have been supportive of the rail line, and up to half a million dollars will go to a study.

Certainly, the track is there. The lines are there, and much upgrading needs to be done in both terminals and to really broaden the concept. Is it going to be just Budd cars, or are we going to have a broader concept that can, perhaps, carry bicycles and maybe even carry electric cars? Who knows? They're looking at a wide range of feasibility options. We expect to present those and then

propose those to the Minister of Transportation in a comprehensive way that makes economic sense.

Certainly, we need a comprehensive business plan that includes passenger and freight to sustain the line. I believe it will happen. I'm very optimistic about it happening.

We have got a man, in Graham Bruce, who is supplying his considerable energy and expertise to making sure that all the bases are touched. He's met with all the chiefs of the first nations bands up and down the Island. Of course, the railway was put down without any consultation whatsoever many, many years ago, and he's taken the time now to consult with each of these bands and is receiving a good review and a good opportunity.

I accept and respect that it's going to be an important thing for the Lower Mainland, but it could be a dynamic addition to the upper Island.

[1030]

We have a cruise ship terminal coming in. Discussions are being held with that about how we can do cruise ship terminals or connections, perhaps down to Chemainus, perhaps over to Alberni and the west coast. There are a considerable number of options.

The line runs right by the new Nanaimo Airport, which is being expanded both on the terminal and the runway, so people could fly in and take excursions — or commuters down the Island.

One of the things that is being talked about is, "Yes, I couldn't agree more. It runs the wrong way at the wrong time," or the right way at the wrong time — I'm not sure which way we want to put it. There's the possibility of a commuter line starting in Victoria and coming up to Nanaimo and then back down again.

I certainly would enjoy it. This morning I was in Qualicum Beach at 6 a.m. enjoying the wonderful.... About 2,000 people were there to witness the Olympic torch in the dark. It was a phenomenal event. Well, I would have much preferred at that time to jump on a train and ride in comfort and do my prep work on the way to Victoria, and I think many would. I certainly endorse the future of the E&N Railway.

M. Karagianis: I'm very happy to have heard the previous member endorse this idea, and it doesn't surprise me at all, in fact, that the member would be endorsing this idea because it seems so very pragmatic for us to make use of this really extraordinary corridor.

The reality is that the repairs to be done to the line.... Again, I go back to the idea that the repairs are necessary to get this line up and running as both a commuter option and, as the previous member had mentioned, the idea of using it for other forms of freight transportation up and down the Island. It is such a small, minimal amount of money in the larger scope of investments that have been made in this province recently for transportation infrastructure.

When you see it compared to the cost of a Canada Line, when you see it compared to the cost of other huge infrastructure investments that have been made in the province of British Columbia, this is such a tiny drop in the bucket. Yet the change it would make would be extraordinary. Once that line is repaired, getting rolling stock on there and getting those commuter cars running is the simplest and easiest step possible. Operational money — certainly, out for the next number of years until it's able to pay for itself.

But, you know, mayors along this corridor have been fighting for this for ten years. What it needs is a commitment of investment, because once that commitment of real investment is there, then I think it would move forward so much more quickly. We already have communities like Langford that has committed a million dollars to a station out in one area of their community.

We know that the other municipalities have stepped forward in starting to rebuild the infrastructure. You know, at the Colville interchange near the base — huge expansion going on by Esquimalt to make that intersection work better. Part of that is with the foresight that at some point it will be a commuter rail stop.

It seems common sense to make the investment and make that commitment. The reality is that in order to move it forward and make it a reality, all it takes is that commitment of those funds there, and I know that it would take off on its own accord.

I mean, if we truly want to see greener and cleaner environments in the future, if we really want to offer people options to get out of their cars, we have to do it as soon as possible. I think it's sad that we have had to wait ten years at this point for this dream to take hold — and perhaps how many years into the future? It just makes no sense to me that we wouldn't take clearer steps immediately and make this really minor investment in this infrastructure here.

Frankly, I think that local communities feel that they deserve it just as much as any other community deserves the kind of infrastructure expansion they've seen. The south Island feels that it's our turn to see that kind of commitment and dollars coming here, that will make this a reality.

TRANSPORTATION: KEY TO OUR ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE

D. Horne: We live in the best place on earth, and every year more and more people come here to live and pursue their dreams. Our population and our economy have grown considerably over the last number of years. In the Metro Vancouver region the economic opportunities and the quality of life we value so much will bring further population growth of more than a million people over the next 25 years.

The increase in population, however, brings challenges — challenges that I'll focus on today — the transportation issues and the environment. We must find ways to enable our economic activity and our growth in the area to be sustainable. By building density, by building transportation corridors, by allowing people to move freely between those areas of density and allowing them to live and work in wonderful places is so very, very important.

There's an interesting statistic that I found recently. You take a look around the world, and you take a look at different areas. You look in Asia, for example, where they have very highly densified areas and very rural areas very close by — you know, with the farming that takes place in China. You've got cities like Shanghai, where we have very, very large groups of people, yet very, very quickly you move to rural areas.

The way that the Chinese have allowed for the transportation corridors and the people to move from one area to another is very significant. In Europe as well, people are able to move from one area to another to work and to live and to have very strong transportation links between those two, which is very, very important.

It's very interesting, however, because I found a recent U.S. Department of Transportation study, which I mentioned, and I'll quote from it. It says: "Significantly reducing national greenhouse gas emissions via increased use of transit would require momentous efforts. All modes of transit" — bus, rail and light rapid transit — "account for only 1 percent of passenger miles travelled in the United States today." Doubling national transit use would, therefore, only increase the number of miles in the United States to 2 percent of the total miles.

If you take a look at the cultural differences — between what's happening in China and in Asia, what's happening in Europe and what's happening here in North America, especially in the United States — obviously, there has to be a cultural shift in order for mass transit and transportation to actually have benefit. That's one of the things that we need to look at as we look for transportation solutions and as we look to the future.

One of the issues, obviously, is convenience. There is safety. There is the ability for people to move easily from one place to another. Perhaps in North America that's one of the difficulties that we have, as well as perhaps the cultural perception of transit over time. If you look to Asia, for example, or you look to Europe — you go to the transit system in London, and you go to the Tube — there'll be business people wearing their suits with their briefcases in hand and travelling from one meeting to another.

If you take a look at the United States, which was in the study that I just mentioned, and look at what they do... Perhaps in many places of the United States transportation isn't embraced, but you go to New York, for example, and there are many, many people that use the

rapid transit system and use the subway. It's common, and obviously, because of the culture within New York, it works very, very well.

In Canada and in British Columbia, what we have to do is look to make it so that it's convenient for people, that it's easy for people to use. Obviously that does and will impact our greenhouse gas emissions substantially.

One of the local examples, I think, that we can look at and that has proved to be a huge success is the Canada Line. The Canada Line, which attaches Richmond to downtown Vancouver and the Vancouver Airport, has been tremendously successful.

I think one of the reasons for that, if you take a look at the population of Richmond, is that, obviously, there are quite a few Asian Canadians, people that have come from Asia and now make Richmond their home. They have the culture of using the transportation system. They have the culture of perhaps being from Hong Kong, being from Shanghai or being from Taipei where they have very, very highly evolved transportation systems.

They very much enjoy taking the subway, taking the transit system. Obviously, because they now have that option available to them, they are able to use that and enjoy it very, very much. By having that and by building those systems, we're able to take huge numbers of people out of their cars — huge numbers of people that contribute significantly to the greenhouse gas emissions and significantly to the environmental degradation that we see from greenhouse gases.

Transportation itself represents one-third of all greenhouse gas emissions today in Canada. Putting a significant system in place in order to get people out of their cars, getting people with other modes of transportation that they can use, and getting them so that they can conveniently move from one place to the other are extremely important.

[1040]

You know, one of the other things that we have to look at in building transportation systems as well is safety. In the transportation systems that we have in British Columbia, obviously, that's of key importance to us: making sure that people feel safe on those lines and making sure that people want to use those lines and want to use them in the daytime, in the evening and throughout the year. By using systems that people feel are safe, comfortable and convenient, it makes it significantly more useful, and significantly more population will want to use those systems.

One of the systems that's near and dear to my heart, as well, is the Evergreen line. Obviously, with what the government has committed to the Evergreen line and building that — and from my area we have significant new Canadians from Asia as well — I believe that that line, once built, will be significantly used as well and will be a wonderful addition to the northeast sector.

With the new Pitt River Bridge that we originally opened a couple of weeks ago — I was there with the

Premier — it would be a possibility to move that to Pitt Meadows and to Maple Ridge and to expand that system so that we have a very vibrant community and a very vibrant transportation solution for the area.

It's very, very important as we move forward and something that can contribute significantly to the environment for all of the greater Vancouver area and, quite frankly, for the province of British Columbia in general.

L. Krog: I'm delighted to rise this morning in response to the member's remarks — the topic, "Transportation: Key to our Environmental Future." He talked about a number of issues and one that the member for Saanich South pointed out to me. It's not just a discussion around a cultural shift. It is also a shift around investment. The cultural shift will follow in time.

Generations change. The immigrant population that the member mentioned obviously has a profound impact on transportation and the attitude towards transportation. But it requires money, and there is no question that, notwithstanding that we talk about the private automobile and that goods are by and large almost 100 percent transported by the private sector, the roads on which they travel, where much of our goods are transported now, are public roads.

There are very few toll roads anywhere, and I'm talking in particular about Canada and British Columbia, so what we're talking about is an investment by the taxpayer, ultimately. What return is the taxpayer getting for that investment? Everyone who doesn't have a car is ultimately subsidizing with their tax dollars those of us who have private automobiles. Everyone who doesn't have a car is subsidizing the trucking industry. Everyone who doesn't have a car is subsidizing every form of transportation in one form or the other, including the public transit they may take — light rail, if it's available; railroads, if they're available, although railroads are by and large privately owned.

Certainly, in this country we've recognized the importance of public investment in transportation. The member for Parksville-Qualicum this morning talked so nostalgically about his time on the trains. Every Canadian is in love with trains, and every Canadian who understands anything of the history of this great nation knows that it was the building of the CPR that literally put a ribbon of steel across this country that's held it together, I would argue, through some very difficult times.

But in order for all of this to occur, we have to really talk about the priorities, and I think we have to talk about the true cost. The member mentioned this morning some suggestion that one-third of greenhouse gases arise from transportation. Whether that figure is accurate or not, I'm not sure. It's not a reflection of what the member says. He's repeating what he's read, and I've read all kinds of things as well.

We haven't put the total cost yet on what it actually costs us to transport any item anywhere. We haven't done the kinds of studies that I think are important for government to ensure are undertaken so that we truly understand what the costs of goods are in terms of the environmental impact.

In other words, when you buy that lettuce and if it comes from California, what is the cost of getting it there? What is the environmental impact of it? What does it really mean? Because I'm satisfied.... Like Thomas Jefferson, I believe in the common sense of the people. I think if people have an opportunity to truly understand what the costs are both in terms of a monetary cost but even more particularly for our generation in terms of environmental cost, they'll be responsive to it.

Those are the kinds of numbers and information that we have to have. I like to make decisions on the basis of numbers, notwithstanding that I tend to get a little carried away with my passion on occasion, but that's the nature of politics, of course. If we're going to take advantage of the cultural shift that is occurring, we have to be prepared to put the public moneys into the infrastructure necessary to ensure that it occurs.

[1045]

The member might be familiar with the fact that there were investments made by government around transit a few years ago in terms of securing land near where stations were going to be built. Private industry, the private sector, wisely decided to invest there. We have to think about those things.

But we also, I think, have to be realistic that as Canadians, we built this country on the basis of a railway, in terms of the most significant population expansion, and then we built it a second time, if you will, on the basis of the free use of the automobile and the private automobile. So we have isolated communities, suburbs feeding great cities.

We didn't concentrate our population. We didn't start out with walking and horses and ox carts. So our country looks much different than Europe does, and that's an enormous difficulty, an enormous cost that we have avoided through the great natural wealth of our country.

Now we're going to have to start to figure out how to pay that price. How do we get people out of vehicles? How do we transport goods effectively? But not just transport goods. Also look at what is the growing realization that we've got to produce it closer to home if we can and that we should give priority to buying it closer to home — whatever it is we consume or use.

These are, I would suggest — and I think the member senses it himself — exciting times. At the time of our great challenge of climate change and the impact it will have on all of our lives, it is also the most exciting and challenging time, because almost anything is possible, I believe. We have an opportunity to pass on to our children and

our grandchildren a hope, if you will, for a better future instead of some of the more dire predictions, but we're going to have to work at it together.

D. Horne: I think the member opposite makes some good points.

Obviously, one of the most important things in transportation and the environment is making sure that we make the investment, that we invest in the infrastructure. That is really, truly key. By making the investments so that we have the infrastructure there, obviously, we can make a substantive impact on the environment in the future. This is one of the things that this government's been doing over the last while with Canada Line, with our commitment to the Evergreen line, with the commitment to the Island Highway and many of the other transportation infrastructure projects that currently are ongoing in the province.

This is an issue that is of tremendous importance to us, all British Columbians, as we move forward — and, quite frankly, for all people around the world. As you look at movement of goods to market, as you look at consolidation of goods to market, transportation is key, as the member has pointed out.

One of the major issues facing us is taking a look at and analyzing, from a greenhouse gas standpoint, whether it is of less impact on the environment to have large inventories of goods moved to market or to have those goods moved in smaller inventory levels from smaller farms. That's the thing. Obviously, one would assume that by having smaller amounts moved to market from closer to where those consumers are, that that would be of significant benefit.

Yet we continue not to pursue that as much because of the difficulty in the way that our food chain works right now. It's not the way that the purchasing in the large stores and the purchasing power that they currently have operate. That being said, you know, the analysis of that may prove that that's not the case. Obviously, by studying that further, we would at least understand the impact of that.

Transportation, as both the member opposite and myself have mentioned, is key to a lot of these areas. The greenhouse gases produced by the trucks and moving goods to market, by the cars and moving people around, by industry in general and using automobiles and trucks and cars is a significant impact on the environment. If we take a look at the way that we do things and take a look at the necessity of those and how we can better utilize things in the future, we'll certainly produce a huge impact, and it's very important for us as we all move forward.

[1050]

UBC 15 BY 15 REPORT

M. Elmore: The newly released report *15 by 15: A Comprehensive Policy Framework for Early Human*

Capital Investment in BC was released in August this year. I would like to congratulate the human early learning partnership, HELP, at the University of British Columbia and the authors of the report: Dr. Paul Kershaw, Dr. Lynell Anderson, Dr. Bill Warburton, Dr. Clyde Hertzman and the entire team of researchers at the UBC HELP research institute.

HELP is a research consortium of faculty researchers and graduate students from B.C.'s six major universities. It's led by Dr. Clyde Hertzman and is recognized as a world-leading contributor to new understandings of early child development. It's very unique and, I think, something that we should be proud of here in B.C. — that we're on the leading edge of this research.

This report was commissioned by the B.C. Business Council for their Opportunity 2020 project. The B.C. Business Council wanted to look at, looking into the future, how B.C. can successfully adapt and innovate to create a prosperous and sustainable future, recognizing the importance of leveraging human capital, our workforce and the contributions to our economy in a global context.

The key finding of the report is that the terminology, the stock of human capital or the resiliency of our people in our workforce, is key to B.C.'s long-term economic success. This means that early childhood development is a critical issue for business leaders, because it's the years before age six that set in motion factors that determine the quality of our future labour force.

Research data collected from 2001 to the present show that today only 71 percent of B.C. children arrive at kindergarten meeting all of the developmental benchmarks they need to thrive both now and into the future. That leaves 29 percent developmentally vulnerable. A rate of child vulnerability above 10 percent is biologically unnecessary. So here in B.C. we have the situation where it's three times what the rate could be. This current vulnerability rate signals that B.C. now tolerates an unnecessary brain drain that will have an impact into the future and impact our workforce and our economy.

Vulnerability is an objective measure that was developed at the UBC HELP institute. The early development indicator, EDI, is a population-based measure that rates vulnerability on five levels — social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive, physical health and well-being, and communication skills. Therefore, reducing vulnerability is necessary for B.C. to secure its long-term economic future. It will also inject a significant economic surplus.

The rate of provincial vulnerability was first measured in 2001 to 2004 at 26 percent and is currently at 29 percent. We saw the rise in this vulnerability occur over the 2001 to 2004 period, the three-year period during which.... This is a time that the province enjoyed a thriving economy measured by GDP and also lower unemployment levels and government surpluses. Yet we saw an increase in early vulnerability for children.

Today 484 neighbourhoods across B.C. were measured, and 93 percent of neighbourhoods fell below this vulnerability threshold of the EDI index.

The early years represent a very unique window in human life. All the research is pointing towards a consensus that the most effective interventions and investment benefiting our labour force happen in these early years — benefiting children.

It's the government of B.C.'s 2009 strategic plan which targets the lowering of the provincial rate of early vulnerability to 15 percent by fiscal 2015-16. It's this report referencing the 15 by 15 goal, which is ambitious but also a signpost along our way to the ultimate goal of reducing early child vulnerability to 10 percent by 2020. [1055]

However, significant changes across the entire province are required to create this equitable access to the conditions that help children and families thrive. New policy thinking is, therefore, in order. International research has shown that the best strategy to reduce early vulnerability is found in a comprehensive government policy which supports parents — men as much as women. There's a recommended investment of GDP to 1.5 percent, which is comparable to other OECD countries. Currently, we have an investment of 0.3 percent, which is among the lowest.

The main policy recommendations that have come out are: build on maternity and parental leave, raise the level of coverage for parents and incent fathers with their leave to encourage that. As well, build on existing employment standards.

In terms of resources: build on income and employment support policies; mitigate poverty among families with children; community resources — build on quality early childhood education and care services; address children with special needs; and work with the local early child development coalitions.

This investment in early child care is also a very significant investment in public infrastructure and in kids. It's been shown that investment in child care shows a return. Every \$1 invested generates \$2 into the economy — so a very efficient investment.

This is a long-term investment strategy, but it has short-, medium- and long-term benefits to children and families and our economy.

M. Dalton: I am pleased to respond to the comments from the member for Vancouver-Kensington. I've been a public school teacher for the past 15 years — the past seven years at the elementary level. I've taught from kindergarten right to grade 12, and I know firsthand the importance of our young people getting a strong start right from their early years.

All too often, students who struggle in the primary school years continue to do so all the way through their educational process. It can place limitations on them later

on in life. Seeing our children get a strong foundation of skills is essential for their own future well-being and, I would add, for the well-being of the entire province.

The government appreciates the HELP report and its recommendations that support our shared goal of reducing early childhood vulnerability. Child vulnerability is the rate of children, as was described, who arrive at kindergarten not meeting all of the developmental benchmarks, such as holding a pen, climbing stairs, using the washroom independently.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

The province has provided help with approximately \$3 million in funding this year alone and about \$22 million over the past number of years. We are committed to reducing the level of early childhood vulnerability to 15 percent by the year 2015.

The latest results in HELP, our HELP partnership, show a very modest improvement in early childhood vulnerability rates in B.C. from 29.6 percent to 28.6 percent this year. We've seen a modest improvement in reducing childhood vulnerabilities, but there's more work that needs to be done.

This is why this government has committed to delivering voluntary full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds, beginning next year. This is to help ensure that our youngest learners get the best possible start. The delivery will be phased in over the next two years.

Boards of education have been asked to consider first reaching children from neighbourhoods where early development results show the highest level of vulnerability. This very significant initiative is going to help the educational needs of our children.

In my constituency there is one private school that is already using the full-day kindergarten. I was talking to someone that was involved in leading the program. He said that children going into grade 1 who have had the full-day kindergarten as opposed to the half-day are noticeably more advanced.

[1100]

Also, I was talking to another kindergarten teacher last week. As a longstanding teacher at the kindergarten level, she says that more time is needed to reach the educational benchmarks, and she feels that the full-day kindergarten will benefit students to get a better grasp of the necessary skills.

We believe in providing free, innovative early learning options for children, because early learning is essential. This is why we've developed the StrongStart B.C. program. It's a free, drop-in early learning program for preschool children when they're accompanied by their parents or caregivers. We've invested \$43 million in StrongStart B.C. centres across B.C., and more are opening up every week. We're hoping to have approximately 300 by the end of this year.

There are a number of StrongStart centres in my constituency, including the first one that began in Mission. It's a very successful early learning program for children.

The government has also helped deliver Ready, Set, Learn, which is a program for three-year-olds. This program helps make positive connections between families, the school system and the community agencies to help three-year-olds get ready for school.

There's much more that the government is doing, including the B.C. Family Bonus program, which provides tax-free contributions calculated on a family's income so that the lowest level of families in B.C. receives the most in direct financial support from this government. B.C. also invests \$1,000 into the children's education fund for every child born after January 1, 2007.

In conclusion, the government recognizes the need for giving our young children the educational tools they need from the very beginning. This is why we've gone to great expense and effort towards achieving this goal.

M. Elmore: Thank you to the member for Maple Ridge–Mission for his comments. I also appreciate our shared recognition of the value and benefit of investing in early learning.

In terms of, also, the recommendation from the HELP report was.... The level of investment that's needed is significant. It's along the lines of \$3 billion a year in terms of significantly reducing the early vulnerability to keep on track for the 15 by 15, to reduce the target 15 percent by 2015. So it's a significant investment that's required on a number of policy levels in terms of supporting families.

The programs the member mentioned are quality programs. I met with a number of child care providers and educators, and they've told me. I've met with working families, as well, who wish they had the opportunity to access these programs, but they have to work. So there is a need, especially for support for working families, for the wraparound care when they drop their kids off to kindergarten or to have an opportunity to provide care for them while they're at work so that these children can also benefit from these investments.

It's a significant investment, which again would require a very significant shift in priorities in terms of government policy. It's a very substantial investment, but I think, as the member mentioned, the benefits that we will see in terms of investing in children will provide that they get the start that they deserve and should expect in B.C.

I think the report shows that the investment pays off in the short term in terms of freeing up the labour force, allowing more parents to access the labour force once they have child care for their children.

It shows that the benefits to the children themselves moving through the school system are.... We'll see the results also, in terms of the long term, with the benefits to our labour force and the quality of their life. Also, for the efficiency of decreased costs to the health care

system, providing support to kids at this very early stage is beneficial.

[1105]

I'd just like to wrap up and to commend, again, the excellent work of the HELP research team at UBC; their findings, which are being used across Canada for measuring early childhood development; and also their recommendations for significant investment.

Hon. B. Penner: I'd like to call Motion 16 on the order paper, a motion put forward by the MLA for Richmond Centre.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 16 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

Private Members' Motions

MOTION 16 — ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES OF OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

R. Howard:

[Be it resolved the House welcome the Olympic torch to British Columbia, and recognize the unprecedented economic opportunity the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games will provide the Province.]

Mr. Speaker, I would first like just to take a minute to acknowledge the vision, the unrelenting hard work and the dedication of the late Jack Poole.

[L. Reid in the chair.]

Jack's leadership and integrity stand us proud and in many respects got us to where we are today. We will miss him dearly.

I speak to this with a sense of pride and great expectations — expectations which are unfolding daily, especially now that the Olympic flame has arrived. It's been only a few days since the torch run started, and we've already seen so many heartwarming and motivational stories — incredible stories of personal achievement, of people overcoming obstacles and seemingly impossible odds to succeed in their personal goals.

There is something about the Olympic flame and the torch run that propels us, that inspires us, that challenges us all to find that next gear and to extend our reach. One can only imagine the wealth of stories yet to come as the torch continues its journey across the country.

Fifty communities in this province will hold special celebrations, and the torch will visit over 200 communities representing 90 percent of B.C.'s population. Ninety-two percent of the B.C. population will be within an hour's drive of the relay route, a remarkable achievement in itself.

I think the legacy of the games will be many-faceted: from the many stories of challenge and triumph that surface in the run-up to the games, to the memories of the athletes and the competition of the games themselves, to the legacy of the bricks and mortar that will remain for future generations, to the programs and volunteer capacities that will be built to host the games and will survive long after the games are past and to the unprecedented opportunity we have to showcase ourselves to the whole world.

The economic opportunity that arises from all of this is, I believe, unmatched in our history. Since the heady days back in July 2000 — on July 2 in particular a crowd gathered at GM Place and other places; I happened to be at GM Place to hear the announcement that we had won the bid — much economic activity has been generated in advance of the games, and I would like to highlight a few examples. I'll focus on my community, as I know others will speak to theirs.

In my community, Richmond, we have the Olympic speed skating oval. This iconic structure is already hosting both community and national events. Generating huge interest from international media, it features a roof made from pine beetle-enhanced wood.

It is absolutely stunning and an opportunity to showcase our province's wood and the creative use of B.C. wood products in a very meaningful way to the entire world. It is hard to overstate this opportunity. It is a wood marketer's dream come true. It is an economic opportunity which is very unique.

Beyond the oval, the economic opportunity is significant. Of course, we have the international airport located in Richmond. It's an Olympic sponsor company, and it's in full preparations for the Olympics — and, of course, investing in the future — including a spectacular new viewing area which features a flight simulator. There are businesses in Richmond that earlier secured contracts, such as official licensees Wilson International and Blade Pro Products.

[1110]

The city of Richmond is setting up a live site called the O Zone. Businesses — international, national and local — and community partners will come together to create a celebration site to showcase their products to the world. An unparalleled economic opportunity. The Richmond hotels, shops, malls and restaurants are busy preparing strategies with the assistance of our chamber of commerce, Tourism Richmond and other associations to leverage this economic opportunity to the fullest.

As much as I've just said, I've really just touched on a very few examples of economic opportunity in a single community. I know stories like these have unfolded and are unfolding across the province. Every region of this province will be showcased through the B.C. stories and B.C. Explorer programs and, of course, the B.C. Showcase space at Robson Square. Legacy assets have been built in Fort St. John, in Kimberley, in Kamloops and elsewhere.

These much-treasured Olympic and Paralympic Games are arriving at what seems like the perfect time. The economy could use a lift, and a lift it will receive, as our communities, our businesses, our job providers look to leverage this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and harvest the afterglow of the 2010 Winter and Paralympic Games.

A. Dix: On this Monday morning I think we get six minutes, so we're going to either say only a few things or speak extremely quickly. I'll have to decide which of those it is.

It is always wonderful to hear government members praising the value of large-scale, public sector, public works projects. It's always good to see that and to say — as this motion does, in fact — that such public works projects, at times combined with a huge effort by the community, can lead to economic benefits.

Of course, all members will know, in this House.... Hon. Speaker, you'll know in particular, because you were a member of this House at the time that the Olympic project in British Columbia was launched by Tourism Vancouver and the government of the time in the 1990s, led by a former member for Vancouver-Kingsway, Premier Glen Clark.

Why was that? Because like everyone else, like the succeeding government in British Columbia, New Democrats love winter sports. British Columbia and Vancouver and Whistler and the whole community is a centre in the world for winter sports, and we saw this as an opportunity for our province to showcase what we have here and to build a lasting legacy here that would be, I think, inspirational to the world. We have a lot to show and a lot to offer.

You know, it's been suggested.... I think that in recent years it's fair to say the idea of the Olympic vision for British Columbia has been focused excessively on the current government, which has tried to drive a political argument around the Olympics and tried to suggest that people who have sought accountability in that process are somehow not supporting the games. But as you know, hon. Speaker — you know better than others — there is absolutely no contradiction between insisting on accountability and supporting the Olympic Games.

We are, like many British Columbians, excited at the prospect, and in particular, excited to view and to be inspired by the commitment and the determination of the athletes. After all, this is a global athletic competition, fundamentally, and we could use a lot more of that kind of positive global engagement between countries and the world. Being part of that is an important, I think, element of what will make the Olympics an exciting thing. Of course, we want to share what we have here in British Columbia.

But there has been, I think it's fair to say.... There's a debate about the economic value of the Olympics. There's a debate, and many countries have had it. There's been

relatively little peer-reviewed analysis of the economic value of the games, but that which there is suggests....

[1115]

I think the most significant study showed about a 1 percent lift in growth in the few years subsequent to the games and a decline in income. That was what that study brought to it. But I think, surely, the value is beyond those kinds of peer-reviewed results. It's what image we present to the world, and I think there has been, sadly.... We're going to do our best as a province, and we're going to be part of doing our best as a province, putting our best face forward to the world — but, also, a missed opportunity, it seems to me, to deal with fundamental issues.

I think of some of the issues that occur in my constituency, in the constituency of my colleague from Vancouver-Mount Pleasant. To address issues of homelessness, which will also be shown to the world; to address issues of drug addiction, and those issues will also be shown to the world; to address issues of crime, and those issues will also be shown to the world....

What we have to do and what we have to continue to do, it seems to me.... I think there is no contradiction between supporting the Olympics and supporting policies that will generate an end to homelessness. There's no contradiction, but we have some work still to do to benefit fully from the vision that was started by Tourism Vancouver and that has been engaged in by subsequent governments.

We're very proud to host the Olympics. I will be very proud when the torch is lit at the opening ceremonies. I will be very proud of the very, very small role that I had to play in that but also, I think, proud of the Canadian athletes and the British Columbia volunteers who will bring those games to life.

H. Bloy: It makes me proud to stand today, proud to be a Canadian, proud to be a British Columbian for the Olympics that are coming here. I've been proud to be part of this process from the day that we were awarded the Olympics in 2003. Again, like my colleague, I was at GM Place the day it was announced.

It all came to a reality last Friday in front of this beautiful building, the Legislature, when the flame was flown by airplane from Greece. It arrived here in Victoria and came by canoe across the bay, by the aboriginal first nations, and was walked up to the steps of the Legislature.

While I was waiting in the crowd for this to happen, there were children there talking to their parents: "Can I touch the flame? Can I hold the flame? Can I carry the flame? When I'm old enough, I'm going to be in the Olympics. I'm going to play hockey." I think somebody wanted to do high jumping.

It's still the Olympics. To hear the children and the crowd break into *O Canada* really brings that emotional part to you and what it will bring to all Canadians across British Columbia and across Canada.

British Columbia is the host of these games, but they are Canada's games. They are the Olympics, hosted by British Columbia. I can tell you that in 1976 — you may not believe I'm that old — I was in the Olympics in Montreal. I went on a number of occasions, and I happened to be in the stadium when Greg Joy won a silver medal in the high jump, and the whole stadium in Montreal broke out into *O Canada*. It was one of those moments that you'll always remember.

This whole event of the Olympics is about our citizens in this country and in this province, to bring pride to them of what Canada can do. We are the best place to live.

You know, there was a disappointing factor about the Olympics. It was that 200-odd group of terrorists who came to Victoria from across Canada to interrupt the games. Anyone who could support this group should be ashamed of themselves.

For this group to take away so much from the games, to have an opinion not shared by many where they have to gather from across Canada to try and disrupt these games, to stop a young child or young adult with disabilities from carrying the flame — something he had been looking at doing for months since he was chosen, and he couldn't carry it in his hometown — I think is disgusting and shameful.

They do not understand, these terrorists, the potential goodwill and economic benefits that come from these games, because they have a limited intellect and do not understand how the world truly operates.

[1120]

I support this motion to welcome the Olympic torch to British Columbia and recognize the unprecedented economic opportunities that the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games will provide the province.

The first day that we won this bid to host the Olympics, when it was announced, the name "Vancouver" was on 167 papers' front pages, around the world. This is advertising that nobody could buy, that no one could afford.

We have so many great sponsors for the event. Every riding will host and support. ... Every part of this province will benefit from these games. You know, 50 communities will hold special celebrations. In my area of Burnaby it will be on January 11, and I can tell you that I can't wait for it to happen and to be involved in the carrying of the games. I know that one of the torch carriers in Burnaby is going to be Jeff Clark, who is a true British Columbian hero — the gentleman that brought, along with Miles Ritchie, the World Police and Fire Games to British Columbia this past summer.

You know, three billion people will watch our games and will give us a unique opportunity to market ourselves to the world. My colleague spoke about what they're doing specifically in Richmond — but what all parts of the province are going to do.

At a time when many parts of North America are retrenching, British Columbia will see substantial economic

benefits from the 2010 games in every corner of the province. Leading economists indicate that we will get a boost from the 2010 games, and the Royal Bank of Canada's leading economist says that the growth will be 2.9 percent in 2010.

The 2010 games represent \$4 billion in economic opportunities for B.C. companies and communities, and every region of the province will benefit. The Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will spend \$1.3 billion this year in the local economy, and VANOC estimates that their sponsoring partners will spend about the same in this province.

All of our Olympic venues have been completed two seasons early, two years ahead. This is unprecedented in Olympic history. It's the earliest jurisdiction ever to complete all its venues. As a matter of fact, a number of the venues have already been used for world games.

Over 100 aboriginally owned companies will benefit from the Olympics, and they have already signed contracts worth \$53 million. We have third-party validators that talk about this. "It will definitely create a significant, a substantial, amount of opportunities for B.C. businesses and businesses outside of B.C. as well" — David Hobden, economist with the Credit Union Central of British Columbia.

Another one: "We should feel more fortunate than ever now to have the Olympics on the horizon in B.C. They will play a greater role in our province's economic well-being and our return to positive growth in 2010" — John Winter, president, B.C. Chamber of Commerce, news release, February 2, 2009.

This is a quote from Carole James, Leader of the Opposition. "I heard the Finance Minister say this week that the Olympics are the best economic stimulus any government could hope for. I disagree," is what the Leader of the Opposition stated. But I can tell you, in the *Vancouver Sun* — candidates were surveyed during the May, 2009 election — the member for Vancouver–West End and the member for Vancouver–Kingsway both responded that the 2010 Olympics will benefit their ridings. I say that they will benefit all of British Columbians.

I support this motion, and I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to stand up and speak.

Deputy Speaker: Members are reminded that members are referred to only by the names of their constituency.

S. Hammell: I also stand to support the motion that recognizes the economic opportunity of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In thinking about the Olympics, we do come to think of a commitment to excellence, the celebration of youth, challenging the elements of nature with the outward limits of one's physical prowess, and also the coming together of many nations of the world, united in a common cause, and the spirit of competition amongst those nations within a contained context — a healthy competition.

[1125]

That's something all of us understand now — how important being engaged in physical activity is to us, and how important that is to us as citizens of this country, of this province.

The Olympic motto is "Faster, stronger, higher," but the most important thing in the Olympic Games, according to the background information, is to take part. Taking part is just as important a thing in life, and it is not only the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well. It's sort of a commitment to the best in ourselves.

I harken back to when the Olympics first came along. It was in 1997, and I remember the discussion around the cabinet table that we had when the proposal was brought forward. Ian Waddell was the existing Minister of Tourism at the time, and the notion, through Tourism Vancouver, came to the cabinet table through him. Many of us were worried about the cost. We saw that there would be a huge cost to the games, but we also saw the potential as an economic driver and the motivation of pride in community and province.

It was not an easy decision, because so many unknowns were out there, particularly the end-game cost of the Olympics. But the notion of supporting the initial bid was absolutely embraced. We saw the potential of showing the province to the world, and we were also, at that point, coming out of difficult economic times. We had seen the recession of the '90s and during that period the federal downloading of services to the province, such as health care and housing — to name just a few.

We recognized that the proposal to have the Olympics and Paralympics here in British Columbia was going to be costly. So the decision weighed heavily on all of us. But in the end, we saw that we were close to the end of a tunnel in terms of the recession, and the possibility of hosting the games was a real possibility, particularly if the province supported the games.

Clark's commitment was critical. Glen Clark committed to the games immediately. He supported the presentation to cabinet, and his support was critical, in the end, to us getting the bid. He supported the bid financially, he supported the bid in front of the Olympic secretariat, and he supported the games enthusiastically. But he knew the games would be expensive, and he was up front with that right from the beginning.

He knew there would be infrastructure. He knew there would be added additional costs to the Olympic Centre. He knew there would be a SkyTrain station from the airport, and he acknowledged those costs up front. But he also knew the activity would generate jobs and test the skills and talents of the people of British Columbia. Glen Clark was a builder in the tradition of other B.C. Premiers, and he saw this as a wonderful opportunity for his province.

The difference between Clark and the handoff to the next government is that Clark acknowledged the costs

of the games. He was absolutely transparent in terms of what the costs were going to be in the long run. In watching members from the other side, one wonders if the water did not part on the day they were elected and the world began anew.

All governments sit on the shoulders of decisions made and passed on to them by previous governments. It's clear that the former Premier saw an opportunity for this province and embraced it. The window of opportunity opened, and he jumped through it. It was wonderful to hear the current Premier being so graceful the other day in acknowledging that the genesis of these games came from a previous administration.

[1130]

What I would like to see the members from opposite do now is acknowledge the cost of the games. My father always told me that you never snow your friends. You never hide anything, and you never treat them in a way that is not respectful and understanding.

What is absolutely critical is that the government, to have the confidence of the people behind them, be open and transparent. When you have things such as the Olympic secretariat not being counted as an Olympic expense, it is unbelievable. In many ways it's a foreshadowing of what happened prior to the election and after it.

If you can't be straight up and clear and transparent with the community that you propose to serve, then I don't know how we can't expect to have a \$495 million deficit turn into a \$2.8 billion deficit — and that no HST turns into HST.

My wish in terms of the Olympics is not that we not hold the Olympics, not that we not celebrate that wonderful enthusiasm and skill of the people involved in the Olympics. My wish in terms of the Olympics is that the government had more of the Olympic spirit and that they were open and transparent and true on the costs of the Olympics to the people of British Columbia.

P. Pimm: It gives me great pleasure to stand up and talk to this motion, Motion 3. I think everything kind of came into perspective for me the other day. I certainly am a proud British Columbian, I'm a proud Canadian, and I think that most of us in this room are. It's enlightening for me to see that the opposition are now very much in support of these games as well, and I really appreciate that.

To be part of the whole Olympics setting, to bring 250,000 additional people into our province during the games — it's going to be unbelievable. Three billion people around the world watching B.C. for a two-week period of time — the economic benefits that are going to spin out of that, I think, will be unmeasured ever. It takes me back to Expo 86 and all of the growth that developed as a result of that and how we got a chance to promote our province and promote every region of our province, as we'll be able to do this time around as well.

I think it's a great opportunity for us to allow and have MLAs on both sides of the House support their regions, to promote their regions to be part of the Olympics and to be part of this once-in-a-lifetime event for us and, hopefully, do what we can to bring more industry and more business into each and every region of our province. I think this will give us a great opportunity to do that.

You know, what really got me going was on Friday morning, when we had an opportunity to watch that torch, that little lantern coming into the Legislature, and to watch the four first nations bringing it across the Inner Harbour and walking it up onto the stage and actually lighting the cauldron. It really brought home the point to me that these are going to be wonderful times for all British Columbians and all Canadians.

When you talk about the torch relay, and certainly others have mentioned it earlier.... To go out to 50 communities that are holding celebrations, for the torch to go through 200 British Columbia communities and around the area and to touch 92 percent of all Canadians — this is just wonderful. It's a wonderful time to be in Canada.

When I listened the other day on television to the President of the United States and how disappointed he was in not achieving the Olympics and how we have this wonderful opportunity to promote ourselves and our regions and to be supportive of the Olympics, I just think it's such a wonderful opportunity and one that I'm very, very proud to be part of.

[1135]

The whole Olympic/Paralympic Live Sites across the province that are being set up I think are just fabulous as well. The chance that comes out of this — to give all the world an opportunity to see British Columbia and see the knowledge and the opportunities of what B.C. would give them — the strategic ability that B.C. lends to everything as far as services, tourist attractions.... The opportunities are unbelievable.

When you start talking about the lasting legacies of the Olympics, this is just phenomenal. I can remember back when I was on my city council in the early 2000s, and when the first talk of the Olympics came up and the call went for legacy announcements and lasting legacies, we applied for one.

Richmond has the one that's going to be used for the Olympics. Our community is going to have a covered oval that's going to be there for eternity — a beautiful, fabulous building that just had its soft opening this year. Inside the facility we have two full-sized hockey arenas. On the second floor of that building is a covered speed skating oval that can host Olympic training and Olympic events, and on top of that a 400-metre walking track for all the residents.

The lasting effects of our Olympics are just absolutely phenomenal. The part of the whole thing that I'm very, very proud of for my community is that I'm going to have two brothers who are going to be in the speed

skating segment of the Olympics. I'm so proud of the Morrison brothers. Hopefully, I'll get a chance to choke up as they stand on the podium during the Olympics.

J. Kwan: To be sure, to be host of the Winter Olympic Games may be a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. For British Columbia to have the opportunity to do that, to showcase B.C. to the rest of the world in the 2010 Olympic Games, is indeed significant. It is a signature event. There's no doubt about it. It comes with many possibilities — possibilities for the athletes themselves, for the families, for all of us as spectators who are not actively in the sport itself and for British Columbians who will hold that pride in their hearts as we see the world descend on British Columbia to participate in the games.

With those possibilities also come responsibilities. The responsibilities in acknowledging what comes with hosting the games would deem it to be a success. Early on, commitments contained in the inner-city inclusive agreement, the Olympic bid book, the multiparty agreement have stated that the organizers of the 2010 Winter and Paralympic Games undertook to ensure that Vancouver's inner-city residents, the environment and all British Columbians benefit from the games in Vancouver and Whistler.

For the first time in history, these commitments included a pledge to ensure that the benefits of the Olympics are available to all people, regardless of income or social position; further than that, to ensure that those marginalized in our community, in our society, are not displaced or otherwise harmed by the games.

Sustainability is now part of the IOC's policies. The IOC's policy of inclusion has been adopted by the 2010 organizers who aim "to convene an accessible games that have a positive impact on socially and economically disadvantaged groups." That was the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

To implement this policy, the bid corporations, which preceded the organizing committee, mobilized a considerable cross-section of civil society to create a document that is unique in the history of Olympic bids. It was called the inner-city inclusivity commitment statement. This document outlined 14 issue-oriented commitment areas and 37 commitments that should be addressed in order to "maximize the opportunities and mitigate potential impacts in Vancouver's inner-city neighbourhoods from hosting the 2010 Winter Games."

[1140]

Since that time, we have to measure what has been done and what's been committed and make that comparison. Since that time, I'm sad to say, many of those commitments that the organizing committee had in mind have fallen short. To just name a few of the areas, as my colleague from Vancouver-Kingsway has already mentioned, housing and the issue of homelessness have been critical issues in our communities.

What has happened with the inner-city commitments that had come out with the recommendations? The Housing Table report, which called for 3,200 units of affordable housing to be built over four years, has been shelved, and its recommendations were set aside — no tenancy protections and potential for eviction; potential loss of the athletes village housing; homelessness has more than doubled since the Olympics were awarded to Vancouver; the failure to implement the recommendations for host cities by the UN special rapporteur on housing and the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions.

Another area is on civil liberties: the ticketing of Downtown Eastside residents in my own riding; the surveillance of social activists, including home and workplace visits; the city of Vancouver's 90-page bylaw, which places the rights of Olympic corporate sponsors above the rights of free speech of citizens and safe assembly.

Transparency and costs. No funding for the Olympic watchdog groups, which was committed to by the organizing committee. At the same time, we have seen that the Olympic budget cost overruns skyrocketed. To this very day this government still denies that some of the costs associated with the Olympics are part of the Olympic expenditures.

I can go on. There are many areas which I think require appropriate scrutiny. For us to address these issues will ensure that the success of the games is shared by everyone, as it had originally been envisioned in the beginning when the organizing committee came together and put forward those commitments in the bid book.

I would finally say this. Some of these issues could be rectified, and rectified now. The government, along with VANOC and its partners, can actually come out and say: "We understand that those commitments have fallen into the dark wayside, into the hole of the abyss, but we can fix that. We will commit to a national housing program today as part of that legacy for the Olympics. So we can actually ensure transparency is going to be materialized, we will enable all Olympic-related expenditures to be actually put out to the public for them to review. They are going to be subject to the Freedom of Information Act so that people can actually see it."

Wow, what about this concept? Actually make the minutes available and open for the public to access so that they know what is being discussed in the finance and management meetings of the 2010 Olympic Games.

These are just some of the examples in which action could be taken today to rectify these errors so that we could all say that the success of the Olympic Games is shared by everyone and that the original commitments would actually be honoured.

D. Hayer: It is with great Canadian pride that I support this motion. I also want to say that I'm happy to hear that the NDP officially supports the Olympics now. I was happy to hear the minister's statement from the Premier last week and a statement from the Leader of the

Opposition, which both received standing ovations for supporting the Olympics. It's good to see that they have finally come around to support our Olympics greatly.

On Friday, when the Olympic flame first touched Canadian soil at the Victoria Airport, we could feel an incredible upwelling of support, and national and provincial pride. The 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games were really happening, and they were happening right here in British Columbia. That was a feeling that I shall not forget — a feeling of pride, a feeling of history and a feeling that it will be a legacy to British Columbia.

While the flame will burn bright across the land, it will also burn a place in the hearts of all Canadians, particularly all British Columbians. It is the flame of pride, the flame of inspiration, hope and prosperity. This is a flame that will burn deeply in the hearts of our young people and inspire them to be the best they can be. It will inspire Canadians to be better, to be stronger, to reach higher.

[1145]

This phenomenal event we are witnessing, the Olympic and Paralympic Games, is all about being the best we can be. We will be the best, and we will inspire others. Our spirit and our strength will resonate throughout the world next February and March, and the world will take notice. The world will find out that we will and that our province truly is the best place on earth.

Not only will the Olympic Games be the focus of the world for the next few months, but they will encourage millions to come to see what great things we have to offer right here in British Columbia, what great things we can come to see right here in British Columbia and what great things can be when you live here, when you grow up here, when you do work, when you do business here and when you prosper right here in British Columbia. The prosperity that will flow from these games, from the worldwide exposure we'll receive, is truly exciting.

We have always been a tourist destination. We have mountains, magnificent landscapes, magnificent seascapes, rain forests and deserts. We have an incredible first nations presence and a multicultural community that is second to none. We have everything.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

These Olympic and Paralympic Games will give us the opportunity to tell the world just how wonderful it is here in British Columbia. We who live here sometimes take for granted the wonders of nature that surround us — grizzly bears, orcas, giant trees, endless beaches and stunning mountains. The rest of the world doesn't really know what we have here, but they will soon find out what we have here. They will soon want to come here to see the wonders of nature and the wonders of an economy based on the Pacific Rim.

They will, thanks to the Olympic and Paralympic coverage and exposure, want to visit us and come here to invest in

British Columbia, to have the best of the world here. The Olympics will give us a showcase to tell the world how wonderful it is here, how many advantages there are in living here in British Columbia and just how great it is to have the possibility to raise your family here, to create wealth here — the security and financial stability within British Columbia. The opportunities in the province are boundless.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are an ideal venue to present ourselves to the world. The success that will follow, which we will feel, will be incredible.

In closing, most of all, it will be our children who will benefit from it the most. They will gain an enormous sense of pride in their country and in the province. They will learn that if you are willing to work hard and willing to give everything you can, you will succeed, and you'll become the best you can be.

The games will be incredible. I support them, and I support British Columbia's great future.

M. Farnworth: It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the motion that we welcome the torch run to British Columbia.

As I said a few days ago in this chamber, I was part of the original cabinet when the idea to try and launch a bid for the Olympics was first discussed. I can tell you that there was an enthusiasm around that table that this would be a great opportunity for the province — not just Vancouver, not just Whistler, but for British Columbia — an opportunity for athletes, an opportunity for the public, an opportunity to showcase everything there is in British Columbia, all the things that we know as to why it's such a really great place and why we live here.

It was seen as really something in the spirit of our province and the ability to be able to do things. That was one of the bases for which the decision was made to go forward, and I'm really glad we did. Now, almost a decade later, we're seeing that fruition, and we'll have the games in just a few more months' time.

One aspect of this motion that I think is particularly important, and I know it was discussed at that time at the cabinet table, was the torch run. Outside of the actual games themselves during that two-week period, this is the event that I think has the opportunity for most people in this country to be a part of. For many people, the Olympics are far away. For many people, the only way they'll get to see it is on television.

The torch run is an opportunity to showcase the Olympics in a way that involves people, involves communities not just here in British Columbia but right across the country. The fact that the torch is going from British Columbia to every province and territory in the country I think is something that is truly remarkable.

[1150]

It's not going just by running. We've seen people on a surfboard in Tofino over the weekend. I'm sure up in Iqaluit and in the High Arctic, there'll be equally unique

ways perhaps involving a dogsled. Who knows? But the bottom line is that it will reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of our nation, and I think that's something to be truly proud of.

I think that's something that people around the world will watch as the media covers the torch relay — the different and unique varied parts of our country, the different and unique ways in which the torch is carried, and the people and the stories that come from that. I think that one of the best attributes of the games is this opportunity for the torch and what it symbolizes and the opportunity for people to go out and be part of that.

For me, I'm happy to see that taking place. I am particularly pleased that it is going to every single territory and province in the country. The fact that more than 12,000 people will be involved in passing that torch from here and then back again is a marvellous opportunity for the people of this province and the people of Canada in communities right across, from coast to coast to coast.

Hon. Speaker, I have no trouble in supporting the motion, and I know there are other members who wish to make a few more comments before we adjourn for lunch.

M. Dalton: I am very pleased to stand in support of this private member's statement. I was also at the activities in Victoria on Friday, and the amount of enthusiasm and energy there in Victoria was just incredible. In the evening it was raining, but it didn't seem to make any difference at all to the thousands of people at the event.

This is just an example, which we're going to see across this nation from one end to the other, to up north. It's something that's great for British Columbians. It's great for Canada as a unifier and an opportunity to really showcase our province in these areas. I'm looking forward to the flame coming through my cities, Maple Ridge and Mission.

Something we're already benefiting from at this point is some of the infrastructure projects. We've mentioned the convention centre, the transit between Vancouver Airport and downtown and the Richmond oval. There was a moniker for the Sea to Sky Highway beforehand, and that was the Death Highway. That's been all rectified, and it's just a joy to drive on.

This is one of the most positive things that's ever happened to British Columbia. As the flame passes through our cities and towns, let's celebrate how blessed we are to live in such a wonderful place on this planet. Let's share that joy with the rest of the world as they come and spend time with us at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

H. Lali: I, too, rise to support this motion that is before the House. I always have been and always will be a proud Canadian, and I always have been and always will be a proud British Columbian. I always have been and always will be a supporter of the Winter Olympics here in Canada, in British Columbia.

I know the member from Surrey-Panorama made comments a few minutes earlier saying that the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP have finally come around. I'd like to correct him, because it was actually the NDP under Premier Glen Clark, who had the foresight to join the tourism folks in British Columbia to put forward the bid.

I just want to remind the member for Surrey-Panorama that it was right here in this House on May 14, 1998.... I want to quote myself from a speech that I made:

"There's nothing that I or this government would like to see more than B.C. becoming successful in hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics. I think that would be a great boon for our economy, for the people of British Columbia, giving us exposure in terms of tourism dollars coming in from other parts of the world. I would certainly join hands with all parties — opposition, private sector, government bodies, non-profit organizations — in an effort to make sure that the Olympics could be attained by this province."

I would like to make a correction. I'm sorry. It was the former member from.... Surrey-Tynehead — that's his present riding. I apologize to the current member for Surrey-Panorama and correct that record.

The difference from the way we would have done the Winter Olympics compared to the B.C. Liberals is.... Actually, there's a big gap in terms of how the difference would be. I think the accountability hasn't been there, and that's what the folks up in my neck of the woods have been really harping upon — that they needed accountability and that a true cost of the Olympics is not being included by the Premier and the cabinet.

[1155]

There are a whole lot of hidden costs. They need to be recognized as the costs of the Olympics. I just want to quote Vaughn Palmer, who was talking to the Premier. The Premier said: "There's a good chance these numbers will move before we get done." And here's Vaughn Palmer's commentary: "So they did. At last tally, the games were a \$2 billion proposition all by themselves. Those related projects came in at close to \$4 billion. Figure another \$1 billion for security, another \$1 billion for the Olympic village, and pretty soon you're talking \$8 billion in real money."

You're looking at the Sea to Sky Highway. Again, on May 14, 1998, I made these comments: "I would also participate in any federal cost-sharing in terms of improving that corridor so that we can make it easy for the Winter Olympics if we were to be successful." I was the Minister of Transportation and Highways at the time.

There's \$2 billion for the Canada Line. B.C. Place roof is going to be replaced. The Spirit Squares. The convention centre is a billion dollars. Unfortunately, there have been a number of casualties as a result of the

cost overruns and some of the mismanagement by this government.

Homelessness is on the increase, and nothing has been done on that file. When you look at agriculture and forestry and transportation in rural B.C., and health and education, those are all casualties. Their line is: "We don't have enough money." That's because it's going into the cost overruns as this government has mismanaged a lot of those projects.

I just wanted to correct the notion that the NDP has finally come on board. We put in the bid when we were government. I was a part of cabinet at the time, and we were always in support of the Olympics as we are now and will be in the future. Where we differ is on how this would have been done.

D. Barnett: It is with great pride that I stand in this House today to support this motion, as I stood July 2, 2003, at the stadium in Vancouver when the great announcement was made.

I'm very proud of this province, of this government, past governments and present governments for the vision, courage, conviction and leadership that we have today. It takes great leadership and skills to bring together organizations, such as was done with VANOC, and bring this opportunity to British Columbia.

I would just like to say that as I sat in my constituency office on Friday and watched the torch come to this great province, to this House, and the experience of the torch and our young children and the opportunities that we see coming to this province now and in the future.... I can see no other reason that anybody would have anything negative to say about this relay or these Olympics. I see communities across this province standing together, waiting for their opportunity to hold the torch, to see it pass by.

Noting the hour, I will support this motion and call for adjournment of debate.

D. Barnett moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. B. Penner moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

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