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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
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4TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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Afternoon Sitting

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2003

The House met at 2:04 p.m.

Introductions by Members

Hon. G. Halsey-Brandt: Today in the members' gallery, I'd like to acknowledge a special visitor from Spain. Please join me in welcoming His Excellency José Ignacio Carbajal, the newly appointed Ambassador of Spain to Canada. This is the ambassador's first official visit to British Columbia, and I am pleased he has travelled to British Columbia to discover the many opportunities our beautiful province presents. He's accompanied by his wife, Ms. Elisa Iranzo de Carbajal. Would the House please make them welcome.

[1405]

Hon. G. Campbell: Today I have the honour of introducing the new director of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Canada, Mr. Bassanio So. Joining the Hong Kong government in 1991 from the private sector, Mr. So has served in various policy areas and was most recently the principal assistant secretary for constitutional affairs of Hong Kong until he was appointed director of the Toronto head office. Mr. So is joined in the gallery by Mr. Kenneth Cheng, deputy director of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, and Ms. Catherine Yuen, principal consultant from the Vancouver office. I'm pleased Mr. So and his party have had the opportunity to meet with members of the government this morning, and I hope the House will make them welcome.

J. Kwan: There is a delegation of people from the west coast here today, who brought forward a petition lobbying for government to save the West Coast General Hospital. The individuals are Jack McLeman, Hira Chopra, Nancy Czigany, Janet Pombert, Nelia Krikke, Harry Dhillon, Dorothy Aston, Carol Reynolds, Angie Brick and Alf Brick. Would the House please make them welcome.

Hon. G. Campbell: Currently, the United States of America is hosting the 2003 women's soccer World Cup. I think it's important that we take this opportunity to recognize the exceptional efforts of the Canadian women's soccer team. Eight of those players are from British Columbia. Christine Sinclair, Andrea Neil, Brittany Timko, Kara Lang, Silvana Butini, Katrina LeBlanc, Sharolta Nonen and Clare Rustad are all players on the team. The physiotherapist, Paolo Borignon; the goaltender coach, Shel Brodsgaard; the assistant coach, Ian Bridge; and the equipment manager, Jamie Sales, all come from the province of British Columbia.

Prior to this event Canada's women's soccer team had not won a single World Cup match. This year they won against Argentina, Japan and China. That took them to the semifinals last night. They were valiant, but unfortunately last night Sweden prevailed. I can tell you, all of us in British Columbia will be watching them on Saturday, October 11, in Carson, California, as they take on the United States team for the bronze

medal. They've made British Columbia proud, they've made Canada proud, and I hope the House will send them their best wishes.

I. Chong: Joining us in the gallery today are five very special friends and constituents. Earlier we enjoyed meeting with you, Mr. Speaker, and now they are here to observe the proceedings of this afternoon: firstly, Mr. Richard Burke from Berkshire Investments, who is joined by Michael O'Connor, a well-known leader in the community as well as being chair of the Greater Victoria Hospitals Foundation.

Joining them are three brothers who this past summer put on a celebrity gala weekend event that raised awareness for mental illness. They are Geoff, Russ and Bruce Courtnall. Would the House please make them all very welcome.

Hon. B. Barisoff: Today I'd like to introduce Glen Ringdal, who's the CEO and president of BCADA New Car Dealers of B.C. Also, I'd like to introduce two constituents of mine, Dr. Fred Hamilton and his wife Julie — who actually bought a dinner with me in the dining room earlier today — and their friends from Victoria, Hugh Davidson and his friend Aubrey Little. Would the House please make them welcome.

Hon. L. Reid: We all have family and friends who make this job not just possible but enjoyable. In the gallery today — and I'd ask the House to please join me — is my three-and-a-half-year-old little girl, Olivia. She's accompanied by her grandmother, my mom, Catherine Reid. I'd ask the House to please make them welcome.

B. Lekstrom: It's certainly my privilege to be back in the House and have the opportunity on the first day to introduce three people who work very hard on behalf of the people of Peace River South in the north-eastern part of our province. Joining us in the Legislature today are Mayor Evan Saugstad, district of Chetwynd; Mayor Wayne Dahlen, mayor of the city of Dawson Creek; and the director for area E in the Peace River regional district, Mr. Tim Caton. Will the House please join me in offering them a warm welcome.

[1410]

Hon. R. Neufeld: It's my pleasure today to introduce a few folks from what we call north of the river: director Karen Goodings, chair of the Peace River regional district; Mayor Steve Thorlakson, city of Fort St. John; and Lenore Harwood, mayor of the district of Hudson's Hope.

R. Lee: I am pleased to introduce Benny Cheung and Cindy Pau from Fairchild Media Group Ltd. They are here today for the reconvening of the House and to cover the visit of Mr. Bassanio. Would the House please make them welcome.

I. Chong: I have another set of introductions today. Visiting us today is a class of grade 11 students from Mount Douglas Senior Secondary, my former high

school. There are 50 students. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Ponchet and Ms. Jones as well as an adult leader, Ms. Windjack.

They've had a tour of the buildings and are now here to observe question period. So I hope the House will make please make them all very welcome.

P. Wong: I would like to introduce Mr. Andy Gregor, who has contributed the last 15 years in the B.C. film industry as a speech trainer. Would the House please make him welcome.

Tabling Documents

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, I have the honour to present the following documents: office of the conflict-of-interest commissioner annual report 2001; office of the auditor general, 2003-04, report No. 2, follow-up of performance reports; annual audit, office of the auditor general, year ended March 31, 2003; office of the auditor general annual report 2002-03; office of the ombudsman annual report 2002.

Statements (Standing Order 25b)

MENTAL ILLNESS

I. Chong: This past July, a very special fundraising event took place here in Victoria — the inaugural Courtnall Celebrity Classic. It was an extraordinary weekend where \$800,000 was raised in aid of the Greater Victoria Hospital Foundation toward a facility to combat mental illness.

This fundraiser featured a gala dinner and a highly successful auction followed by a celebrity golf tournament the next day at the Victoria Golf Club. The event was particularly poignant as it focused on the personal lives of three brothers who knew all too well the effects of mental illness.

The Courtnall brothers — Geoff, Russ and Bruce — along with their sister, Cheryl, and their mother, Kathy, shared their story with us. We were all moved as they spoke about how having to deal with mental illness changed and shaped their lives, their futures. I commend the Courtnalls for their courage to speak out and for raising awareness of mental illness not only locally but provincially and internationally.

One out of five people in British Columbia will be affected by mental illness during their lifetime. No one is immune. Mental illness can affect your family, your father, your mother, your spouse, your child, your friend, your co-worker or even yourself. Mental illness does not discriminate, and it affects all ages, genders, socioeconomic classes and ethnic backgrounds. Sadly, people with mental illness and their families still encounter discrimination and stigma. This week is mental illness awareness week, and the goal is to provide education and information to raise awareness about mental health issues. The more we know about mental illness, the better able we will be to seek help and speak

openly, the better able we will be to offer support to individuals who should be supported and the better able we will be to ask for support and respect, because it's deserved.

With the help of people like the Courtnalls, who are in the gallery today, awareness of mental illness is increasing and will continue. I hope all members in this House and individuals in the gallery will do their part not only during mental illness awareness week but every day.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

T. Christensen: Last night, as most of us were sitting down to dinner, a team of British Columbians on the other side of the world slowly walked towards the 19,340-foot-high Ohuru Peak, joining the ranks of other British Columbians, like the Premier and his family, who have ascended Mount Kilimanjaro in support of the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia. Over the last six months members of the 2003 Ascent for Alzheimer's team have been training physically and mentally, speaking to community groups and raising funds to help increase awareness and to support research to overcome Alzheimer's disease.

[1415]

This year approximately 16,000 British Columbians will be diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease, joining over 50,000 other people in our province who face the daily challenges of living with Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's is the leading cause of dementia, a set of symptoms that includes loss of memory, judgment and reasoning, as well as changes in both mood and behaviour. It affects all aspects of a person's life — how he or she thinks, feels and acts. It taunts its victims and their families as it slowly steals the memories and personalities of its victims and impacts their relationships with all who know and love them. One in four of us has someone in the family who suffers from Alzheimer's disease.

The Ascent for Alzheimer's symbolizes the mountainous struggle facing the victims of Alzheimer's and their caregivers. There is no known cause or cure for Alzheimer's, and although it is often considered a seniors' disease, the beginnings of the disease can now be detected in people in their thirties and forties. The 2003 Ascent for Alzheimer's team includes Elaine Wright and her 16-year-old son Cameron. Elaine was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at age 47. The other members are Lorraine Barker, Jim Hoggan, Judy Huska, Roslyn Kunin, Joanie McEwen, Enid Marion, Claude Rinfret and Kate Sladen, who I'm particularly proud of because she's my mom.

Would the House please join me in congratulating all of these outstanding British Columbians on a job well done.

RESPONSE TO B.C. FOREST FIRES

J. Les: I rise today to pay tribute to the people of British Columbia and their great display of courage under fire.

This summer the forest fires that consumed large areas of the province threatened the lives and homes of many British Columbians. A few lost their lives, and some lost their homes. We owe thanks to the heroic efforts of the firefighters and military personnel who saved so many lives and homes. Were it not for those who risked their personal safety and stood shoulder to shoulder against the ever-growing flames, the devastation would have been even more tragic than it was.

I know I speak for many of my government caucus colleagues when I express my admiration for the people affected by the fires. Their unwillingness to give up should serve as an example to us all. Faced with devastating losses, families still came together and celebrated the fact that they had not been physically hurt by the fires. As many said, a house can be rebuilt but a life cannot.

The plight of these British Columbians did not go unnoticed. The Premier, with the support of his caucus members, made sure that all of B.C. was ready to meet the challenge. He responded quickly and effectively by declaring a provincial state of emergency, ensuring that all available firefighting and military forces would be ready and engaged to stop the fires' spread. This timely response protected the safety of all who were threatened by the flames and was part of the provincewide effort to protect all the property that was possible to protect.

The significance of this natural disaster was lost on no one, even those living in areas of the province far from the flames. Every single one of my colleagues was touched by this summer's events, as were their constituents. The generosity displayed all across this great province in fundraising efforts has shown that British Columbians stand ready to help their fellow citizens and that they are prepared to work together in the rebuilding process. We owe our thanks to every person who contributed their time, energy or money to fighting the fires.

I am honoured to speak on behalf of my colleagues today to thank the people of the fire-ravaged communities for their great display of courage and resilience. May they serve as an example to us all.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Oral Questions

SPENDING ON GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS

J. Kwan: The Premier knows well the good people at National Public Relations. Perhaps he even recalls Randy Wood's kind words in his defence last January — speaking as a crisis management expert, of course.

The Premier's office paid National Public Relations a total of \$37,000 in taxpayers' money last year alone. Given that this Premier has the largest political communications staff in B.C. history working for him already, what possible extra value could National Public Relations provide that was worth \$37,000?

[1420]

Hon. G. Campbell: I'd have to get the information on the specific contractual arrangements for the member, but let me just remind the member that, in fact, this government is spending substantially less than the government that she was part of spent on communications. It is important, unquestionably, that we do communicate with the people of British Columbia, and we are doing that. But today, Mr. Speaker, as you will know from the budget documents — and the member opposite should as well — we're effectively paying \$6 million less than the previous government was in 1992.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has a supplementary question.

WORK OF LOBBYIST ON GOVERNMENT ENERGY PLAN

J. Kwan: The boss at National Public Relations, B.C. office, is Marcia Smith. On September 4, 2002, Marcia Smith registered as a lobbyist for an oil and mining industry association, the Canadian Coalition for Responsible Environmental Solutions. These guys don't like Kyoto, but they sure like oil and coal. It was Marcia Smith's job to lobby government on their behalf as the government was putting its energy plan together. She really must be convincing — good enough that only five days later, the Minister of Energy and Mines hired her to work on this government's energy plan.

Can the Minister of Energy tell us why he was paying Marcia Smith to help develop his energy plan when she was also being paid by big oil to lobby on the very same energy plan?

Hon. R. Neufeld: It's interesting that the member asks a question about energy in British Columbia, one of the bright lights in the province. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have an energy plan that we released last fall, which moves British Columbia forward into the future instead of into the past — like under the leadership of the last administration. B.C. Hydro just signed \$800 million worth of contracts to supply clean energy in the province of British Columbia. And I stress "in the province of British Columbia." This wasn't in some other country, like the other administration did. We're actually building projects in the province of British Columbia for British Columbians.

We are moving forward with an excellent energy plan, one that just brought us in \$418 million in British Columbia. That's three times higher than any land sale in Alberta has ever brought in...

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. R. Neufeld: ...and it is a record in Canada and matches the best fiscal year we've ever had in one month. That means we're moving ahead on a great energy plan for British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has a further supplementary.

J. Kwan: Perhaps the minister should have taken the question on notice.

Let me just lay it out for the minister. Marcia Smith is paid by the big oil and coal association to lobby this minister and this government on the development of its energy plan. At the same time she was also being paid by this government to work on the same energy plan. The contract that this government signed was a \$22,000 contract for her to do this work. Does the minister see the problem at all — that there is a conflict here? Does he see the problem — yes or no?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Again, I don't want to go through all the points that I just went through, because I believe...

Interjections.

Hon. R. Neufeld: Please — more, more.
...British Columbians...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. R. Neufeld: ...are very happy with the energy plan that this government, under the leadership of our Premier, released last November. It's an energy plan that takes us well, well into the future. The member over there is picking at straws, trying to find anything wrong that she can. Unfortunately, they have not been able to, other than trying to mislead people in some instances. We have a very good energy plan in the province, one that's designed to take British Columbia well into the future, and we are looking forward to actually going along with that energy plan well into the future.

J. MacPhail: Well, the minister is playing dumb. That's what my notes here say, but I actually don't think he's playing. I actually think he may be dumb on this one. It's an outright conflict — it's an outright conflict — for the minister to pay Marcia Smith to help him with his energy plan when she's already on the payroll of big oil and mining companies to lobby him on the same plan.

[1425]

But there's more, Mr. Speaker — new information. Two of National Public Relations top lobbyists, Michael Goehring and Randy Wood, are also registered lobbyist for Accenture — National Public Relations employees lobbying for Accenture, the same folks who benefited from this government's privatization of B.C. Hydro. These two gentlemen report to Marcia Smith.

So while the government is busy negotiating a deal with Accenture and drafting the final energy policy, which included the Accenture deal, Marcia Smith is also lobbying for Accenture. She's also lobbying for big oil, and at the same time she's being paid by this minister to advise him about the Liberal energy plan. Can the minister stand up now and tell us how this is not a conflict?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Well, as normal, the opposition is trying to dig under every straw and everything to see what they can find that is wrong. Now they talk about Accenture. Isn't it interesting? The deal B.C. Hydro has with Accenture will save ratepayers \$250 million over ten years. Is that a bad deal? I think that's a good deal for British Columbia. It's also a business that's centred in Vancouver, that pays taxes in the province of British Columbia, hires....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister has the floor.

Interjections.

Hon. R. Neufeld: It's my turn. I listened to you.

Accenture will set up a business in the province of British Columbia. It will employ British Columbians. It will pay taxes in British Columbia. It will help keep the rates low for ratepayers of B.C. Hydro in the province. I can't imagine anything that's better for British Columbians than that, and that's a key part of our energy plan. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition has a supplementary question.

J. MacPhail: Well, I hope all those public affairs bureau employees are scurrying around right now to help the minister out of this little trap. If the minister....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

J. MacPhail: Although, actually, the minister isn't confident that no conflict occurred, because he didn't answer the question.

Let me ask the minister this: will he agree today to release to the public all of the documents that Ms. Marcia Smith was involved with under this contract, and will he ask the Attorney General to do a full investigation into how and why the government is paying oil and mining lobbyists, industry lobbyists, to help develop his energy plan? And if he won't, what's he got to hide?

Hon. R. Neufeld: What have I got to hide? I'll tell you, this government has been more transparent than any government we've experienced in the last bloody decade. You want to talk about transparency? That person talking about transparency should take a lesson from this government under the leadership of our Premier. We have been more transparent with things that happen in the province than they ever were. In developing our energy plan, we were as transparent as you can possibly get. We're moving ahead with an energy plan that is excellent for British Columbia and will bring benefits for years to come, even though they just

about destroyed this province in the ten years that they were here.

SURGICAL SERVICES AT PORT ALBERNI HOSPITAL

G. Trumper: My question is to the Minister of Health Services. People in Port Alberni and the surrounding communities that depend on the West Coast General Hospital are very concerned about the planned temporary closure of nine acute care beds in the hospital. They are further concerned that this may lead to a loss of surgical services provided in Port Alberni. Will the Minister of Health Services assure the residents, who depend on the availability of health services, that their quality of care will not be compromised?

[1430]

Hon. C. Hansen: This is a subject that is very dear to me because I was actually born in the old West Coast General Hospital in Port Alberni. I had the pleasure of being there for the opening of the new West Coast General Hospital just recently.

The Vancouver Island health authority is undertaking a review of surgical services on the mid-Island. I can reassure the member that there is no plan to remove surgical services from Port Alberni, and that will continue. But they are looking at where the best mix of services can be provided between Nanaimo and Port Alberni, and at the same time making sure that the communities of Bamfield, Ucluelet and Tofino, who also rely on West Coast General Hospital, will have access to the care that they need when they need it.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

B.C. RAIL PARTNERSHIPS AND PROTECTION FOR EMPLOYEES

P. Nettleton: I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. During the summer recess the member for Prince George North had a great deal to say to the media regarding the government's plan for B.C. Rail. For example, to the *Prince George Citizen*, September 9, 2003, the member was quoted as stating, when questioned on the future of B.C. Rail, that their concerns — that is the employees' — "really come down to succession and pension funds." The member for Prince George North further added: "When you really ground it down to nuts and bolts, I don't think they care that much about whose name is at the top of the paycheque as they do about the long-term security."

My question to the minister is: does the member for Prince George North speak for the government on this issue, and further, is the minister seeking from the proponents or bidders some form of guarantee of job security and protection of pension funds for the B.C. Rail employees?

Hon. J. Reid: With the B.C. Rail partnership that we're looking at, the operating partnership, we've certainly been engaged with the communities. We've certainly been listening to the concerns. One of those concerns is employment.

The members from Prince George have very adequately represented their community, their concerns, as well as other mayors who are on the mayors' committee that have been part of this process all along. There has been well-expressed concern. The member knows that in the RFP process, that was one of the areas that has to be addressed in the proposals that are put to government.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Prince George-Omineca has a supplementary question.

P. Nettleton: Well, I'm interested in that response, minister. If, as you claim, you're listening to workers as well as folks from communities along the line — if that is the case — then will this provision to which I've made reference be included in the strategic considerations in the finalized form of the terms of request for proposals?

Hon. J. Reid: The respect for those workers is part of the deliberations. It will be part of the evaluation as we work our way through the proposals. Absolutely. That's been there from the beginning. All the concerns they have expressed are part of the respect that we need to pay to workers. They have collective agreements in place, and all of those issues are part of the discussion.

Yes, absolutely. There is a commitment that all those issues are part of the discussion.

POTENTIAL CLOSING OF PORT ALBERNI HOSPITAL

J. Kwan: Before the election, the current member for Alberni-Qualicum campaigned hard to have the hospital in Port Alberni built. Indeed, she established a profile in the community on it.

Now she and her government are shutting the hospital down and sending patients off to Nanaimo, the hospital with the longest wait-lists in the province.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

J. Kwan: No weasel words from the Minister of Health, please. The question that should be asked from the member from Qualicum to the minister is: will he today commit, in front of the members from that community, that he will in fact keep the hospital open and that he'll make that commitment to their face by meeting with them today?

Hon. C. Hansen: Yes.

[End of question period.]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[1435]

Orders of the Day

Motions without Notice

RESPONSE TO B.C. FOREST FIRES

Hon. G. Campbell: I ask leave of the House to move a motion without notice relating to the recent forest fires in British Columbia. A copy of the proposed motion has been given to the opposition and is in the hands of the Clerk.

[Be it resolved that this House recognize:

The heroic efforts of all firefighters and military personnel who fought and continue to fight the 2003 wildfires, the contributions of volunteers and donors across British Columbia in assisting the evacuees and helping rebuild communities; and the noble determination of those families directly affected.]

Leave granted.

Hon. G. Campbell: This summer our entire province was struck by the ferocity and the power of nature. It was one of the worst wildfire seasons in our history. We were also awed, however, by the spirit of British Columbians and their response. Today, as we observe Fire Prevention Week, we honour and pay tribute to that spirit. We saw the heroism and courage of those who fought the fires. Unfortunately, 334 homes were lost, ten businesses were destroyed, and 50,000 residences were evacuated — the second-largest evacuation in Canada's history. In response, over 7,600 men and women from across Canada and indeed from south of the border and over 1,000 military personnel from our Canadian Armed Forces came to assist. Our forest fire service personnel, property protection personnel, first nations firefighters and firefighters from the property protection divisions of 61 communities across B.C. dedicated themselves to protecting British Columbians. They all came and put themselves in harm's way to protect the public.

As I speak today, we must remember that three people lost their lives in airplane and helicopter crashes as they tried to help fight the fires from the air. I'm sure the hearts of the Legislature go out to the families of Ian MacKay, Eric Ebert and Ben von Hardenberg, but thanks to our firefighters' efforts, not one single member of the public or resident that was evacuated lost their life through this horrendous summer. We saw the spirit of British Columbians and the determination of their families and communities, and we saw British Columbians band together and be neighbours.

As one of the women I visited in one of the evacuations said to me, she had thought she was from the town of Kelowna, but she realized that everyone in British Columbia was her neighbour as she went

through that horrendous experience. There were 2,000 volunteers that were involved to help evacuees. In Kamloops, in Kelowna, in Cranbrook and throughout our province people banded together to offer support and comfort at a time of incredible family stress to people that live in our province. We saw the spirit of British Columbia and outpouring of support from across the province. We saw as Telus rushed to make sure people had phone cards and Internet connections to make sure they could connect with their loved ones. We saw the efforts of London Drugs to provide things as simple as eye drops to make sure people could get through the difficult environmental time the fires created. Fifty thousand British Columbians were evacuated, and 4.1 million did everything they could to help.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you're aware, there have been cash donations that have been large and small. There have been truckloads of toys, clothing and household goods. Communities across the province offered whatever they could. As I mentioned, 61 communities provided personnel and equipment to help protect the properties of their fellow British Columbians. Together with the federal government we were able to provide assistance at that time, and we will continue to work in partnership with the federal government, the local government and regional governments to try and ensure that people can get through this very difficult time of their lives.

[1440]

We've launched a full public and open review, a no-holds-barred review that asks people to say clearly what they think could have been done better but that also, hopefully, will recognize the things that were done exceptionally well. It's important to note that today, as I speak, there are 570 firefighters still working in the forests of British Columbia. They're cleaning up over 290 fires as we speak today. Those people continue to work on behalf of us.

I think the real message of all of the activity through the summer was how fortunate we are to live in a province like British Columbia, how fortunate we are to have citizens that are as generous as those who live in our province, how fortunate we are to have a public service who will put everything aside in the service of the public they were asked to protect. I believe this was a time of great difficulty for all of us, but I also think it's a time that we should celebrate the work British Columbians did.

We had people from Crown corporations, from across all arms of government, trying to be sure we could deal with this in a way that was as positive and supportive as possible. To all of those people, I say thank you. To all of the volunteers who came from literally all over the province to the areas in the Kootenays and the Okanagan and the North Thompson Valley, who were going through that exceptional time, to all those who came to offer their support, I say thank you.

Let the legacy of this summer be a legacy that we can build on, a legacy that says that in the midst of danger, British Columbians will dig down and bring

out the best they have to offer on behalf of their fellow citizens.

J. Kwan: I seek leave to table a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Petitions

J. Kwan: I rise to present a petition signed by over 9,000 people from the west coast who ask that the West Coast General Hospital in Port Alberni stay open as a full-service facility, including surgical capabilities.

Debate Continued

K. Krueger: I rise to support the Premier's motion. As you know, three of the major interface fires that our province experienced this summer were in my constituency of Kamloops-North Thompson. First, the McLure fire started. It looked like a small matter to begin with, but over the next 21 hours it turned into a raging monster that threatened the very existence of the town of Barriere and wiped out the community of Louis Creek, together with the major employer of that part of the North Thompson Valley. The Strawberry Hill fire started shortly thereafter, and so our forest firefighters, our Ministry of Forests personnel, were dealing with these two massive crises simultaneously.

The little volunteer fire department from Barriere and the even smaller one from McLure fought the McLure fire for 21 hours straight, backing up all the way from McLure to Barriere, and it was a nightmare night for them. Their lives were constantly at risk. They were facing flames 500 feet high. At one point they were completely surrounded by fire and literally had to drive through fire to escape.

The Strawberry Hill fire raced off at 140 metres per minute and ran 12 kilometres in the first night, literally at the doorstep of Kamloops, just the opposite side of Highway 5 from the subdivision of Rayleigh, which had to be evacuated so rapidly that a call went out for boats to bring residents across the North Thompson River, because the smoke was too dense to use the highway. Fortunately, the smoke lifted, the boats weren't necessary, and everyone got out in safety.

Heroes arose everywhere during the course of this emergency. There were B.C. Hydro linemen out putting up new hydro poles to replace those that had burned down, while the fire was still burning around them. The Chu Chua, McLure and Barriere fire departments, under the leadership of Chief Al Kirkwood from Barriere, distinguished themselves in every way. People with stock trailers and pickup trucks tore up into the hills from Kamloops, picking up stock all over the endangered countryside, bringing them into the SPCA and to the Kamloops Exhibition Association where they were cared for until the threat had passed.

Members of the public came forward offering their homes and goods, offering their services as volunteers at the evacuation centres, helping in every possible

way. The Barriere search and rescue department, all of them volunteers, were incredibly self-sacrificing. They were travelling between houses, knocking on doors, evacuating people, while their own homes were burning to the ground.

[1445]

The firefighters, both private and government, the loggers, the emergency personnel — everybody distinguished themselves. The SPCA was open around the clock, sent out a plea for help from the community and got it. The search and rescue went around and fed animals that were left on the properties that were evacuated and would have starved or died of thirst without their help. NL radio, locally, devoted almost all their coverage full-time around the clock to communicating information to my constituents, and we'll never forget that. Robbie Dunn, the owner, Jim Harrison, the news director, and Angelo Iacobucci, Bob Price and all the staff worked incredible hours and did yeoman service for us.

The people down at the Thompson-Nicola regional district emergency centre also worked around the clock. The provincial emergency program people under the leadership of the coordinator Rod Salem really distinguished themselves. The Canadian military as well — it was wonderful to see them arrive.

Just when we were in the thick of all this and thinking it's amazing how people are coping, there was a lightning strike at 18 kilometres on the McGillivray Lake Road — 18 kilometres from Sun Peaks. I talked to a Mountie that night. I was in the emergency operations centre at four in the morning, and he had been out to have a look at it. I said: "How bad is it?" He said: "It's about 30 hectares, I think, and it looks really evil. It's just smouldering there like some kind of demon." It smouldered all night, and in the morning it came raging out of the ravine it was in. They weren't able to touch it with aircraft because of the steepness of the ravine. They couldn't get to it with cats or heavy equipment. Out it came. The next thing we knew, it was threatening the community of Chase. It came within three kilometres of Chase, when as I said we had had a fire go 12 kilometres in one night previously. It was a very frightening time.

As far as I'm concerned, he doesn't want to take any praise for it, but the Premier is a hero too. He declared a state of emergency immediately. During the Salmon Arm fires of 1998, the Premier of that day turned the situation into a photo op and went out to Salmon Arm to declare an emergency. Our Premier did it as a leader, did it immediately, marshalled the resources of the province, the country and the continent to help us. There were no politics involved.

The Solicitor General is another hero. He phoned every day. He checked on us constantly. He got the resources whenever we needed them. He created a provincial fire department, and very shortly there were 45 different municipal fire departments protecting the community of Barriere, and they saved Barriere — 800 homes. We all grieve for the homes that were lost, but we're so proud of them for saving Barriere.

We've been looking big picture. I want to just give you a zoom-lens picture of one family, the Oakland family. They have the only permanent home at Neskonlith Lake, and it survived because of heroes. Mr. Oakland is on a disability pension. He's owned that property for 25 years. He inherited it as a boy. Now he's raised three boys of his own there, but he's disabled, and he doesn't have a whole lot of income. He painstakingly built this beautiful log home himself, and he didn't want to give it up.

He couldn't afford insurance. Some people have been pretty harsh about why folks didn't have insurance. He didn't have any money. It would have cost \$3,000 a year to insure that home, and he couldn't afford it, so he didn't. He and his family determined they were not going to let it go. I've got a series of pictures he loaned me of this terrible yellow cloud of smoke coming up to his home and how frightening it was for them. At the last minute 13 people showed up — friends of his, people he used to work with at Adams Lake Lumber and other friends. They were determined his home was not going to be lost.

They fought that fire until the fire was 20 metres from the house. They were soaking it down. They were terrified, and they could easily have been killed. Then they had to run, and it was a class 6 fire at that point. As the fire chief from Kelowna has said, the standing orders for class 6 fires are: "Run for your lives." They had to do that, and they went and jumped in Niskonlith Lake — all 13 of them.

The fire was creating its own weather, as these fires did — a huge raging windstorm — and debris was pounding down on them as if they were in a hailstorm. The fire was sucking all the oxygen out from the lake, and they could barely breathe. The wind and the waves came up tremendously. They had taken boats, and the boats all sank. They had things they were hanging on to, to try and float, and they were all kicking together to try and get out into the middle of the lake. They couldn't because the wind from the fire kept sucking them back. They began to think they were going to be drawn back into the fire. Someone showed up with a little putt-putt electric motor on a boat and managed to tow them out into the middle of the lake. They were out there for five and a half hours, kicking and struggling to keep from being drawn back into the fire.

[1450]

In the meantime, there was wildlife all around them. Everything was piling into the lake to save its life. There was a moose swimming in circles around them. There were deer, bear, bats and birds. A little bird came and landed on Mr. Oakland's chest, and he tucked it under his chin. It stayed there for over an hour until it was strong enough to fly away. None of them was afraid of each other, because they were all in it together, just like British Columbians were. It was a terrible time for them. Many times they thought they would die. Some of them were very close to hypothermic, but they all survived it.

It has been an awful experience for our constituents, but the thing that really inspires people about the

way it all turned out was the way British Columbians rallied around them. The new chief, Art Anthony, of the Neskonlith band spoke at the Chase public meeting we had, and he said: "We realized we were treated just like everybody else. Everybody pitched in to help us, to save our people, and we really appreciate it." There's a new bond between people, between aboriginal people and everyone else, between all of us and the Chinese community with their generosity — the member for Vancouver-Kensington and Mr. Johnny Fong and the incredible fundraising drive that they led to contribute a quarter-million dollars to the North Thompson Relief Fund.

We just feel a real kinship with British Columbians, and everybody who has helped is a hero. George Evans and Derek Johnson, two businessmen from Kamloops, started that fund thinking they might raise \$100,000, and it's well over \$2.5 million. Their board is composed of people like Bob Holden from KPMG, a representative from Fulton and Co., and many distinguished business people from around our area. Their commitment is a dollar in, a dollar out — no administration fees. All of the money is to go to the people who suffered losses.

Alberta farmers are organizing a hay lift, 400 tonnes that they're delivering themselves to our ranchers who were burned out, and the Minister of Transportation and the Solicitor General once again have stepped up to the plate and waived regulations and changed things that they needed to change so that could be done. People have provided food and water and supplies, and the money keeps coming in.

We had disappointing news from Tolko last Thursday that they don't intend to rebuild the mill at Louis Creek, and I appeal to them to reconsider, to pitch in with the same spirit that has been demonstrated by British Columbians everywhere, to recognize that these people in Barriere and Louis Creek served them well for decades. They've suffered catastrophic losses, and they don't deserve to lose their employment, as well, and the hurt that will bring to that community.

I appeal to them to pitch in like everyone else and rebuild the North Thompson Valley, to consider a value-added plan, to join in the spirit of support and generosity of all other British Columbians and reward the loyalty of the people of the North Thompson Valley. The Minister of Forests has already been talking to me about a community forest for Barriere, more woodlots for people in the Barriere area, more allotment to the North Thompson Indian band.

All of these are efforts to try and help those people get back on their feet and make their community thrive again. I've already spoken longer than I meant to, but there are so many people to thank, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that there are an awful lot of heroes here, and we appreciate every one of you.

Hon. M. de Jong: Thanks, to the member for Kamloops-North Thompson and, of course, the Premier. There are many in this chamber, I think, who would like to place on the record their thoughts and

their thanks as it relates to the events that have taken place over the past number of months, so I will try to keep my comments brief.

It seems to me that years from now, as we look back on these events, we will necessarily be drawn to the numbers. We will think about and record the 2,700 fires. We will talk about the 8,000 or 9,000 or 10,000 firefighters who were engaged at any one time. We will talk about the incredibly abnormal number of interface fires that took place, challenging lives, threatening lives and property. We will look at the money that was necessarily spent, closing in on the half-billion-dollar mark.

[1455]

Those will be the measurements by which we compare these extraordinary events and place them in historical context, and yet here, standing in close proximity to what has taken place, it is really things other than the numbers that leave a lasting impression. As the member for Kamloops-North Thompson pointed out, it is those human stories. It is the manner in which British Columbians rallied at a time when it took our collective resolve and, essentially, our collective reserves to wrestle to the ground a natural conflagration that threatened an incredibly large geographic area of the province.

Today is really a chance, at a time when fires continue to burn.... Fires continue to burn, and there are still men and women battling blazes, conducting mop-up or cleanup work. Of course, the cleanup work will continue months and probably years into the future. But it is a chance to say thank you and recognize some of those thousands of people, British Columbians, who in their own way — some large, some small — contributed to us battling through this unforgettable, unforgettable summer.

To say thank you to the Forest Service personnel who marshalled themselves in ways that I am certain they hoped they would never have to marshal themselves but in their heart of hearts were prepared to respond in the ways they were called upon to do — not necessarily the jobs they were accustomed to doing but remobilized from parts of the province where, happily, the fire situation didn't reach the crucial and critical stages that it did in the Okanagan or the North Thompson Valley.

To thank the air crews who — in a professional way that all of us, I think, must admire — utilized the tools at their disposal and fought, whether it be as an initial attack on a fire or as a way of trying to contain the spread of a fire, and attacked those blazes in terrain that is difficult, in circumstances that are dangerous. And yes, there was loss of life. Three members of our aerial firefighting team died in tragic accidents. Our hearts go out to their families.

It is a time to say thank you to the first nations who, when their province and country needed them most of all, were there — no questions asked — to lend support in terms of personnel, equipment and locations for the establishment of fire camps, operational camps. It's quite a story. No questions, no bureaucratic hurdles,

just a willingness to respond and be there and to lend whatever support was necessary.

It is a time to say thank you to our Armed Forces. We sometimes — as we go about our business in this chamber and our province and, I suppose, in this country — forget the advantages that come with being members of a great team. Canada is a team; I like to think about it in those terms. In this past summer British Columbia needed help from our teammates, and we got that help. We got it from the Armed Forces, who marshalled and deployed, again asking only one question: how can we help? We got that assistance from other provinces — from the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, the prairie provinces, the Territories — again, asking only one question: how can we help? And it's at times like this past summer when you appreciate and are reminded of the value that goes with being members of a great team like Canada.

The fire departments from across the province that the Solicitor General helped to forge into a single provincial fire department, who asked only, "What can we do and where do you need us?" and then arrived on the scene from the four corners of the province — an extraordinary sight, an extraordinary effort.

[1500]

Some of those other organizations and individuals that were probably never on the television screen and never on the front page of any newspaper are people like the women in Okanagan Falls who spent hours, day in and day out, ensuring that those fighting the fires on the front line had enough to eat, making 200 lunches and 200 dinners and, in circumstances that would have challenged any of us, had fun doing it. They were able to motivate their community by their example, by their enthusiasm and by their unwavering belief in the fact that we were going to — and did — overcome the challenge posed by Mother Nature.

The commissionaires — some of them coming out of retirement and back to active service after being in retirement for five, ten or 15 years and asking only, "How can we help?" — were there to lend the kind of logistical support that is so essential at a time like this.

The list goes on and on: the ice cream parlour and pizza house in Penticton that ensured our firefighters had enough to eat, enough ice cream to cool off at the end of the incredibly long shifts over such an extended period of time.... Everyone did their bit in the best way they knew how. We say thank you to them, and we say we will learn from your efforts. We will conduct a review, as the Premier announced at last week's Union of B.C. Municipalities meeting — a full review, a transparent review.

We'll ask the difficult questions. Could we have done some things better? What are those things? How could we do them better? Could we have communicated better? Could we have prepared better? If so, how? How do we place ourselves in a position where we can diminish, if not eliminate, the likelihood of events like this recurring? We will learn, as one would expect, after events of the magnitude that we were met with this summer.

Today most members of this House, if not all, will simply want to join together and say thank you and place on the journals that record debates in this chamber our belief — and it is certainly my belief — that out of these extraordinary circumstances, British Columbians demonstrated their incredible spirit. In our history this surely was, collectively, one of our finest hours. Thank you from grateful legislators to those thousands and thousands of British Columbians who saw us through such a difficult time.

Hon. G. Abbott: It's an honour for me to rise, as well, and speak to the motion before us today. I too, like the Minister of Forests and the member for Kamloops-North Thompson and the Premier, want to say a heartfelt thanks for a job well done by a great many people, particularly in the southern interior this year, as we faced what was undoubtedly the toughest forest fire season that we have ever seen in this province.

I had the good fortune to be born in British Columbia and to have lived here for 50 years now. Every year, it seems, we have some challenges in respect to forest fires, but there is no question that 2003 will go down in history as the most difficult season to date. Hopefully, we never see another one like it, but we don't know that.

[1505]

In my own constituency of Shuswap we certainly had our share of forest fire challenges. As it turned out, one of the first fires near my home town of Sicamous was, relatively speaking, a small one in comparison with what was going to come later. We had the Cedar Hill fire between Falkland and Armstrong. That was a very challenging blaze — one home lost in that battle, and of course, there was a constant threat throughout the season. Actually, that threat still exists. We still haven't had the kind of rains that would assure us the fire season is well beyond us. That potential still exists. We've had a very long period of drought, certainly one of the longest in history — hottest temperatures, least precipitation and so on. That led to enormous potential for fires.

Fortunately for us, only part of that potential for fires was realized. It could have been a lot worse had we had an unfortunate combination of lightning and other factors. I think we also benefit enormously from the skill and dedication with which the firefighters and a host of others helped to contain the many small blazes that threatened to become very large blazes — particularly across the Thompson-Okanagan, the Kootenay and other areas of the southern interior.

The potential for forest fires also obviously brought into focus that term "interface fires." A few years ago we wouldn't have known what an interface fire was — it's when the forest fire meets a community — and we are more and more becoming accustomed to the interface fire. Certainly we saw the greatest interface fire threats in Kamloops and Kelowna this year. It's a very difficult thing. Hopefully, we will never see interface fires like we had in 2003, but again, the potential may exist in the future, and we're going to have to work

hard as a province to ensure we are as well prepared as we possibly can be for such an event.

One of the items I have in my office that I've kept since 1998 is a piece of melted aluminum from the 1998 fire that swept across rural Salmon Arm — the Silver Creek area. In 1998 we lost about a dozen homes to that forest fire. Again, it was a prelude, I guess, to the enormous challenges we were to face in 2003 in terms of that magnitude.

There were in 1998 and again in 2003 a host of people who worked together to ensure that the potential impact of those forest fires was not realized. Clearly, the outcome was devastating in any event, but these were among the people who helped to ensure that the full devastating potential of wildfires was not realized.

Among the people that worked very hard — there's a huge number of volunteers, and others of my colleagues have mentioned them — the folks in the evacuation centres were phenomenal. Sometimes people even from out of province volunteered to serve in those evacuation centres, and it was a remarkable example of communities pulling together to help people who were temporarily displaced by those interface fires. They did a great job. Enormous compassion and enormous humanity were reflected in the way in which the evacuation centres were operated.

One of the other critical pieces in terms of community and provincial responses to the fires was the emergency operation centres. In those centres we saw people like the local fire departments' representatives, representatives of the RCMP, representatives from all the local governments in the area. A host of officials worked together tirelessly, I must say.

The folks in those centres were absolutely exhausted by the time the major fires had come under control. They were absolutely exhausted. They were tireless in terms of serving to ensure that the firefighters and the fire departments all had the resources that they need. It was an enormous logistical challenge. They rose to that challenge and acquitted themselves most admirably in their efforts to help keep the fires and the impact of the fires on communities under control.

[1510]

I think we also want to acknowledge the efforts of the search and rescue personnel, who were enormously valuable in helping to manage situations. The Minister of Forests mentioned the folks making sandwiches. Well, there were an enormous number of church groups across the southern interior — I'm sure across British Columbia — who worked in many ways to help with the human needs that people experienced when they were displaced from their homes or were threatened with displacement from their homes. Countless service clubs in the Shuswap and right across the province contributed enormously to helping manage the impact of these devastating fires.

Of course, I think we should acknowledge, as well, the business community, which in many cases stepped up to the plate with fundraising endeavours and contributions of material and other goods that helped

enormously to make what is often an unmanageable situation at least more manageable, more livable, more human. They need to be thanked for that as well.

Out in the field there's no shortage of people to acknowledge, salute and thank here. Obviously, the forest fire fighters did a great job. Tireless efforts by the first nations across the province who stepped in.... The Canadian Armed Forces were instrumental in assisting and did a fabulous job.

All of the pilots. The tragic loss of three pilots' lives was one example of the commitment and sacrifices that they make to ensure that, from the air, we are doing everything we can to contain blazes. Structural fire-fighters, because of the interface nature of many of the fires this year, also have to be saluted, commended and thanked for their work.

Right across the province volunteer and professional firefighters stepped up to the plate. Often I would see travelling down the highway or in communities fire trucks from literally every corner of the province. I know that people took enormous comfort, enormous satisfaction in seeing firemen and fire trucks from literally every corner of the province in their community to help them through what was a very, very tough patch to endure.

I'll conclude quite quickly here, because I know there are a lot of my colleagues who wish to speak to this resolution, and rightly so. We learned a lot from the 1998 fires, particularly in Salmon Arm, which was brought to bear in the situation we had in 2003. The lessons were well-learned, I think. Looking on as, obviously, an interested observer, I was amazed at the efficiency, the speed, the thoroughness and the humanness, all of which were a part of the response by officials to an emergency situation. This is not something that we have a lot of time to prepare for. Often these things spring up quickly, without notice and in areas where we may not necessarily expect them. I think that a lot has been learned, and that contributed to an excellent response in 2003.

But as others have noted, there are always things that we can do better. There are always things we can and should learn from these very, very difficult and sometimes devastating experiences. I think we fully intend to do that, so I do look forward to hearing my constituents' views with respect to how they think the firefighting in the future can be undertaken, in some respects, in more effective ways. I'll look forward to hearing that.

[1515]

I do think we have to, at this moment in time, not only think ahead about what we can do better but also look back and say what great people, what great communities, what a great province and what a job well done. With that, I do thank them all for those efforts, and thank you for this opportunity to speak to the motion.

Hon. B. Barisoff: Thank you for the time to speak about these fires. I know the Premier spoke about the province as a whole, along with the Minister of Forests.

My colleague from Kamloops spoke about the Kamloops area, and my colleague from Shuswap spoke about that area. I'd like to just focus in a little bit on the South Okanagan.

As it started out, we had the hottest, driest summer that we've had in a long time. That's nothing new for the South Okanagan, because we're used to that kind of weather. But unfortunately for us in the Oliver area, we started out in early July with a firebug who started to light fires. Rod Parrent and the Oliver fire department, along with the B.C. Forest Service, took quick action on a number of those fires and were able to prevent them from getting out of hand too far. They actually grew pretty fast, and we realized at that point in time how quickly these fires were growing.

Shortly after that, on July 19 we had the Anarchist Mountain fire in Osoyoos. I guess that was one of the first major fires that started. We lost three structures and a couple homes up there. I must say that Walter Lemke and the Osoyoos fire department just did an admirable job of keeping that loss to a minimum. In the early stages of what will probably be the worst fire season that we've ever seen, the B.C. Forest Service was there with everything they had, to bring that under control. I just can't give enough credit to the local firefighters under Walter Lemke and the Osoyoos fire department. I know they were administered by the Oliver fire department. Then they were administered by OK Falls and all the way down the line. They prevented that fire from actually going very far.

During that whole interim period of time, we had the great fire down in the U.S. that was moving up towards Keremeos. We were actually surrounded by fire, knowing that it was going to be a bad season, but it didn't feel that bad at that time. Lo and behold, later on in July we got the Okanagan Mountain fire, and that truly came to be one of the biggest fires that we had in the province and took a lot of homes, and it took a lot of effort by a lot of people to make things happen. I know that Mac Lockhart, the fire chief from Penticton, organized the initial stages in Penticton, and Grahame Baker in the fire department in Naramata were right in the forefront of it all as that fire moved in towards Naramata with the big fear of what was going to happen. Lo and behold, the small community of Kaleden, with Darlene Bailey and her fire department were there trying to help each other out and make sure things were happening.

That very Friday — again, I must commend the Premier for taking the time — he came up to meet with the people in Penticton and in Kelowna. That was the night that the big fire took off. The Premier was just out to do a press conference on what was happening in the Okanagan Lake fire, and my wife happened to phone me. She said: "If you're on your way home, you're not going to get past Vaseaux Lake because a major fire has just erupted at Vaseaux Lake." An osprey nest fell off the power lines, and the fire was running at 300 feet per minute. It was just taking off right up the mountain, so make sure I come around the opposite way. Well, you know, you've got to give credit to the OK

Falls fire department. They were there trying to get it. That was another one. Everything was so dry that it just took right off.

I've got to commend the people of the area, particularly the people around OK Falls and all the communities. I used to try to make an effort of getting up there to talk to the firefighters after they came off shift or just to see them to give them a little bit of credit. OK Falls ladies auxiliary were there just preparing food. They were camped out at the elementary school in OK Falls. There were people at the fire hall, ladies coming in and making cookies, suppers, and everything else just to keep people going, because it was a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day operation.

[1520]

Lo and behold, along comes the Canadian military. I tell you, they did an awesome job of coming there to.... They camped out in the community park on the grass, and nobody was concerned about whether it was going to be damaged or whatever else. Everybody just pitched in and said: "Here's a great place to set up camp. Let's set it up here and make things happen." I talked to a lieutenant commander, and he was indicating how they were actually excited. They were coming back after a 12-hour shift, but they were really, certainly, doing their job and what had to be done. In particular, again, when I think of Bob Haddow and the OK Falls fire crew, they were there, it seemed, every day I went there. They were more and more tired because they were spending — we thought it was 12 or 14 — almost 20 hours a day there and going home, having a quick rest and coming back. All the people that were contributing in the area kind of brought the community together to say: "Listen, we'll survive this. We'll make this happen."

One of the things that impressed me the very most was — in my visits to the different areas and what was happening — all the community support. We thank everybody from the B.C. Forest Service for an admirable job of what they did and the local firefighters in taking their equipment from here, there and everywhere. I think everybody in the OK Falls fire.... I counted. There were seven or eight different trucks from different places around the province that had come to do the things that had to be done.

During one of those visits, I had one of the B.C. Forest Service members come up to me. He said: "I just want to tell you something." He'd been in the Forest Service for 25 or 30 years and had seen it all. This was probably the worst he'd ever seen. He said: "I want to commend your Premier." I looked at him, and I said: "Well, that's fine." He said that when the Premier came, he came with the attitude of: "What can we do to help?" He wasn't there to criticize; he wasn't there to lay blame or to do something else. He was simply there to ensure that they had the moral support for what was going on. He said: "We've never, ever seen that before." I guess internally I kind of felt really good about it. As we were standing there talking, one of the other senior Ministry of Forests personnel came up and actually said almost the same thing. One said to the other:

"Promise, we never talked about this before. We never said anything about it. It was just something that came about." That's the impression they got.

I think that out of this, you've got to take that everybody worked together. There's such a positive feeling about the work that went on — from the guys that were shovelling, trying to put out every little piece of fire, right to the Premier of this province, who was doing his part. I think the member from Kamloops mentioned the Solicitor General. He seemed like he was on a road circuit. When you're in part of that circuit.... I know the Solicitor General was either in Kamloops or Kelowna or the South Okanagan. Meantime, he'd go back around, and he just kept circling around the province — I think over to Cranbrook. You know, I think he also did an admirable job in what was taking place.

My thanks go out to everybody that contributed, because I know we're going to look to see where we might have gone wrong or where we can do things better. I know that's part of looking back. I know that if I could replay every one of my days of coaching basketball, I certainly would do things differently. I'm certain that when we start to look back at all of this, we'll find things we might have been able to do better, but you know, we're going to find that we did an awful lot of things exceptionally well.

I think a lot of credit goes to the individual fire departments for what they did, but in the big scheme of things, it goes to the B.C. Forest Service. It was unprecedented what was taking place, yet they kept everything under control. You know, there wasn't panic in the air. There weren't these kinds of things happening. It was a matter that they actually kept control of. As one of the people that had the fires in their back yard, I've kind of seen that firsthand, and I truly think they should be commended.

[1525]

I know a lot of businesses suffered from what took place over the summer, and the tourists didn't come because of all the smoke we had in the valley, particularly in the South Okanagan. I want to tell you: that all changed on the weekend, when the winefest came and the Wine Festival started. I've never seen so many people back in the Okanagan, and I'm sure that's a credit to all the people of British Columbia. They didn't come and interfere when the fires were going on, but they certainly came and gave their support when it was needed. I'm sure they'll all be coming back. We certainly want the hot, dry summers. We just don't want the fires.

L. Mayencourt: It's an honour to stand here and speak to this resolution. I come from an urban area, but I got to witness some of the tremendous efforts by a large group of individuals — people like firefighters, community leaders and volunteers — in addressing the awesome effects of the wildfire season in British Columbia this year.

Last week, as members of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, we travelled up to Kamloops, and we had the opportunity to

visit the fire control centre in Kamloops and also to fly over the towns of McLure and Barriere and the fire sites there and to visit the Strawberry Hill fire site. While these locations represent just a small portion of the challenges that we faced in British Columbia, it was amazing when you looked at the scale of what had happened.

I want to say that I was really impressed with the people at the Kamloops fire station. I couldn't believe the expertise and the caring and the knowledge that exist in that facility. I was impressed by the technology they employed in British Columbia as a way of dealing with the forest fire problems. I am also really impressed with the volunteers that put together a response to this particular crisis. I am speaking about both corporate and individual donors who rallied together to help.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

I must speak about some people from my own riding that contributed to this, as well, people who were willing to share their time and give what they had to the people who lost homes and properties in our province. One corporate donor I want to specifically recognize is Wayne Hartrick, the gentleman who owns reputations.com. Wayne, while sitting in his boardroom one day, looking at the North Shore mountains and the lush greenness of those, started to think about what it would be like if we were to lose the North Shore mountains to fire. He became committed to doing something for the people in the interior — to the people of McLure, Cranbrook and Kelowna — and so he got to work on creating a concert. He worked with some people from our community: Joanne Wyatt of Telus Communications, Kristen Rabnett of CIBC, Linda Oglove of the 2010 bid committee and Paul Haagenson of the House of Blues. They decided they wanted to put a concert together, so they talked to Bruce Allen.

Bruce Allen rose to the challenge, and he talked to his talented artist Bryan Adams — who was raised here in British Columbia — and they put together a concert series that is going to travel across this province. They're going to go to Prince George, Kamloops, Kelowna and Vancouver, and they're going to raise money for the fire relief fund, for the North Thompson relief fund, and also for the Salvation Army and for other charities that are needing support at this time. I'm really proud of the efforts of those people.

There are also other businesses that have become corporate donors. I want to talk about Molson Canada, which has a program that's going to take place here in British Columbia on October 16. This is an ad kind of thing. You want to go out and drink Molson Canadian on that day, because they're going to be giving \$1 from every Molson Canadian that is sold in the province of British Columbia. A dollar from that is going into the North Thomson relief fund. That's like a contribution of \$100,000 for one day's work, and I really salute them for what they're doing.

Aside from corporate donations there are many, many individuals that pulled together, made contributions and have been extremely generous. Over the

weekend I had the privilege of talking with Capt. John Murray of the Salvation Army. He's a gentleman who has come and visited this Legislature. I've introduced him here. He has appeared before members of caucus. John informed me that the Salvation Army has set a private fund aside for those who have lost their homes in the fires. For the 348 homeowners that lost their homes in these fires, the Salvation Army is going to send a cheque for \$1,000 this week, and it is going to send a further \$500 to them just ahead of Christmas so that they can know that the people of British Columbia really care about them.

[1530]

That money that the Salvation Army raised — \$1.1 million in cash and \$1.3 million in goods and services — is going to be distributed to people who really need some help and assistance right now, and it is a demonstration of the support of this whole province. I'm very, very proud of that.

I'm also proud of the people who worked really hard to see that people's needs were being met. Specifically, I want to mention the Premier and the Solicitor General. Both of these gentlemen suspended their vacation time, which they really deserved and really needed, and they went to work on supporting the communities that were affected by these fires. I really want to say that they are also great heroes in this province for what they did. When I talk to people in my community, they say that was a demonstration of leadership they have not seen before here in British Columbia, and they are appreciative of it. I'm proud to serve in this House with those two gentlemen.

I also know that there were many, many members of this caucus who took time out of their vacation and decided to work in their communities: the member for Kamloops–North Thompson, the member for Shuswap, the member from Okanagan Falls and many, many others who took time out of their precious time away from this Legislature to help their communities. I think that's something we can all be very, very proud of in this province.

Sometimes in this chamber and in this Legislature we talk about the disconnect, the difference between urban British Columbia and the heartlands. That's something that I'm particularly conscious of as I travel around the province, because there are differences in this province. Sometimes there's a gap, a lack of understanding about lifestyles in both of those different types of communities.

I think the fires actually helped us bridge those gaps. I think the fires taught us that we're all British Columbians. I think the fires taught us that we can be better and bigger than just our own little communities. We can be a province that works together, that bridges these gaps. I'm very, very proud to be a member of this Legislature, but more than anything else I'm proud to be a British Columbian because of the way that British Columbia responded to the fires.

With that I'd like to yield the floor to other members who want to speak on this matter, but thank you very much.

R. Lee: I would like to stand to add my voice to support the motion moved by the hon. member for Kamloops–North Thompson. This year British Columbia experienced the driest summer in 50 years, and the water level in some of the rivers reached the lowest level in 80 years. Consequently, it's not surprising to see that this province has had one of the worst summer seasons with fires caused by lightning and human error.

In early August, for a trip planned months ahead, I travelled with my family to Barkerville, Prince George, Prince Rupert, McBride and Kelowna. Everywhere we went, we could see the indirect effect of the fires on the tourist industries. In some areas we saw the effect of the fires on jobs and air quality.

Many families in the heartlands are directly affected by the interface fires. I was at the McLure and Louis Creek areas on September 20, together with 34 members of the Chinese Canadian community from the lower mainland, to talk to the families who were evacuees and to see firsthand the disaster area. As British Columbians we are all related, all interconnected like a human body. When part of the body is hurt, then we all feel the pain. The Chinese Canadian community brought in donations of a quarter of a million dollars to the North Thompson relief fund on that day. Thanks to the community members from Kensington and also to the member for Kamloops–North Thompson for their quick response.

[1535]

The support of hundreds of communities, business organizations and individuals from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam was behind the donations. I would like to particularly mention the members from the Tzu Chi Foundation, who helped some families without house insurance, and the donation they gave to the three fire departments in McLure, Barriere and the Chu Chua volunteer fire departments.

Thanks to the volunteers and firefighters and also the military personnel coming from across Canada, the fires in British Columbia are now under control. From my constituency of Burnaby, the Burnaby firefighters were among those who helped to fight the fires in the heartlands this summer. They've also been in there helping fundraising for the relief fund by selling T-shirts.

Fortunately, the fires this summer also brought out the best in British Columbians, as many of my colleagues have said. In the months ahead, let's move forward together to help rebuild the affected communities, to bring in more economic development and job opportunities to these communities.

B. Suffredine: I rise in support of the motion of thanks made by the Premier today.

In emergencies we often react out of emotion and fear. The urgency of a situation often causes us to use poor judgment instead of the right judgment. Later, when we analyze the events, we tend to be critical of the things that were done perhaps by us and by others. That's in part due to the fact that we have the benefit of

hindsight and the luxury of time afterward. There will be a time for us to question things, but today I think it's important to focus on saying thank you to those who contributed so much.

In my part of the Kootenays, which fortunately wasn't prominent in the news, we were really lucky to have hundreds of skilled professionals and volunteers. Many people, when they think of the fires, think of areas like Barriere where the whole community was lost. While our hearts in my part of the Kootenays go out to those people who have lost everything, we also have to bear in mind why it didn't happen where we live.

In Nelson-Creston there were thousands and thousands of acres on fire at one time. I believe the total is between 40,000 and 50,000 acres. We had a fire called Kutetl Creek that burned approximately one-third of the West Arm wilderness park. We had fires in Meadow Creek, Arrow Park, Burton and Kuskonook — all at the same time. Now it's clear that when such a large portion of your community is burning, you don't have the luxury of being able to put enough resources on to put out all of those fires. What the Forest Service did was the only rational way to approach it. That was to pick the priorities and to put your resources on the things where people or property were seriously at risk.

There was a fire between Nelson and Harrop that was a little over 12,000 acres at its largest. It was actually between five and seven miles from each community. It carried on for a number of weeks, with people being pretty nervous, understandably, about whether or not if a wind came up one of those communities could have been the subject of a fire like Kelowna. Fortunately, it wasn't. The fact that there was no interface fire in those communities or virtually in any other community in the Kootenays is a great credit to the skill and the decision-making of the Forest Service and the emergency centres.

Recognition should also be given to the many community volunteers who provided outstanding service during those fires. There were hundreds of people who donated in the efforts and who volunteered in the local provincial emergency centre. In Harrop, people like Rick Morley, who is a former conservation service employee, volunteered and helped put together an evacuation plan that was communicated to the community one night at a community meeting I attended. Lynne Betts, another local person, served as a distribution source to provide by e-mail copies of the most current fire information throughout the whole community.

[1540]

Accurate information to all the communities was the most critical thing. Our biggest enemy was rumour and misinformation. People needed to know what was happening, and both the Forest Service and the volunteers helped that information reach them in a way that gave them confidence.

Getting that accurate information was simply critical. In Kuskonook, a little place about 15 kilometres north of Creston, a local pilot, Michael Wigen, volun-

teered some aerial time and did a video of the fire the day there was a public meeting, so the people at the public meeting could actually see for themselves on TV that evening what the fire looked like that day. That sort of information was extremely valuable in helping the community to approach things in a calm and rational way.

Evacuations were rare in Nelson-Creston — only one, at Arrow Park, where the entire community was driven from their homes and stayed out of their homes for a little more than a week. Community support was great. All those people were accommodated. Not a single home was lost, and everyone evacuated was looked after for that entire time.

I know people want the review promised by the Premier to proceed. So do I, and I'll make sure the views of my constituents are heard when that opportunity comes. But today is about recognizing that this was a summer where nature was in charge, and the strategy employed to protect lives and property first was realistic and necessary.

Out of every challenge, we learn something. This summer and the challenge it brought was no exception. What we learned about our communities is the single most important thing. We saw the volunteers perform admirably and the firefighters courageously. We saw them work tirelessly day after day. I know some of the people in the PREOC centre had been working without a day off for over a month.

To all of them, thank you may not be enough, but it's what we have and it's what we should do. What impresses me most is that in saying thanks to all of these people, it's probably more than they would have asked. So thank you to each and every one of the volunteers and the firefighters, and my greatest respect.

Hon. L. Stephens: It gives me great pleasure to rise to pay tribute to the many contributions of people from all across British Columbia as we debate this motion moved by the Premier earlier today.

Really, on behalf of the constituents of Langley, I want to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to all the firefighters involved over this very long, hot summer, fighting fires throughout British Columbia — especially to the 47 members of the firefighters, male and female, from Langley who responded to the call. We are all very proud of you.

Although Langley was very far away from the Okanagan and the Kootenays, our hearts go out to the many families who are homeless, who have lost valuable possessions and are dealing with the trauma disasters such as raging forest fires can produce. Also the many hundreds of community volunteers who worked tirelessly to assist individuals and families who were affected by the fires — they all deserve our respect and admiration for a job well done.

Our Premier visited the affected areas to demonstrate our government's support for those communities. The Premier's tireless efforts with the federal government and numerous visits are ongoing to convince

the federal government of the need for relief dollars for B.C. communities and families.

I join with my constituents and express my appreciation to our Premier for his leadership during this very difficult time, and to various other individuals in our government, particularly the Solicitor General. It was under his leadership that the provincial emergency response program folks and other government agencies, including local governments, handled this massive undertaking with what looked like — to those of us looking on from the outside — military precision. Indeed, without the help of our military forces, the outcome may have been greater loss of life, personal property, valuable forest land and valuable parkland.

[1545]

It was a huge task to coordinate so many, and all of those agencies — including the pilots, the weather personnel, the forest personnel — were magnificent. In many ways we were at war, and to use an old cliché, this was really their finest hour.

I know that at least 47 firefighters from Langley were part of this unprecedented effort, and I'd like to read into the record the names of those 47 who were in the Okanagan or in the Kootenays, and I'm sure there were others that perhaps are not on this list. But from the Langley city fire-rescue, there were Terry Alcombrack, Jamie Burns, Mike Cameron, Murray Campbell, James Clark, Troy Collins, Tony Crawford, Bruce Dundas, Mike Frew, R. Gunn, Brad Hamilton, John Hanson, Murray Hess, Scott Kennedy, Bruce Kilby, Ryan Kilby, J. Kirbyson, Rob Leigh, Gord McGregor, Chris Miley, Brent Morgan, Colin Nystrom, Dave Robinson, Dan Skidmore, Mike Veitch and Barry Vignal.

In the town of Langley: K. Anderson, D. Anline, M. Blair, S. Brewer, R. Clauson, Jim Duncan, Bruce Ferguson, Len Foss, A. Hewitson, M. Kernel, S. Mashi, S. Matterson, Rita Paine, Dave Palmer, P. Prudhome, Rob Sewel, D. Steeple, B. Ulle, H. Vanbroek, D. Witowitch and J. Witowitch.

Once again, on behalf of the constituents of Langley, I want to express our sincere and deep appreciation to the 47 firefighters from Langley city fire-rescue and the township of Langley and all the other women, men, firefighters and the military from across Canada and the United States for your bravery and heroism that was displayed this summer throughout British Columbia in the fire-ravaged parts of our province. Thank you.

R. Hawes: Like those before me, I too rise to put the voices of both myself and my constituents, actually, behind the congratulations and thanks that we would send out to those who worked so hard to stop the terrible fires of last summer.

It wasn't just the communities that were directly affected by the fires that suffered the terrible, terrible consequences. Communities all over the province and families all over the province felt the effect, and some a lot more than others. As volunteers, firemen, policemen and our soldiers pulled together to put themselves in harm's way — very typical of what happens in this

type of an event, where young men and women go forward without regard to their own safety to protect the lives and property of others.... It's very, very typical of what happens in these types of events.

The Mission fire department and the Maple Ridge fire department, like many others around the province, sent volunteers. But I want to speak today just briefly about one that went, and that would be Ben von Hardenberg. Ben was a helicopter pilot who grew up in the Deroche area, near Mission, in my riding. Ben, like the others, answered the call, knew the risks and decided that he would put himself in harm's way to help quell the fires. He flew the buckets of water that many of us watching TV saw so frequently — the image of the firebombers and the helicopters flying over these fires. Every time you would see that, at least personally.... I'm sure just about anyone else who saw it would think about the people who were inside those planes and inside those helicopters and the kind of danger that they had put themselves into and the kind of bravery they were displaying as they just flew mission after mission over these fires.

[1550]

So often in these events, tragedies occur that go beyond just what the headlines say. Ben von Hardenberg was about to get married. He was days away from being married, and he was just flying one of his last missions. Following his marriage, Ben was going to move to Australia to take up a management position. He was tragically killed while flying a mission over one of the fires. For Ben, there isn't going to be a future. For Ben's family, who have been completely devastated by this, and for his fiancée, our hearts must go out. I just wanted to make sure that the memory of people like Ben von Hardenberg is recorded and not forgotten.

These are the types of heroes that fought for us all summer, and tragically, three, including Ben, gave their lives. On behalf of myself and my constituents, our hearts do go out to the von Hardenberg family and to Ben's fiancée, and our thanks for what he did for us and our thanks to all of the volunteers. I think we need to constantly remember that there are those who will give their lives, and we need to make sure they are not forgotten.

D. MacKay: I'm pleased to stand in the House today in support of the motion on the floor. Our Premier has said several times that the greatest resource this province has is its people. At no time in our history as a province has this been more evident than this past summer.

I was appointed to the mining task force made up of 15 members of caucus under the very knowledgeable and competent chair, the member for West Vancouver-Capilano. We were asked to discuss with the mining industry what more we could do as government to bring back the industry. This required a great deal of travel throughout the summer months. We travelled through the interior, down through Kamloops and Ashcroft, Vernon, Merritt and the Coquihalla Highway area. This is where we got our first glimpse of smoke and an indication of what was to come.

We travelled on our next trip through the south-eastern part of British Columbia, where the fires were creating so much havoc. I recall my trip from Banff to Radium Hot Springs. I experienced firsthand what the fires were doing. We travelled through a burned valley and through an area that was still burning. The highway was intermittently opened and closed, and travel arrangements had to be put on hold and moved ahead.

I continued on to Cranbrook, and there was smoke everywhere. After checking in to the hotel, the first thing one noticed was that there were firefighters from all over B.C. and Alberta. T-shirts identified where the firefighters were from. There were fire trucks from all over the province in the parking lot. Thank-you signs were posted on commercial billboards and businesses as well as on private properties. The signs had a simple message: "Thank you, firefighters."

I recall one evening in Cranbrook, where the fires were visible from the parking lot. I filled up my truck with fuel just in case I got a phone call in the middle of the night that said: "You have to leave." I recall standing in the parking lot of the hotel and watching the flames and trees exploding. Residents in Cranbrook continued on with their daily activities. I'm sure the uncertainty was there, but it was not evident.

After we finished in the southeastern part of the province, I travelled home through the Kelowna area and could see the after-effects of that fire and the continuing smoke in the distance. I continued on through Kamloops and up Highway 5 north through Barriere, McLure and Louis Creek.

Having lived in Blue River for years and travelled that road many times, "devastation" is the only word that comes to mind to describe the scene that was unfolding as we travelled north. Homes were gone. Some were left standing. Who knows why. Industry was gone. All that was left of the sawmill was some twisted metal. Jobs were gone, dreams were shattered, and lives had uncertain futures. To add to the uncertainty was the announcement a few days ago that the mill will not be rebuilt.

[1555]

Thousands of firefighters from around the province and this country came to help them in their time of need. The Canadian Armed Forces sent personnel to help. Countless volunteers, police, provincial emergency personnel and other government agencies contributed to the evacuations. There was no loss of life on the ground. However, three died in aircraft, fighting the fires. Our sympathies to the families who lost loved ones in those tragic accidents.

People from the area I represent, Bulkley Valley-Stikine, travelled a great distance to be of assistance. They travelled to help with the firefighting. We had people on the ground and in the air. I'm talking about the pilots and the engineers who keep those things in the air. They were part of the army of people needed to fight the fires.

If I could just get off that and talk on a lighter side for a moment.... My good friend Ray Brakenbury was one of the many helicopter pilots that spent the sum-

mer away from home. Ray is a golfing partner of mine, and his absence took away my opportunity to win as much as 50 cents a round.

Linda Goudy retired from the B.C. Forest Service last year. She was a dispatcher. She was retired, and she went back to work when she was called. She didn't ask any questions; she went back to work. Bob Rowsell, a retired fire boss with the B.C. Forest Service, took a crew called a "ten pack" to assist. Four forest companies from my riding sent crews as well. Pro-Tech Forest Resources Ltd., PRT Summit nursery, Silvicon Service Inc. and Tyhee Forestry Consultants Ltd. were four of the companies that sent crews down.

A very competent district forest manager from the Nadina forest district, Bob Murray, was also called to the southeast fire centre. His duties consisted of ensuring that resources were being deployed to the right fire in the right priority. The key objectives of the resources are (1) the protection of life, (2) the protection of property, (3) the protection of infrastructure such as roads and power lines, and (4) the protection of timber.

This is just one example of how people from my riding assisted. Think for a moment of the planning needed to look after the thousands who faced it and were evacuated. The largest evacuations ever in this province were done with precision. This is a credit to the dedicated public service employees and hundreds of volunteers who assisted them.

What else did we do to help? Well, we prayed in our churches, and we prayed in our homes. We prayed for those whose homes and businesses were at risk, and we prayed for the firefighters that fought the fires.

The Smithers *Interior News* dated September 10 carried an interesting story. It talked about how the individuals and groups across the Bulkley Valley are showing their compassion for victims of B.C. forest fires in a multitude of ways, sending everything from cash, quilts and clothing to prayers, best wishes and letters of support. Special mention was made of Bob and Kathy Allaire of the Crocodile Cafe in Telkwa. They collected truckloads of supplies for those in need.

Another great initiative to raise funds was started by the members for Cariboo North and Cariboo South. They held a beef barbecue, both to raise the profile of Canadian beef and to raise funds for the fire victims. My constituency assistant, Sharon Eastabrook, thought this was such a great idea that she organized a beef barbecue in Smithers. Our mayor, Jim Davidson, the firemen from Smithers and Telkwa and the members of the Bulkley Valley Cattlemen's Association and local service clubs worked for four hours on a Saturday. We raised over \$5,000. Many local businesses also contributed to make this a great event.

In Burns Lake a group of women made quilts for fire victims. A fundraising garage sale at the rod and gun club was held in Burns Lake on September 6, with all the proceeds to go to the Red Cross to help people affected by the forest fires. A poker ride was held on September 14, and the money raised was sent to the Red Cross.

Corwood Timber Products in Houston challenged all businesses and contractors and their employees to donate to the North Thompson Relief Fund at Kamloops. I'd just like to read the short announcement that was in the Houston paper: "We at Corwood Timber Products Ltd. would like to challenge all business and contractors and employees to donate to the North Thompson Relief Fund at Kamloops. The fund is managed in Kamloops and is designed to help the many people who lost their jobs, homes and possessions. We believe Houston is a very fortunate community and is a position to help."

[1600]

"We nearly had the same thing happen to us 20 years ago. The Royal Bank will look after donations. All Corwood Timber employees have donated \$100 each, and the company has matched that amount."

The Premier, in his address at UBCM, promised a review of the 2003 fire season to be completed by February 15, 2004. The Premier promised that the review would be done quickly, independently and thoroughly, and Mr. Gary Filmon, the former Premier of the province of Manitoba, has been appointed to this task. In support of the motion put forward by the member for Kamloops-North Thompson, I would like at this time to say thank you to the firefighters, the police, the public service, the military personnel and the thousands of volunteers who helped strangers in their time of need and who continue to help us to this day.

To the families affected, you should know by now that you are not alone. This is what I meant when I used the words of our Premier when he said that the greatest resource this province has is its people. It is the spirit of British Columbia that makes this the best province in the best country in the world.

Hon. S. Bond: I, too, stand in the House to join my colleagues today in support of this motion. As I stand here and listen to story after story being shared by MLAs from around the province, it's absolutely amazing. This province should feel incredibly proud of the spirit of volunteerism and support that was demonstrated and continues to be demonstrated in the province even today. I want, first of all, to say that I am incredibly proud of the constituents I have in Prince George-Mount Robson and in the communities within my riding who demonstrated incredible service and volunteerism during the last number of months.

I also want to say that the leadership that was demonstrated by the Solicitor General and the Premier was outstanding. I know that during very, very complicated and very busy times for both of them, they made efforts to contact me, since there were some unexpected and unintended consequences in the communities that I represent in this province. You see, the McLure forest fire burned 20 kilometres of B.C. Hydro's right-of-way near Barriere, right through B.C. Hydro poles. What that meant was that two of the large communities and many small communities in my riding literally had no power for weeks.

On August 1, 2003, at about 12:30 in the morning, power went out just prior to the long weekend. One of the things I want to say that made me most proud was that while it was obviously an inconvenience, and we still will pay for the impacts of what happened — and I'll explain those briefly — what was most impressive was that people in my constituency said: "We're not in immediate jeopardy. There are people whose homes and lives and jobs are in jeopardy. Take care of them first, but help us where you can." That is the kind of spirit we have not just in my riding but in the province.

Hydroelectric service was cut from Clearwater through Valemount, through McBride, Mount Robson Provincial Park and all the way to the Alberta border. I want to highlight what an impact, economically, that brought to some of those communities. The long weekend in August is typically the best weekend for tourism in both the Valemount and McBride areas, so many small business owners had brought in additional supplies — food, in particular — to serve the customers that had booked their particular hotels and motels and restaurants.

As you can imagine, the lack of electricity caused significant loss of business traffic. There was no opening in any of the restaurants or the motels, and I can tell you that it is only this week that the mobile generators that were required in order to power up our part of the world are finally being sent back to where they came from. In particular, there were ten diesel generators brought into the North Thompson and Robson Valley areas as interim power sources, which, as I've suggested, are finally going home this week.

[1605]

Two semitrailers with freezer units operated by their own motors were brought in for McBride residents and small businesses to store their frozen foods. A boil-water advisory was issued immediately because the water purification equipment could not operate without power. The provincial emergency program issued warnings that there was no opportunity to purchase gasoline on the Yellowhead Highway between Prince George and Jasper, so the limited service stations that were offering service in Valemount were certainly a challenge for travellers who were stranded, and the potential for that existed for several days.

One of the things that I became aware of very quickly is that while there was a direct and absolutely devastating impact on hundreds and thousands of people in specific areas of the province, there were certainly extended consequences to those of us whose ridings border the geographic area where the fires were the most significant.

I want to tell you that the people in my constituency responded amazingly well. Some of the first outside responders to the fire situation came from the Fraser-Fort George regional district, where firefighters from volunteer fire departments responded quickly and effectively. Local volunteer firefighters pitched in to work on fires. Over four dozen Prince George volunteer firefighters and five fire trucks travelled south to help fight the blazes. Over 50 firefighters from 12 vol-

unteer departments in the regional district volunteered to fight the fires in McLure, the Venables, Naramata, Kelowna and Cranbrook. I can honestly tell you that as I've heard the stories of the number of hours... In fact, a very reasonable estimate would be over 6,700 hours spent volunteering away from their jobs in order to help the other parts of the province of British Columbia.

I also want to extend a sincere thank-you to those employers who allowed the volunteer firefighters from our regional district to be away from their jobs in order to help support the other parts of the province at very difficult times. That is a sense of community spirit and provincial responsibility. We had numerous examples, as have been shared by my colleagues, in terms of the generosity of the people in my communities and in terms of blankets, clothing and all sorts of other items that were needed by the victims. But perhaps one of the most poignant stories was hearing firsthand, as a matter of fact, from one of my colleagues who ultimately ended up in an evacuation centre. She said to me: "The person that greeted me at the evacuation centre that night was from Prince George." I was pleased that someone who we were concerned about was able to be cared for initially by someone from Prince George, and I think that says volumes. I'm hearing behind me that my colleague appreciated that.

I want you to know that while these were difficult times... I'm sure we all share those visuals that we will not forget — watching the television screen in my case, watching only by television. It was horrifying and absolutely tragic. Yet the people of our constituencies, the people of our province, rose to meet the very difficult circumstances. I want to recognize the leadership provided by the mayors of my communities: in particular, Mayor Frazier in McBride, Mayor Townsend in Valemount and Mayor Kinsley in Prince George. They provided 24-hour support for their communities. We worked together to attract the number of generators that we needed. We were very concerned that our industry, particularly our forest industry, was unable to actually operate for a significant period of time. At times as difficult as these, you can imagine that added extra challenge in resource-dependent communities.

The excellence of the work done by B.C. Hydro and Telus has to be mentioned today. They were on 24-hour standby, in contact with my communities and my mayors on a regular basis.

But I think it's the people of Mount Robson who came together. They delivered flyers, they looked after each other, they cared for one another, and despite their own circumstances, they recognized they were not the most in need. They, in turn, then provided support and assistance to those whose circumstances they recognized as being much more challenging.

[1610]

Today I am so very proud to stand in the House to support the motion made by the Premier and to congratulate the people of Prince George–Mount Robson, in particular, for not only enduring circumstances that were challenging for them but most of all for rising

above that, for recognizing the challenges of other British Columbians and thinking first and foremost about their health and their safety.

J. Bray: I'm very pleased to be able to stand up and speak strongly in support of the Premier's motion. We've heard a lot over the last little while about all the heroes that came forth during this incredible period in our province's history. Really, I can't echo it better than the Premier talking about 50,000 residents evacuated and 4.5 million people, the population of the province, looking out for them. It was a tremendous thing as a British Columbian to witness the bravery of the residents and all the heroes, large and small, who emerged over this summer of fire.

Here in Victoria, obviously, we have a large amount of public sector workers and government employees who work here. Given that I'm coming at it from a Victoria perspective, from an area that wasn't directly impacted, I thought I would like to pay special attention and give special acknowledgment to British Columbia's public service — not just the provincial public service, although they were majorly involved but in fact all of those people who work on behalf of British Columbians in the service of the public.

Obviously, when you're dealing with something like forest fires, one of the most present views you see on TV are those brave men and women of the B.C. Forest Service. I don't think there's any question that nobody could have done a better job in fighting these fires than the men and women who work for the B.C. Forest Service. I think they did us all proud in the way they battled hour after hour, day and night, week upon week against at times almost insurmountable pressures from these fires to finally beat those fires back. That shows that those men and women who work for the B.C. Forest Service didn't just step up to the plate during this summer. What it shows is their dedication to training, their dedication to planning and their dedication to their communities year after year. You don't get that good overnight. You get that good year upon year, planning, working, receiving direction from senior officials and learning from past experiences.

My first congratulations and thanks go to the men and women who worked on the front lines for the B.C. Forest Service, because the only reason those forest fires stopped was their excellent training, their incredible hard work and their dedication to their communities. I think they did us all proud in the way they fought those forest fires this summer in British Columbia.

There are some other public servants who were involved in that. Those were the municipal firefighters, those who were employed on behalf of their municipalities, who were there not necessarily to fight the front lines of the actual forest fires and brush fires. They were there to protect property. They were there on their off-shifts. They were calling in and volunteering time, and they were going sometimes out of their catchment area and positioning themselves between the fire and property — people's homes, people's

workplaces, farms. In fact, the member for Kamloops-North Thompson talked about how that fight occurred with property, how they were up to 20 metres between the fire and homes.

I can tell you that there's no question over 300 homes were lost, but because of the B.C. Forest Service, those public servants and those municipal firefighters four times as many homes were saved as a result of their work, their training, their bravery and their dedication. Their impact was immeasurable on the homes, the families and the communities which they served.

[1615]

You know, there was another incredible story that was almost so big I'm not sure people actually understood the gravity of it. That was the evacuation — both the Barriere, McLure and Louis Creek areas and the even larger Kelowna evacuation. I'm speaking about the public servants who work for the provincial emergency program. This is a group that does not get much attention year in, year out. We haven't had a lot of major disasters. This is a group that plans for major catastrophes the best you can when they don't happen. These are groups that work out in our communities, encouraging volunteers, identifying evacuation reception centres and identifying suppliers available to provide the necessities of life during a catastrophe, but because they don't happen that regularly, we tend not to notice their efforts. They work quietly and in some anonymity in our communities, both here in Victoria centrally and around the province.

There can be no question that those public servants who work for the provincial emergency program can take great pride that they didn't just show British Columbia their skill, and they didn't just show Canada their skill. They showed the world their skills, their preparation, their commitment to their communities — the second-largest evacuation in the history of Canada — and it went so smoothly, we almost didn't notice the magnitude. Thirty thousand people at one time in Kelowna were evacuated, sometimes on less than an hour's notice, yet their needs were met. Reception centres were available, and registration for names so loved ones could contact occurred. Distribution of food, prescription medication, care for animals — these all happened without serious glitches. That is an incredible story.

The public servants who work here in Victoria to coordinate the program — the regional managers out in the various areas affected and their volunteer crews, who came together in such an enormous, effective and efficient way — can take great pride in the fact that 30,000 people were evacuated, 30,000 people were served and 30,000 people were able to return home as soon as possible. That is a testament to the men and women who work in the provincial emergency program.

A lot of municipalities were directly impacted by evacuations, by a disruption in service, by the dislocation of families and by the interruption of business, commerce and trade. The resources that municipalities, through their city staff, had to put on standby, had to

mobilize, which had to go above and beyond the call of duty.... That was incredible. Whether it was Kelowna, Kamloops, Barriere or Cranbrook, these communities required their professional, hard-working, dedicated municipal civil servants to respond, and respond they did. Again, they often go without much recognition, and yet when called upon, they didn't just rise to the challenge; they exceeded the challenge. They served their communities with distinction and with honour.

Evacuating people from their homes and directing the mobilization of people is difficult and can sometimes be a dangerous task. The municipal police and the RCMP officers around the province who were dealing with that did so in a caring and compassionate, well-organized manner that ensured the safety of movement and the safety of our population, and is one of the reasons why despite the huge tragedy of these fires, despite the huge areas affected and the huge mobilization, no civilians were injured during this summer of forest fires. In part it is because of the skill, coordination and superior training of our RCMP and municipal police officers.

Lots of power was disrupted. Power is required for all sorts of functions, and those men and women that work for B.C. Hydro again stepped up to the plate, working extra hours, sometimes in rather difficult working circumstances, as I'm sure one could imagine — no complaints, no requests for special favours; instead, a dedication to the public which they serve. The result was getting power restored extremely quickly in most communities and working very hard to install new lines and repair the grid where necessary.

[1620]

There were great volunteers and great heroes. We heard about George Evans in Kamloops, who basically stopped his auto dealership business for two months to raise over \$2 million for the North Thompson Relief Fund. He's getting a lot of attention, and he deserves to, for that kind of work.

We've had great examples from my colleagues here in the House of individuals who have risen to the challenge. But I hope that as we acknowledge the heroes and we acknowledge what worked well, we remember that the cornerstone of the response that occurred this summer was our public service. The years in quiet obscurity doing planning paid off. The hours and hours and hours of each day they worked on execution during this summer paid off. I know that in the months to come, various ministries, various municipal staffs, regional districts — those public servants — will be working to evaluate what occurred in an open and no-holds-barred approach, as the Premier has set out, to ensure that as we learn from this, we evaluate this to improve even further our response to these types of tragedies.

Sometimes in casual conversation people like to refer to a certain stereotype of "government workers." I hope British Columbians will stop for a minute now, look at the people I've mentioned and others have — in the Forest Service, with the RCMP and the police, the provincial emergency program, our city staff — and

see their hard work, not worried about overtime or whether they're union or non-union, which level of government they worked on. They were concerned about their communities. I hope the new stereotype emerges, which is the public servant, the civil servant, who is the cornerstone of our communities, and no more so than when our communities are facing danger.

Hon. R. Coleman: On July 31 I was in Edmonton meeting with the RCMP with regard to issues in and around organized crime when I received a phone call stating we had a fire that might take off on us in British Columbia and interface with a community and put lives at risk. By noon the next day, as the minister responsible for the provincial emergency program, I was actually signing an order to create a state of emergency in the Thompson-Nicola Valley and advising the Premier, in consultation with him, that we were going to have to do this.

By the next day, the Saturday, because of how fires had taken off, we actually created a state of emergency provincewide, because we had fires in a number of areas across the province that were threatening communities.

I've heard a lot of discussion and talk in this debate today about the different organizations that performed at a high level — police, fire, emergency personnel, all those people who actually made us able to react and deal with this thing that the Premier and I were dealing with every single day through the month of August to September 15.

Those people did a remarkable job, and there were some tough decisions made during that period of time — decisions that changed how we will deal with emergencies in the future, decisions that had to be made on the spur of the moment for the benefit and the protection of British Columbians. In my opinion, they were all the right decisions. They were done in a timely manner, because people didn't panic, people understood the issues, and people put people first, rather than anything else, when it came to protecting lives.

In the middle of August we created a provincial fire department, and some people have actually questioned whether we should have done that, because they said that actually put the fire commissioner's office in charge of all the fire equipment in the province. But when you actually have to move 61 different pieces of equipment from different communities across the province because you need them now, you need to be able to coordinate them, and you can't have time to say: "Please, could we have...?" When people's lives are at stake, you make those decisions.

Whether you were the city of Kelowna or the community of Barriere or the cities of Cranbrook or Grand Forks, you all saw fire departments from elsewhere in the province in your communities this summer. When they needed foam and they needed gel and they needed emergency equipment, the emergency program made sure those supplies were there and delivered on time because they had identified all of those things through proper planning well in advance. Those things

were moved in unquestionably because we were in a state of emergency and on behalf of the province of British Columbia.

[1625]

As we moved through this, as you know, we did a number of things. We actually had to evacuate a number of communities and put other ones on alert. We completed the largest single evacuation of people in one night in Canadian history, with the exception of an evacuation in Mississauga, Ontario, where there was a train derailment and a gas spill. But on that one, they were out of their homes for about 18 to 20 hours. In British Columbia 30,000 to 40,000 people were out of their homes for days and, in some cases, weeks while we fought these fires.

It was done in such a way that it was absolutely amazing how well those people were taken care of. Evacuation centres were set up. People knew where the forms were; people knew where the supplies were; people knew where the inventory of homes and businesses and hotels and motels were through a region. It was because of planning and because of our provincial emergency program that we could actually deal with that aspect of the whole incident.

There wasn't a single solitary isolated provincial emergency operation in any single community; there was a coordinated effort across an entire province. We had a provincial emergency program central operation in Victoria that oversaw what was going on in B.C.; made sure that where weaknesses were, we applied staff we knew were experienced to go in and help with those local communities as far as their emergency programs were concerned; made sure the people were moved appropriately and volunteers were managed in such a way that we could deal with feeding them, getting them residential care or assistance and all the emergency social services aspects and creating, frankly, the information that was required for people to know what was going on. At the height of this, the emergency program website alone was getting over 900,000 hits a day from people all over British Columbia and across the country and internationally, wondering what was going on in B.C. and how they could help.

We saw the efforts of fire departments and police officers, who did a remarkable job in every community we asked them to go to. We asked them, at short notice, to leave their homes and go to another community to help police it or go to another community and help fight a fire because we needed their help. We didn't get any push-back from those people. Although it's part of their job, there still was no grumbling, no griping, no anything. It was just: "We have a job to do to protect the people of B.C."

The mistake we make when we go through this is to underestimate the power of the people of B.C. as we went through this thing. The members from the municipality of Kelowna and the members of this Legislature from Kamloops and the North Thompson area will be able to tell you individually about how their communities changed, how their communities actually grew up in August, how the sense of community actu-

ally came back to life in the province and how volunteers one more time stepped up to the plate to do what was needed for their fellow citizens. That was a remarkable part of this thing, the part of it where we see how people can come together to help each other — how if you have it properly planned, you can actually make use of those people resources to give services to other people in your community. Whether it be the Red Cross or the Salvation Army or emergency personnel from any community across the province, we should recognize that.

The member from Victoria mentioned just a minute ago the people in our public service. We have a system in B.C. called TEAMS. We actually have people that give of their time to be trained in emergency response. They go through training on an annual basis and a regular basis so that in a case of emergency, we have people we can mobilize that can run these operations if they're needed. Those TEAMS people were moved from Terrace to Cranbrook, from Vancouver Island to the Thompson-Nicola region. They were from all over B.C., moved in as people that work for government because they were trained and ready to go and help. They were there for hours upon hours upon hours on end. In some cases it was even difficult to get them to go home and get a rest, because they knew there was one more person who needed to be helped or taken care of. It was a remarkable month.

[1630]

There's something else about this incident that I think we must remember, in addition to the people from the Canadian military, the RCMP, our firefighters, our forest fire fighters, our community volunteers, our provincial emergency people. All of them have done a remarkable job. We've also found out there are some things we can be really proud about in British Columbia. One is that there is no question we have the best emergency program of any jurisdiction in this country and perhaps all of North America.

When the Minister of National Defence arrives with his senior staff in Kamloops and says to me, "One of these things we're looking at today is not just what you need as far as the military is concerned and to meet with you about the fires. I really want to see what the best operation looks like, because I've been told as the minister by other jurisdictions across this country that B.C.'s got the best operation going...."

We knew that on 9/11 when we dealt with 6,000 people arriving in B.C. overnight with regard to the whole issue in and around the twin towers in New York. We knew because our people performed. We trained our people this spring, taking into account the auditor general's report on interface fires. We were ready. We actually did our research and our training so we could handle this, and the people at the emergency program — people in Victoria here — were there every single day, for days straight on end.

Something else happened in August, something that doesn't get talked about enough. In one conversation I had at the emergency protection office when I came over to Victoria at the height of the crisis, I said to

the people that were running it: "What else can we do for you? What else do you need from government to make this thing work, when you're coordinating all these things like fire departments and what have you?" They said: "Just keep doing what you're doing. The fact that we have solid, stable, calm leadership at a political level has been the biggest asset in this incident." They knew that the Premier and the Solicitor General were in communication on this incident. They knew that we made a decision. We made a decision for the benefit of British Columbia.

I want to tell the House this: the remarkable leadership shown by the Premier of this province during the month of August during these incidences, I saw personally. I saw personally his commitment to British Columbians. I saw personally his caring about making sure that every individual that was displaced was going to be taken care of. I saw personally the calm, the tough decisions that had to be made and the ability to make those decisions. I can tell you today, after spending August watching this incident, that there is no better leader in the province than the Premier of British Columbia we have today.

He was there. He was enjoined in the discussions, he knew what was going on, and he was there in support of what we had to do. That's so important because, as they said in the same conversation.... They described an incident a number of years ago when a minister and a Premier were actually on a conference call in a night of a crisis, not discussing whether you needed to have a provincial fire department, not discussing where you were going to get the next resources from or giving your staff the confidence to know whether they could make a decision. They were arguing over when the photo op would be — which one of them would get it first. That's not leadership.

Leadership is the ability to stay calm under pressure, make the decisions and allow your people to do the job. In the month of August, that's exactly what we saw from the Premier of this province. We saw that, and that leadership went right down through the system. Every group of people that had to deal with incidents knew the leadership and management style of this government was strong enough to deal with this, calm was there, and we could deal with this incident across the province. That was what happened in August.

In August we saw our communities grow up and come together and volunteerism reinvigorated. We saw what we knew as a government caucus — a leader leading. That's what we should all be proud of. We have to be proud of the people that performed, the firefighters and what have you, but we should also be proud of our Premier and the job that he did in August. I for one, as a colleague, want to say thank you to the Premier of this province on behalf of all British Columbians. You did a job that we all very much needed to be done in August, and it was done well.

[1635]

It's great that we get this opportunity to thank everybody. You know, we'd probably miss somebody,

if we wrote them all a letter, but I think we could just say — to any British Columbian that touched this file, any British Columbian that cared, any British Columbia that so much as sent a donation or some goods, any British Columbian that was there to volunteer at an emergency centre or provincial emergency program or our search and rescue personnel, any British Columbian working for a civil service, our police, our fire, our military, our forest fire fighters — thank you. You did a great job, you did us proud, and we have better communities for your contribution to our society.

K. Stewart: It's rather difficult and humbling to have to speak after the Solicitor General, knowing the great work he did over August, leading the troops and communicating the information that needed to be communicated, and his closeness and the passion with which he dispatched his duties over the month of August. I think he deserves a great round of credit, also, from all of us.

It would be easy for me to say that we were unaffected in Maple Ridge by the forest fires, as Maple Ridge is quite a ways away from where these fires occurred, but that's not the case. Our community was affected greatly by the actions of our local firemen who, per capita, had the highest participation in the fires in the interior of any municipality in British Columbia. I'm truly proud of that.

Not only were the members up and out of their community fighting fires and participating in fires that were somewhat unusual to them — they're mostly domestic and urban firefighters — the forest fire fighting that they did was truly a challenge to their skills, and they came through wonderfully. Again, I was very proud to have the opportunity, at a special ceremony that was actually designed to commemorate a piece of art that was going down for 9/11 but that was expanded to include a tribute to not only our local firefighters but the other emergency service personnel who contribute so much to our communities....

Aside from the fire department from Maple Ridge, there were a number of other community groups that were active in that group, such as the Salvation Army, who sent many of their members up there and also even our Adopt-a-Block group. We had a member, Peter Barnes, who made many personal trips up to Barriere, coming down, collecting whatever he could from the community and organizing truckloads of resources to go up. It was individuals such as that who really, truly make us proud of the volunteerism in our community.

I can go on for hours to talk about the great volunteers in our community. I'll leave that for another time, but I would just like to make note of a personal observation I made as I was going through the canyon on a fire air station of the militaristic precision with which that procedure was taking place. It was astonishing to see the turnaround times on the helicopters as they were coming in, the way the fuel was reloaded, the way the retardants were reloaded and the cycling in which that operation took place. It would be pretty

hard to see planes coming off an aircraft carrier any faster than those helicopters were loading and unloading in the canyon base. It just goes to show, and it just restates what many people have said earlier with regard to the precision and the training that go on ahead of time to make something like this work as successfully as it did.

In closing, I'd just like to again wish that all of those who were put out by the fires can, as quickly as possible, get their lives back together. I'm assured that the resources that are available from the province will be there for these people and that the volunteerism and the spirit will continue for all of us to help those who need our help.

J. MacPhail: I am pleased to rise on the following motion: "Be it resolved that this House recognize the heroic efforts of all firefighters and military personnel who fought and continue to fight the 2003 wildfires, the contributions of volunteers and donors across British Columbia in assisting the evacuees and helping rebuild communities; and the noble determination of those families directly affected."

[1640]

Yes, I join with all of my other colleagues in the Legislature to praise the provincial firefighters, the municipal firefighters, the police forces, the pilots who flew the planes and the families who lost their homes and their jobs. I particularly grieve for the three pilots who lost their lives in the fighting of these forest fires. I think any one of us would say that the provincial firefighters, the municipal firefighters, the pilots — any one of whose photo would have stirred our hearts — could have been brought to the glory of all of us in this province. Those of us who had the chance to meet with these knew the image of determination amongst all of those, which could have been flashed across our province.

I also want to acknowledge.... I hope I'm not offering offence to anyone else by singling out this one member. It's the only member I know who was so directly impacted. I thought the member for Kelowna-Mission, the Minister of Health Planning, was in a very, very difficult situation and offered great solace and actually was a bit of a hero herself in that she was evacuated not once, not twice.... It may have even been three times.

Hon. S. Hawkins: Twice.

J. MacPhail: Twice. She also had to deal with offering solace to all who were affected with her, on camera and in the media. She managed to do it in a way that allowed for solace to be distributed beyond herself and asked for no special privilege and offered assistance to everyone else. For that I join with all of our colleagues in wishing the best for the member for Kelowna-Mission throughout this. She epitomizes what the rest of the community also delivered.

There were community members who raised funds. We've talked about the Red Cross and the Salvation

Army. Chantal Kreviazuk and Cher came to the defence of families and communities affected by this terrible tragedy. George Evans, the car dealership owner in Kamloops who started the North Thompson Relief Fund, has raised, I think, over \$2 million now, along with many who have joined in helping him. He and his fellow volunteers are distributing that money in a very cost-effective way.

What can we legislators do now to collectively honour the many heroes from this summer? I have been thinking about this for a while, and I think there are two things we can do: (1) we can help the victims, and (2) we can protect against this, as much as possible, happening again. On the first point, I hope we can come together at all levels — municipal, regional, provincial and federal — and bring quick help to the victims of the forest fires.

I visited Barriere and Louis Creek and Rayleigh on September 19, a full six weeks after their towns had been ravaged. At that time there was still hope amongst community members and the workers there that the Tolko mill would be rebuilt, and now that is not to be. It's but one example of consequences from the forest fire that will have debilitating and long-lasting effects, from which people may think now they will not survive. It is up to us to ensure not only those towns' survival but also that of the workers and the families there who have had a particularly hard blow in losing their employment as a result of the fires.

But while my heart goes out to every single one who worked at the Tolko mill, I have also learned that there are many, many other businesses who, as a result of the forest fires, may not survive either. As far away as Wells and Barkerville there are businesses who were affected and may not survive because of the forest fires. We must offer quick help to those without insurance, and we must offer quick help to those who face a rebuilding crunch.

[1645]

On the second point, we must, at all levels of government, ensure that it doesn't happen again, as best as we can. We're not able to guarantee against nature, but we do have the ability to put up as much protection as we possibly can to ensure that the future is not the same as the past. We owe that to all of those who will be required to battle again on our behalf. We must ensure that they do have the resources to protect against disaster. There will be lots of opportunity on many fronts in the future to guarantee those resources. There will be many opportunities for all of us to express our opinions on offering that guarantee, and I wish to say to all of those who were so deeply affected — and in so many hundreds of families and dozens of communities that continue to be affected by this devastation — that we will guarantee the resources are there. The opposition joins with all of us in working toward that goal now and in the future.

J. Kwan: I'll be brief in my comments. I think the Leader of the Opposition and members of this House have spoken much about the devastation that people

from Kelowna have experienced — not just people from Kelowna but those in many other communities as well. For all the people who stood out, who worked hard to literally save our communities — the firefighters, the military personnel, the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers who poured their heart and soul to help those who were in need of aid, the people who were directly affected and, as mentioned by my colleague the Minister of Health Planning herself, who has been personally affected in personal ways....

I remember, actually, listening to a small clip on CBC as she was being interviewed. At that moment I was sitting in the rocking chair with my baby, and I was nursing her. I thought to myself: what would I do if I was in that situation? I could not fathom even beginning to gather myself together to know how to act, other than to think: my goodness, the courage that people have and their ability to cope with the most severe stresses at all times — and of the outpouring of British Columbians who stood out to say to those who are affected, "You're not alone," that we will be there and that we stand with you to fight the challenges that are ahead of us....

I think that really epitomizes the one thing that I've always known in my own heart and that makes me proud, and that is to be a Canadian. I think the efforts of everyone who is impacted in this tremendous disaster is showing the Canadian values, what we stand for and who we are. That's what sets us apart.

I was also talking to other people who have been impacted by the Kelowna fire. A fellow named John Powell, who is a resident, and his family have been evacuated three times. Each time he was recounting the situation by e-mail to us, to let us know in terms of what is going on. Thank goodness, he and his family are well and their house has not been destroyed by the fire. But there are many of those who are.... As people working hard to rebuild their lives and to rebuild their community, to know that they are not alone is, I think, a powerful, powerful statement.

[1650]

I can't help but think how doubly devastating the situation must be for those who don't have the insurance or the resources afterwards to rebuild in terms of that simple protection. And those who lost jobs — not only have they lost their homes, but they also lost their jobs. How, again, the tripling of the impacts of the shock of it all....

The lessons, of course, to be learned here are how we can prevent such fires, such situations in the future, and I would have no doubt that there would be much to be learned afterwards. There will be lots of work being done, and I hope when that work begins, every member in the Legislature — everyone — puts their best interest in place and that it is with a focus around how to prevent this from happening again, being completely honest with ourselves in that assessment and that evaluation.

I was thinking about other communities that are also faced with different challenges today across British Columbia — those that may not have faced a fire but

are also faced with devastation, whether it be economic devastation in terms of the downturn in the forestry industry or whether it be the resource sector of the fisheries industry. In those other communities where they, too, are struggling, the spirit of helping British Columbians to overcome these challenges, to help our towns rebuild themselves, to gain strength and not sort of become ghost towns and to just let it pass through these challenges that British Columbians are faced with, we as government, we as legislators, must work together to assist all of these communities to overcome their challenges. Every one of our communities makes up who we are as British Columbia as a whole.

It is in that spirit that I ask the Premier, the ministers and the members of this House to also keep in mind as they work in their own portfolios and in their own areas the impacts of the changes taking place across British Columbia and how difficult those changes have been for some of our communities, especially those that are in the resource sector. I would like to close by simply saying thank you to everyone who stood up to the challenge, to show everyone that united we can face our challenges, and that together we are there for each other. Without that, I don't think we have anything.

It has been said many, many a time that this is how we as a community, as a province — as a country, I would venture to say — are being judged by those who are most vulnerable, those who have faced losses without any fault of their own, those who have challenges in their own personal lives, those who may well be homeless today, those who may be faced with drug addictions in life. For whatever reason people are faced with challenges, we as a society are judged by how well we treat them.

British Columbians have shown how well we could do that job for the community of Kelowna. I would ask all members of this House to take the spirit that has been demonstrated by those who stood up and stepped forward to assist those faced with the Kelowna fire, to extend that spirit to every one of our communities that are faced with different challenges in their lives.

I. Chong: I, too, rise today to support the motion introduced earlier this afternoon by the Premier. As the member for Oak Bay–Gordon Head, some may wonder how it is that my community was impacted. Let me just assure all my colleagues and those who may be listening that, indeed, residents of Oak Bay–Gordon Head were impacted. I heard from so many constituents who called because they had friends or family members living in the area who were evacuated or on evacuee alert.

They wanted to know what was happening, so they called my office wondering if I had heard of any more news or if I had any further update other than what had been reported. There was a lot of anxiety amongst the people who lived in my area. Even one of my part-time constituency assistants had concerns, because her family lived in the Kelowna area. She was finally able

to reach her mother and know that everything was fine, but there were certainly some tense moments.

Even as we sat through and watched our television each night, as we tuned into the various radio broadcasts, as we flipped through the many devastating pictures we saw in the newspapers, none of us in Oak Bay–Gordon Head — none of us — for one moment questioned the abilities of the leadership of our firefighters and our military personnel. Here in the greater Victoria area we did see our military personnel leave for the Kelowna area to help in whatever way they could. It really is truly fitting that we acknowledge their heroic efforts, because their actions are nothing short of exceptional.

[1655]

I also want to briefly speak about the volunteers and the donors across British Columbia and how the residents in my riding of Oak Bay–Gordon Head contributed to that effort. I refer specifically to a fundraising effort held by the Oak Bay Kiwanis Club. As we know, the Kiwanis clubs are volunteer organizations. They approached the Salvation Army and requested the use of their Christmas kettles. All of the Christmas kettles had been put in storage except for one. We gathered with this one Christmas kettle and stood on one of the main streets in Oak Bay — well, there is only one main street in Oak Bay — for several hours, many members taking different shifts. Community leaders also volunteered their time, and I was there and was amazed to see the number of passers-by come by and drop in whatever amount they could. Even young children who had gone shopping came by and emptied their pockets full of change. In one short week over \$10,000 was raised for the Salvation Army B.C. Fire Relief Fund.

I want to pay tribute to the Oak Bay Kiwanis Club and all those others who have contributed so greatly, all the donors who spent their time putting together packages to send to those who were stricken with this wildfire tragedy this summer.

For everyone else who has spoken today, I want to commend them as well — my colleagues, the opposition members — all of us speaking together on one theme, and that is by working together, by reaching out, we all stand together united as British Columbians.

G. Trumper: I am pleased to rise to speak to the motion put forward by the Premier.

The summer of 2003 will be remembered and recalled as a summer that broke many records. The forest fire season will be a memory of tragic destruction and heroic efforts. It will be reflected upon as a time of enormous loss and enormous generosity. As temperatures soared and the rain stopped, the devastation caused by dry conditions, lightning and, in some cases, carelessness led to some of the most uncontrollable wildfires ever witnessed. Such conditions eventually brought a wall of fire towards interior towns and, in some terrible cases, left a path of devastating destruction in their wake.

Our hearts went out to all the businesses and residents who were forced by the fires to evacuate their homes. For those of us watching from a distance, it all happened so fast, but I can only speculate that for those who had to flee their homes, time stood still.

The natural fury was battled by some of British Columbia's bravest men and women, and we owe them all a debt of gratitude. There were many people who worked hard — the police; the Armed Forces; the provincial emergency organizations; the VHF people; the volunteers; the Salvation Army, who took their buses from all across the province to the interior to feed people.

The forest fires that ravaged our province affected all British Columbians in one way or another. Whether they lived in the communities directly affected by the fires or watched in shock from a distance through the media, all British Columbians were aware of the devastation and opened their hearts to raise funds and pitch in however they could. All the fire crews should be commended for the excellent job they did and continue to do in containing the fires.

We saw great good come out of the tragedy of the fires. We saw British Columbians rally around to help their fellow citizens. We saw firefighters and emergency personnel from all corners of the province come together to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, to stop the flames.

I particularly want to talk about the people in my riding. As many of you know, I live in a community that could have and has had a tsunami in the past. When we had a warning some years ago, as the mayor of that time I received many calls of help coming from many communities on the Island. Fortunately, we didn't need it. But we are told that there will be a tsunami sometime.

[1700]

I would like to just speak to the volunteers who worked so hard in our community in my constituency. There were two volunteer fire departments sent to answer the call to help in the battle, although all the fire services, obviously, were on call. From the Errington volunteer fire department Fire Chief Colin Catton, Deputy Fire Chief Andrew Speed, firefighter David Longacre, Capt. Bruce Carpenter, firefighter John Hildebrandt and firefighter Paul Catton fought the interior fires. From the Sproat Lake volunteer department truck No. 49, with Capt. Mike Cann, Capt. Barry Rathburn and firefighter Carla Kulczycki, fought the interior fires as well.

To the men of the Errington and Sproat Lake volunteer fire departments and all the fire departments from clear across the province that helped out in this crisis, thank you. Thank you for risking your lives for all of us, and thank you for showing all of Canada the strength and valour of B.C. firefighters.

The Martin Mars flying water bombers are also critical to B.C.'s forest fire fighting effort. These planes, as many of you know, are kept at Sproat Lake in my constituency. Originally, Flying Tankers Inc. was formed in 1959 by a consortium of forest companies

after experiencing several catastrophic fire seasons. At the time the company purchased the four remaining Mars aircraft in the world from the U.S. Navy and converted them to water bombers by fitting them with 7,200-gallon water tanks. Today there remain only two of these planes in the world, the Hawaii Mars and the Philippine Mars, and we are very lucky to have them right here in B.C. I'm sure many of you probably saw them flying on television if you were not in the interior.

It is a dangerous job. Thank you to the Mars pilots, who bravely delivered water to fires as requested and for their further heroic efforts in cases such as the fire they spotted on the way home from fighting fires in Osoyoos. The fire at the UBC Malcolm Knapp research forest could have been much worse if not for the keen eyes and quick action of the two water bomber pilots. The pilots dumped three loads of water and extinguished the fire once they received authorization over the radio from the coast fire centre in Parksville.

Killin and Wall work for Flying Tankers, a private company based in Port Alberni that is contracted by the Ministry of Forests. Thank you again to the brave pilots and firefighters for all your efforts in keeping all of British Columbia safe.

In my constituency also, we have had two fundraising pancake breakfasts — one in Qualicum and one in Port Alberni. The funds have gone to the northern interior fire victims and also to the Salvation Army, and over two Saturday mornings we have raised approximately \$8,000. The Kiwanis in Port Alberni sponsored the pancake breakfast, as well as one of our grocery stores in town, Quality Foods. In Qualicum, Quality Foods once again helped to volunteer all the things we needed for the pancake breakfast in concert with the community, which put on the pancake breakfast with about three days' notice.

Clear across the province donations of money, food, clothing and other basic belongings are being collected and delivered to the victims of the fires. As of October 3 there were 290 active forest fires still burning throughout B.C., and a total of 264,153 hectares had been burned. This fire season will certainly be remembered for its devastation to the towns, businesses, homes and jobs of so many British Columbians. Our deepest sympathies are extended to those who lost so much, and our heartfelt gratitude is extended to all who gave so much.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Hon. S. Hawkins: It's a tough, tough thing to talk about, having been through it, but I must say I'm very proud to stand up and speak to the Premier's motion. I have never been more proud to live in this province or in my community. Since the Premier called the state of emergency on August 1, I have personally found so many heroes and just incredible citizens across this province, and I want to add my thanks as well.

[1705]

I've listened to all my colleagues talking about the heroes and volunteers and supporters and the acts of

generosity that have come from communities around the province, and I can tell you as a recipient of those acts, we're just overwhelmed by the support. I can't say how much I appreciate the citizens of your communities that came out and helped communities like mine while we were going through that horrific, horrific experience.

I want to thank the firefighters. I want to thank our Kelowna fire department under the leadership of Chief Gerry Zimmerman. Sixty-one communities sent firefighters. They sent trucks and equipment. Just to see them lined up around the fire hall or in staging areas around the community.... It was just awesome knowing that there were so many people coming to volunteer to fight our fire. I think at one point there were over 2,000 firefighters in our area, including the army. That was just incredible.

The Canadian military. I can't say enough about the military. What was really touching was the men and women that came out and said they felt so proud that they could actually serve in their own country. Some of these had served in Bosnia and Afghanistan and other places. The community just adopted them and looked after them. There were wonderful things given to the firefighters and the soldiers. I remember going on the radio and saying that they really liked our Okanagan fruit, because somebody had delivered a box of apples and peaches to the army camp. Next thing you know, I was getting this call from Colonel Cyr saying: "Did you arrange for this?" I said: "I know a few of us mentioned that the soldiers like the fruit." He said: "We have got boxes and boxes of peaches and pears and fruit." The community really, really supported and appreciated what the military did.

The B.C. Forest Service. I can't say enough about our public service, our forest protection branch and, certainly, the incident commander Brian Kempf, who was there for a month and was the commander of the Okanagan Mountain fire. I went up in the helicopter with him a couple of times to see what was happening and certainly, after 238 homes were taken out by the fire, to see the extent of the damage. He just happened to mention his father was Jack Kempf, who was an MLA who served in this House. His father died recently. He said: "You know, I would really have liked to have gone to his service, but I was here with the fire." He couldn't even find the time to go to his dad's funeral service. I just thought, boy, the commitment of our public service to stay and help us out at a time when they had things going on in their lives was very touching. I have to say how much I certainly appreciated the leadership he showed during the fire.

To the retired Forest Service people that came out and helped.... I met another one, a fire centre manager who retired three or four years ago — Gary Munro, who came out. He came out of retirement — he's from the Cariboo; I think he lives up at Williams Lake — and just served in such a critical role in coordinating between the fire service and the Kelowna fire department. I can't say enough about the professionalism of these people that came out of retirement to help us.

To all the members of the emergency operating centre, the people in our city who took that leadership role.... I know I'm going to leave out names, so I'm not going to mention names. They know who they are. They showed such incredible leadership and organization in looking after us, in setting up the evacuation centres. Believe me, I was down there. I think I registered twice because I was evacuated twice. Then during each evacuation we had to go and re-register. First we were out for three days, and then it was five days, and then it ended up being a week. We had to keep going down there, but they were so caring and supportive, and they met all our needs. They looked after us in such a professional way. These were all volunteers, as my other colleagues have pointed out — people from around the province. They were either holidaying in Kelowna, or they came with St. John Ambulance, or they came with the Salvation Army, or they came with another non-profit or agency to volunteer. I met people from everywhere — from Burnaby, Prince George, Chemainus and Williams Lake. They were there helping us. They were certainly a big part of the successful effort in looking after people in Kelowna.

[1710]

Certainly, about the provincial emergency program, I can't say enough. I was a recipient, again, of the kind of management, organization and services they provided to the community as we went through this very trying time. From every organization that had contact with the provincial emergency program, I heard that we have — bar none — the best program in the country. I'm sure other provinces and other communities, which hopefully will never have to go through what we did — but if they do, emergencies like that — can learn from our program.

To the RCMP, the ambulance and certainly our interior health authority.... I can't tell you how much stress and strain they were under. They were not only looking after us in Kelowna, but they had other communities where there were interface fires, like Kamloops and Barriere and Louis Creek and Cranbrook. Our health authority was fighting on a whole bunch of fronts, and I can't tell you how well looked after and how comfortable and safe we felt that we actually had those health services in place, and that they were there and there was a plan. I know that there were evacuations of a couple of seniors' homes. There was certainly identification of people at home that needed help, and they were identified and looked after. It was amazing, the efforts and the leadership that the interior health authority showed.

I certainly want to acknowledge the leadership of our mayor and councillors and the mayors and councillors of all the communities who faced this crisis. I want to say they certainly were there supporting their communities and the citizens, and it made all the difference to have that kind of leadership. I know a bunch of the councillors in my community were evacuated with me, so we sort of went through all of this together.

The churches and the temples also contributed. It was just wonderful. Trinity Baptist Church actually set

up an evacuation centre and housed people in the church. It was an absolutely heart-warming experience to go in and see what the church was doing and how that parish got together and helped people in need.

To our school district and our university college, Okanagan University College, for their assistance.... The school district helped in giving Kelowna Secondary school as an evacuation centre, and certainly the university offered accommodation if it was needed.

The corporate and business community. I can't say enough, and there's too many to mention. I know a lot of them have been mentioned here this afternoon. They just came out in spades. The donations were overwhelming. I remember going down to Skyreach Place. We had three formal evacuations set up the night that 30,000 of us were evacuated, and there were cots in Skyreach Place. That's where we play our hockey games. Somebody came with 100 pillows around 11:30 or midnight, when I was there, for the people that were sleeping there, and it was just 100 brand-new pillows. It was really nice to see that kind of support from our corporate and business community, who really show that they're good community partners and certainly come out when the going is tough and the community needs them.

To the media, I was very, very impressed. They worked around the clock to get out the critical and, I have to say, life-saving information. They kept our community well-informed in such a beneficial way. I have to say we are all so grateful for the way that the Kelowna firestorm was covered, and certainly for the 24-hour, round-the-clock services that some of the radio stations and the TV station provided. The media also started the Yellow Ribbon Campaign across the interior and the Kootenays, and that money really has been raised to help the families in need. It's been a wonderful initiative by the media.

Again, from all of my colleagues and certainly from the Premier, I've heard so many stories of heroism, of generosity and of support. You know, in the middle of us going through this crisis in Kelowna, a group from Alert Bay delivered 25,000 pounds of salmon that were caught by native fishermen and processed and shipped to Kelowna. I think they pulled that all off in a matter of a couple of days, because they wanted to give something to make us feel better, to help us. We were just absolutely overwhelmed by their generosity, because we know that people on the North Island are going through a pretty tough time themselves, and for them to reach out and touch us in such a wonderful, caring way was really quite touching.

[1715]

I also want to thank all the communities who reached out and supported those of us who were going through one of the most frightening experiences of our lives. Again, I don't think there was one corner of the province that didn't reach out and help the areas. I believe there were eight communities that were undergoing the experience of what we call interface fires, where the wilderness interfaces with communities.

I had the privilege two weeks ago to attend the Kamloops "Fire on the Mountain" concert, where I met many of the artists who came out to help and raise money for the victims of the fire. I met many of the people who had lost homes in Barriere and Louis Creek. You know, they lost everything, but they showed this exceptional resilience and courage, and they were committed to making sure that they were moving forward and rebuilding their lives.

I certainly had the privilege of meeting George Evans, who is an auto dealer who helped raise over \$2 million for fire relief efforts in the interior and in the Kamloops area. I met ordinary citizens who stepped up in, I would say, most extraordinary ways. They are all my heroes.

I met the widow of one of the air tanker pilots. I met her and her children at the concert. It's been mentioned that we did lose three firefighters. I have to say these are very brave and heroic people. They stepped up to protect us and to help us, and they gave up their lives and saved our homes and our lives. I have to say that when I did meet the widow and her children, it was very, very emotional. Here is someone who gave up his life to help us. I have to say my heart goes out to those kids and to the families who lost those firefighters.

To all my colleagues in this House: the phone calls, the e-mails, the reaching out to us and saying, "Is there anything we can do?" meant so much because it came, again, from everyone in this chamber. The Leader of the Opposition called, and I have to say it was one of the few times where it was good to hear her voice. The caring and the concern for us were very much appreciated, and I know she passed on the message from her colleague as well. It meant a lot to hear from everyone in this House. I know your thoughts and prayers were with us.

The Solicitor General. I was on vacation when the fire started, and the first call I got — or maybe I made it, or maybe he called me; I can't remember — was talking to the Solicitor General. He kept me informed for a couple of days. When the fire took a run and was close to homes, that's when I decided after a couple of days I needed to be home. He was always there for us. He kept me well-informed. If there was something that needed to be done immediately, that needed his immediate attention — in my mind, anyway — he took my calls. He made sure it was done. His leadership and caring have not gone unnoticed.

It's been mentioned about the Premier's leadership. I have to say how solid that was through our whole time, and that's from personal experience. He had a solid commitment to all of us who were affected. Whatever we needed, he said, would be there for us, and I have no doubt that's exactly what happened. He kept that commitment. His visits around the province showed his caring and his support for us. It really lifted us. I mean, there were days when we were under such thick black smoke, and this fire was raging, and in the evening that's all you could see — just these towering flames 200 and 300 feet in the air. You really did feel all

alone at times and wondered how you were ever going to get through this. Then we heard the Premier was coming, and he would do the tour.

Honestly, going out in cafes and restaurants — I was staying in a hotel and with friends at first — it meant a lot to people to know that the Premier was there, because it told us that the rest of the province was behind us too. It made us feel like we were going to get through this, that there was a lot of support. As the Premier said, 50,000 of us were evacuated, but 4.1 million people were there to help and support us. I can't tell you how much that meant.

[1720]

It's really hard to describe what we went through. We had this firestorm that ravaged our community, that took out 238 homes, that left people with immeasurable losses. We really did feel like a community under siege. We had military there, we had air tankers, we had helicopters, and we had up to 2,000 firefighters — and again, choking smoke and heat. It was really overwhelming at times. I have to say that the second time I was evacuated, I was out of town yet again. I don't think I'm going to leave the community again during the summer.

I remember driving out of the gate of my community and looking across at homes across the road and seeing six big trucks. One was from Surrey, one was from Chemainus, and I can't remember where the other ones were from. There were the firefighters across the road, hosing down homes and setting sprinklers on the roofs. The fire was coming over the ridge. At that point I thought: that's it; it will take us out today sometime. Miraculously, they held it back. Two days later it rained, and we could get back into our homes.

It was an absolutely difficult time. But I have to say for everyone involved, for everyone who helped, for all the volunteers, for all the firefighters, for all the emergency services personnel, it was superbly managed. The night we were evacuated — 30,000 of us.... I went to one of my best friend's home. We didn't know where we were going to go. All of a sudden the call is on the radio, and we are evacuating almost, I think, as far as the airport in Kelowna. People were just streaming out of their homes. The media stepped up to the plate and offered 24-hour coverage and told us where we could go. Anyway, we were sent as far as Merritt, Vernon, Salmon Arm and Kamloops. Kamloops, which was dealing with their own crisis, took in people from our community.

It really does tell me that this is a wonderful, caring place to live, where so many people stepped up to the plate. The people who had jobs to do did their jobs, the people who volunteered came out in spades for us, and everyone in the province is to be commended for the support they've shown. Certainly, our public service has proven to be exemplary. I want to commend everyone who was involved in the fire efforts. They certainly are all my heroes.

Hon. J. Murray: I'm very proud to also speak to the Premier's motion. I'd like to convey my heartfelt sym-

pathy for the hundreds of British Columbians who lost their homes, their properties and businesses to the fire and also to the families of the three pilots who lost their lives working to protect others.

What did we learn? I think we learned that our communities are resilient. Our communities stepped up to the plate in a way that impressed us all. What we've been hearing from our MLAs here today is that this situation of the fires in the North Thompson, the Okanagan, the East Kootenay, the West Kootenay and other areas touched all of us in all parts of the province, and the communities responded. They responded from the north to the south, the east to the west.

The communities that were affected responded — the donors, the volunteers, people in local governments. People responded by sending their fire equipment and their firefighters from all over the province. I would like to acknowledge the leadership of the fire chief in New Westminster, Mr. Carl Nepsted, who also sent equipment and a number of volunteers from the New Westminster fire department.

We learned that our communities are resilient, and I want to particularly acknowledge the people in the communities most affected and the way they supported each other and the way they pulled together and made true communities out of their cities and towns.

We also learned that the civil service is resilient. Premier Campbell has long talked about the importance of a professional civil service in British Columbia. He's talked about what an asset that is to our province and where we're trying to go as a province with our new era of hope and opportunity — the critical role that a professional public service plays in that. That was demonstrated amply this summer with these fires. Different ministries worked together in incredible ways. Ministries that normally have very separate tasks and very separate objectives pulled together and were achieving results and providing that heroism we're all so grateful for. There were the firefighters and the provincial emergency program people, but there were also civil servants from a number of other ministries that pulled together to assist.

[1725]

I would like to acknowledge that many of the members of my ministry — Water, Land and Air Protection — were key members of the team that were working to prevent some of the tragedies, some of the problems, and working to assist with them. So, for example, we had air quality specialists deploying monitoring equipment near the interface fires in the interior because of the potential impact on people's health, and to be able to provide information so people could protect their own health.

Our stewardship regional managers and staff worked directly with the Ministry of Forests experts. They were part of the technical teams, they were in the fire strategy rooms with the Ministry of Forests, they were in overflights with the ministry, and they worked as a team to identify where resources should go so they could make the most difference to protecting people, their property, and our parks and infrastructure.

In fact, some of my ministry staff people were evacuated from their homes as well. I've heard stories of ministry staff in the strategy rooms with their Ministry of Forests colleagues, planning how to deploy resources, who were pulled out and went back home to help their families evacuate.

In any endeavour, there are the visible and then there are the many, many behind them that support their effectiveness. I just want to make sure we have a clear thank-you and appreciation for all the members of our civil service that were part of this initiative — in a support role, in a front-line role, in any role they played — because so many of them contributed.

We learned that our parks are resilient. We had about 19 parks that were affected by fires this year, four with large areas burned — over 68,000 hectares of park area, park forests were burned — and of course we had the very distressing burning of the trestles in the Myra-Bellevue protected area. That was a moment that I will certainly remember.

Once the Kelowna fires hit, I was in frequent communication with the ministry staff. When I heard the trestles were at risk, I was very distressed and very appreciative that the Ministry of Forests, the emergency people and my ministry had decided that protecting the trestles was a priority and resources would go towards that. I know they did everything in their power to do that.

The trestles are something that are a monument, a tourist attraction right across the continent, and I know that people on the east coast of the United States, when they hear about British Columbia, know about the trestles. That's been a very important part of our tourism economy in the Okanagan but also a very important contribution by community members who have volunteered their time, their commitment, their hearts to restore those trestles over the past few years and to offer them to the public for the visits of biking and walking that they allow. So I was pleased to hear that there are discussions underway as to what can be done to restore the trestles, and I'll be supportive in any way I can in that initiative.

We also know that nature is resilient. Now, these fires have to do with a drought that we're experiencing in British Columbia. We've had low snowpacks, we've had low rainfall, we've had hot temperatures, but already the rains are starting to come. We have a nice rainy evening here in Victoria this evening, and nature is resilient.

We will recharge our groundwater, we'll recharge our lakes and streams, but we need to be aware that droughts may come again. We may have that convergence of climatic factors again, and so the critical thing is that although nature is resilient, we as communities have to be resilient and respond to the challenges of reducing our water use.

[1730]

I know the Premier has said this to British Columbians in open cabinet. He's looking to see each individual find ways that they can reduce their waste of water so that we are using our water resources as carefully as

possible, which are shared between industry, communities — clean drinking water — fish and nature. Although nature is resilient, it needs our help, and we need to conserve water and do that in a way that is more consistent, more creative and more thorough right across the province.

Lastly, I want to say that British Columbians are resilient. As the parks begin to recover from these fires — and they will.... Fires are a natural part of our ecosystems. Although these fires were much more intense than we normally experience, these ecosystems will heal. There'll be new shoots; there'll be new growth. There will be new food for deer and wildlife populations within a few months. The flora and fauna will come back.

British Columbians are resilient. We have a new understanding of our links to nature and our vulnerability to the environment around us. We have new friendship bonds out of these experiences. We have a new sense of community right across communities around the province. We will have new homes in the areas that have been burned and new businesses. So this experience — as difficult, trying and traumatic as it has been for so many people — has taught us that British Columbians are resilient. It's an incredible province, and we have the strength, the connectivity and the communities that make us a jurisdiction like no other.

I share the Premier's pride in British Columbia and British Columbians, and I want to add my voice to my colleagues' who are expressing our appreciation, our thanks and our deep sense of honour at being part of this great province.

P. Bell: I, too, am very proud to stand and speak in favour of the motion today.

I think all of us in this province were somehow impacted, or we knew folks that were impacted by the fires of this summer. For me, one of the more memorable times of the fires was speaking with my sister, who lived quite a distance away from the centre of the fires but in the community of Kelowna. She runs an equestrian centre in Kelowna and normally houses about 20 or 25 horses. She had been the receiving stable for many of the horses from the Kelowna area and had about 50 horses in her equestrian centre at the time.

When I called her, she said that she'd made the decision to move them all again because it was unsafe where she was located. She was quite some distance from the fires, and yet houses just two or three miles away from her had been evacuated. So they loaded up all the horses again and had to move them. You forget about those impacts. You don't think about the impacts on different types of animals, whether it be horses or farm animals, as well as people.

Certainly, it was just a terrible time for everyone in the Kelowna area, but as many members of this House have said, everyone really came together. I think the thing that was most impressive was the fact that people from throughout British Columbia had come together and showed an overwhelming response to the people of Kelowna, Kamloops, Barriere and Louis Creek and

all of the areas throughout the province that were impacted by these fires.

I actually had an experience that was quite an interesting one. I was speaking with some folks in Mackenzie, which is located in the northern part of my riding and would probably be at least 400 miles from the nearest fire, and yet they felt very impacted by the fires as well. As a result of that, the Baba Nanak Sikh Temple in Mackenzie put together a collection, and I have here a cheque for \$2,500 from the Sikh temple in Mackenzie. They've asked that I direct this cheque to the North Thompson Relief Fund Association. That's all the folks in Barriere that were impacted by the fire.

[1735]

I just think that's tremendous for a community that far away, in Mackenzie, to feel that close to the people of Barriere. They know the challenges, because they are folks who work in the sawmills of Mackenzie — very hard-working folk — and they understand that the folks in Barriere have just been devastated. I personally would like to send my thanks to all of the members of the Sikh temple in Mackenzie and particularly president Jarnail Singh Kaila, because I think for them to come forward with this type of donation is just fabulous.

Truly, all the people of British Columbia have come together — 334 families without homes anymore, lost. Three lives — absolutely devastating, the impacts to all of those families. I know our hearts all go out to those families. So, a terrible summer, one that we will never forget, one that we need to learn from, one that will continue to challenge us as we move forward into the future. Certainly, it demonstrated the ability of all British Columbians, of volunteers throughout British Columbia, to come together.

Just finally, if I may, I wanted to mention that there were many volunteers from my riding of Prince George North who went down to fight the fires. Particularly, I'd like to mention Russell Perry and all the volunteers from the Pilot Mountain fire department who took their equipment and went down to the Ashcroft area, actually, and fought fires for quite a period of time. Russell said something that was very interesting to me. He said that in the past, it has been a challenge for volunteer fire departments to work side by side with professionally paid fire departments, and he said that just did not exist in this situation. Everyone understood the impact of the fires, and volunteers and paid firefighters alike were standing shoulder to shoulder fighting these blazes and supporting one another.

It really was unprecedented, I think, in terms of bringing British Columbians together. I'm very proud of the efforts displayed by all British Columbians and certainly the Pilot Mountain fire department in particular and all the volunteers that went from Prince George down to the Okanagan and Kamloops areas to fight those fires — a tremendous display of effort on the part of everyone, and certainly my thanks. I believe this House will pass on its thanks to the Sikh temple in Mackenzie as well.

D. Hayer: I would like to support the Premier's motion related to the devastating fire season we have just experienced. Over the summer I have been to most of the fire-ravaged communities both before and after the devastation. My heart goes out to those who lost homes and memories in the blaze. I also offer heartfelt condolences to those who suffered human tragedy, as three people did die fighting our fires this season. To the families of these brave three — two who died in the crash of a water bomber, and the helicopter pilot — I want to say how sad I am that they had to give their lives in trying to help others.

In June I took part in the rural community summit, and we visited a number of small towns and villages. Among them was Clearwater, in the heart of the fire-ravaged Barriere-Louis Creek area. What a difference I found between the June visit and when I returned to the North Thompson area just days ago. The devastation was remarkable.

I was also in the South Okanagan and even in the East Kootenays, and again I witnessed the awesome power that a forest fire can unleash on the unsuspecting community. While there was a great tragedy in all these communities and for those families who lost brave pilots who paid the ultimate price, I want to say how much I admire all those men and women — the firefighters, the police officers, the Canadian Armed Forces, the regulars and reservists — who were on the fire lines, who put themselves in harm's way to save homes and the forest wildlife and the recreation areas. I feel an overwhelming gratitude to them, and they are certainly heroes who deserve everyone's highest praise.

I also want to comment on the outpouring of assistance from all across Canada and from all walks of life for the victims of the fire. Those donations, as we heard this morning, also cross all cultural and ethnic lines. There have been thousands of Canadians who have given goods and financial assistance to the 50,000 people who were evacuated during the many fires.

[1740]

In my own community of Surrey, in addition to the courageous Surrey RCMP officers and the Surrey firefighters who answered the call for help, like many other Sikh temples in B.C., the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple of Surrey-Delta contributed to the relief. Guru Nanak Sikh Temple of Surrey donated a five-ton truck full of new clothes and 6,000 pounds of non-perishable food and kitchen supplies.

Also headquartered in Surrey is the North American Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee of B.C., representing most Sikh temples throughout B.C. It is also raising \$100,000 towards the rebuilding of the historic Myra Canyon trestles as a gesture of financial goodwill toward the heritage and history of Canada.

Finally, I want to recognize all the volunteers who worked so hard to try to return a sense of peace and well-being to the fire-stricken people of British Columbia.

R. Stewart: I rise to support the Premier's motion that this House recognize the heroic efforts of all fire-

fighters and military personnel who fought and who continue to fight the wildfires, the contributions of volunteers and the donors across British Columbia in assisting the evacuees and helping rebuild our communities, and the noble determination of those families who were affected.

My work as an MLA actually took me to Kelowna the week after the worst of the fire damage was done to that community. I was able to see firsthand so many aspects of this tragedy. I saw the devastation of the interface fires, and I saw the spirit of that community. I saw the burned-out neighbourhoods, and I saw the thank-you signs and yellow ribbons posted all around town, recognizing the tremendous efforts of police, firefighters, emergency personnel, Armed Forces and volunteers.

I saw the crews from all across the province descending upon these suffering communities to offer assistance. I had a chance to speak with victims, with municipal and forest department fire officials and with volunteers. I saw the Minister of Health Planning, herself an evacuee, as she spoke earlier, working with community groups and volunteers to support those who needed help.

In all, fire departments from 61 communities across the province contributed personnel and equipment to the fire-ravaged communities in the centre of our province. Coquitlam, for example, sent four dozen firefighters in shifts over 21 days, manning one fire engine and one support vehicle. I know many of those local firefighters, like hundreds of others across the province, worked ten- to 14-hour shifts per day helping douse the flames and protect the people and property of these communities.

I want to acknowledge all of the emergency personnel and volunteers who did so much for these communities, and of course I'm very proud of the work of our own firefighters in Coquitlam — dedicated firefighters like assistant chiefs Bertran, Boechler, Dutton, MacLeod and McPhillips; captains Bowlen, Boyer, Collins, Cook, Hamilton, Levinsky, Lougher, Radonich, Ross and Turncliff; and firefighters Aspenall, Barber, D. Barron, Bourassa, Bridge, Clift, Copeland, Fox, Gates, Gill, Gillespie, R. Gordon, Hurzin, M. Lunden, MacKenzie, Marshall, Martin, McCabe, McNulty, Mulligan, Nygard, Nyhaug, P. Olson, J. Robinson Sr., Sheriff, Skucas, Thomas, Vachon, Van Hove, Visscher, Weisner and Wyatt. I take my hat off to these dedicated firefighters, and I thank them for their selflessness and heroism.

[1745]

There were, of course, many other people in this province who made contributions large and small to fight these fires and to help those families who suffered from evacuation or the loss of their homes and belongings. There were people who donated goods and money to the relief efforts. There were the Rotary Clubs across the province that chipped in to help. There were service clubs like our local Lions Clubs, who held a fundraiser in my riding to aid in the relief efforts; Kinsmen and Kinette clubs; and church groups

like the Sikh temple that the member for Surrey-Tynehead spoke about a few moments ago.

A great many people and organizations chipped in to help people they didn't know, simply because those British Columbians needed their help. I thank them all. I recognize the heroism of those who put their own lives on the line to save so many other lives and so many homes. I thank the Lord that no civilians lost their lives in this horrible summer fire season. My heart, though, goes out to the families of the three fire-fighting personnel who did lose their lives this summer, at the same time as I am thankful that some 8,600 personnel who fought these fires returned home safely. They showed their courage, their skill and their endurance. On behalf of the people of Coquitlam-Maillardville, I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

V. Anderson: It's a privilege today to stand in this House and join with others in the prayers that people of all faiths have shared in these days with those who have gone through the fire of 2003. One of the realities when disaster strikes is that we learn we are not alone in the world in which we live, that we are a part of a big neighbourhood — a neighbourhood that stretches not only in the community of which we're a part but across the province and across the nation. Indeed, it's a community that stretches around the world. I think, in the days to come, the people in British Columbia who have felt the tragedy, fear and survival of these days will be surprised to discover that, from around the world, they will hear people who will come and bring them greetings and say, "We were there," because through the miracle of television, the whole world was in those neighbourhoods as those fires took place.

I remember that a few years ago when the church I was in burnt down, it was only the next week that people within the congregation got word from people in Germany that they had watched the church burn down. It's a small world in which we live, and it's helped us to remember that in this world, there are people who care in every land of the earth and every community of which we're a part. So the opportunity that we have to join in prayer, in sacrifice and in sharing with one another the wonder of the world in which we live is an important aspect that is brought home to us so often by tragedy.

It's strange how it comes about that when we're busy and happy and satisfied, we go our own way, but when tragedy strikes, we come together. We come together to share with one another our faith in common faiths, our faith in each other, our faith in the community and our faith in the neighbours, who prior to this we may not have known by name, but they come and stand side by side. I think this afternoon we have had an expression, from those who lived through this catastrophe, of the growth that has taken place. We will need that strength in the days ahead, because as difficult as the fire was for many families, the greatest difficulty is yet before them as they try to rebuild. It's one

thing to rebuild a house; it's another to rebuild a home. It's one thing to rebuild a community, but it's another thing to have to leave that community without anything in your hands and go someplace else, to a strange place, and start all over again.

Our prayers go with those whose difficulty is yet before them. They've survived, but they'll be survivors for some time to come. I want to thank all those in this House who have shared their faith, their experience and their neighbourliness, and give thanks to all those who gave all that they have that we might share together in our communities.

Deputy Speaker: Members, the question is the motion moved by the Premier: be it resolved that this House recognize the heroic efforts of all firefighters and military personnel who fought and continue to fight the 2003 wildfires, the contributions of volunteers and donors across British Columbia in assisting the evacuees and helping rebuild communities; and the noble determination of those families directly affected.

[1750-1755]

Motion approved unanimously on a division. [See *Votes and Proceedings*.]

Hon. G. Collins: I move this House stand recessed until 6:30 p.m.

Motion approved.

The House recessed from 6 p.m. to 6:31 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Hon. B. Barisoff: I call committee stage on Bill 36.

Committee of the Whole House

BUSINESS NUMBER ACT

The House in Committee of the Whole (Section B) on Bill 36; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 6:33 p.m.

On section 1.

The Chair: Minister for Deregulation, I believe you have an amendment on section 1. I'd like to pass the amendment first, please.

Hon. K. Falcon: I move the amendment to section 1 that is in the possession of the Clerk.

[SECTION 1, by deleting paragraph (c) of the definition of "business information" and substituting the following: (c) the mailing and delivery address of the entity;]

Amendment approved.

The Chair: The member for Saanich South, I believe, was standing. Member, what section would you like to refer to?

S. Brice: Mr. Chair, I take your advice on this. I had stood because I thought the Chair was calling the range of sections. My comments and questions are of a general nature, so if there's an amendment coming to the floor, I'll wait for my questions.

[1835]

The Chair: Member, we probably should deal with that in section 1, if you'd like to stand up and make your statement.

On section 1 as amended.

S. Brice: I'd like to just ask the minister, if I could, how this piece of legislation actually works on the ground, as far as businesses are concerned, and how businesses will actually get on the program.

Hon. K. Falcon: Thank you for the question. This is actually a continuation of our streamlining of red tape for small businesses throughout the province. What happens now under the current approach is that if you're trying to register your new business with the government of British Columbia, you are required to register through a whole number of different agencies — federally, provincially and even locally. The Business Number Act will allow you to be given one single business identifier. It will be the number provided through CCRA, or the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. That number will be the number you use for all your interactions with the multiple government agencies you deal with. So it will be a significant streamlining effort. It will reduce a lot of time and inconvenience for small businesses having to keep track of multiple numbers that they're required to deal with through multiple ministries and different levels of government.

It will be a significant improvement over what we have now, and, most importantly, it can be done from the convenience of the office or home of the individual so that it is no longer in accordance with the hours the government happens to be open. In fact, you could undertake this at any time in a 24-hour period, seven days a week. It's part of our continuing effort to create an environment in British Columbia that is streamlined, effective and allows our small businesses to compete effectively here and around the world.

S. Brice: I thank the minister for that explanation, and certainly with the number of individual owner-operators, small businesses, home businesses and so on, this kind of initiative is going to be very helpful. I wonder if the minister could give me assurance that privacy will be protected in such a procedure.

Hon. K. Falcon: Yes, I can definitely do that. One thing I would say is that most of the information being

provided is of what we call a tombstone nature, so it's typically the kind of information — name, address, etc., — that you'll find on a business card. All of that information is already public because it's required under the corporate registry, so there will be no information there that should cause any great concern.

But I will be able to also tell the member that the single business number project adheres to very strict privacy legislation. Provincially, a privacy impact assessment has been signed off. I know that our staff has met with and worked with the privacy commissioner to make sure that the act is in full accordance with the Privacy Act, and it is, so I think that should put the member's and British Columbians' fears to rest. This is fully in compliance with the privacy commission and the Privacy Act.

Section 1 as amended approved.

Sections 2 to 15 inclusive approved.

On section 15.1.

[1840]

Hon. K. Falcon: Under the new section 15.1(4)(c) and (d), it states that (4)(c) and (d) of this act are repealed and the following is substituted. I should say there's a typographical error where it says: "...repealed the the following substituted." It should say: "...and the following substituted."

[SECTION 15.1, by adding the following section Amendment to this Act
15.1 Section 4 (c) and (d) of this Act is repealed and the following substituted:
(c) a municipality or regional district, or.]

Sections 15.1 and 16 approved.

Title approved.

Hon. K. Falcon: I move that the committee rise and report the bill complete with amendments.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 6:41 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Reporting of Bills

Bill 36, Business Number Act, reported complete with amendments.

Third Reading of Bills

Mr. Speaker: When shall the bill be considered as reported?

Hon. K. Falcon: With leave, now.

Leave granted.

Bill 36, Business Number Act, read a third time and passed.

Hon. B. Barisoff: I call second reading of Bill 62.

Second Reading of Bills

HEALTH PROFESSIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

Hon. S. Hawkins: I move second reading of Bill 62, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2003.

We're all aware of the vital role played by thousands of health care practitioners in the delivery of health services in British Columbia. These amendments aim to provide a consistent framework for the regulation of health care professions by including all health professions under one statute that would lead to less overlap with a net reduction of over 800 regulations, improve public accountability and, most importantly, protect public safety and patient safety.

These amendments stem from recommendations of the former Health Professions Council in its 2001 report *Safe Choices: A New Model for Regulating Health Professions in British Columbia*, as well as consultations with all 23 health professions that we've conducted over the past year.

The task of governing the practice of these health care professionals is the responsibility of numerous professional colleges created by statute. The legislative framework for these colleges is found in the Health Professions Act and in a small number of individual acts. One of the important changes being made by this bill is to consolidate the governance of the 23 health professions under one statute. The amendments will ensure that all the colleges that regulate health professions in British Columbia will have a consistent approach to regulation.

In addition, these amendments enable the designation of a new health professional, the nurse practitioner, by the Registered Nurses Association of B.C. I must say this is an initiative that I'm particularly proud of. The nurse practitioner designation aims to expand the role of nurses in our health care system in order to better serve patients as we renew our primary care around the province.

A total of 30 new nurse practitioner seats were started this fall — 15 seats at the University of Victoria and 15 seats at the University of British Columbia. Our vision is for nurse practitioners to be practising in various settings and areas of health care — including hospitals, health care centres, residential care homes, mental health facilities, urban centres, rural and remote communities — and thereby increasing access to patient care for patients across the province.

[1845]

By moving all professions under the same umbrella, there will be a consistent framework for self-governance that will meet a common level of minimal

standards, ensuring greater public accountability. At the same time, though, it's really important to note that the legislation preserves self-governing autonomy for the health professions. There will continue to be very broad authority for professions to independently organize their operations. Because of the unique features of some professions and the need to accommodate special circumstances, there is a broad bylaw-making authority in this act. As a result, colleges will be able to develop and refine their bylaws over time to best meet the needs of self-governance within their own profession.

There's a number of key changes these amendments establish that relate to patient safety and protection. These amendments are in keeping with the obligation of the colleges to protect the public from incompetent and unethical providers. These changes include enhancing public safety with a new mandatory duty for registrants to report health professionals who pose a public safety risk. If there is a reason to believe that a practitioner in any health profession poses a danger to the public, a registrant with knowledge of such a danger must provide a written report to the college which has authorized that individual to practise.

With respect to prescribed professions in the acute sector, such as physicians and nurses, there will also be an additional obligation, in that facilities providing inpatient treatment of psychiatric or treatment-related illnesses must also report to the practitioner's college. As well, health professionals and employers will be required to report health professionals who may pose a danger to the public as a result of an addiction or lack of competence. A further reporting obligation is established in relation to sexual misconduct. That information must be reported to the practitioner's registrar, but if the information was obtained from a third party, the consent for disclosure of that information must first be obtained by the third party.

These amendments will enhance transparency by improving public access to information about health professionals' registration status and disciplinary records. By improving access to information about practitioners, the public will be able to contact the registrar of a professional college for information on the health practitioner's status, and the colleges will now be required to ensure that the registrar includes key information about each member of a profession that is authorized to practise. This will include information about any limits or conditions that may have been imposed on that individual's practice and whether the individual's registration has been suspended or cancelled.

There will be enhancements in the quality of care, in that every professional college will be required to establish quality assurance programs to improve public protection. This program will be designed to promote good practice and minimize the possibility that practitioners are providing substandard care to patients. Consistent with the well-established process of peer reviews within hospitals, information contained and recorded through quality assurance measures will be kept confidential.

A really important feature of these amendments will be improved accountability for colleges. That allows for new inquiry and directed powers for government on behalf of the public to act quickly where colleges fail to regulate and place public safety at risk. Although the expectation is that this provision would be used very rarely, the amended act would allow cabinet to appoint a person to inquire if there is reason to believe that a college may not be satisfactorily exercising powers or fulfilling duties under this legislation and the college appears not to be acting in the interests of the public or its members.

Let me say this. I understand and I know that most professional colleges take their responsibilities to their members and the public very seriously. I respect that. However, this amendment would give government and the public a mechanism to examine a college's operations should the need arise.

An additional authority is provided for cabinet to issue a directive to a college following an inquiry. This will ensure that where a problem has been identified within a college, government and the public can be satisfied that appropriate remedial measures will be taken. For example, if an inquiry revealed a systematic failure to adequately investigate complaints, inform complainants about their complaints or appropriately exercise self-governing powers, the college could be directed to take necessary remedial measures.

[1850]

Colleges are also being given greater flexibility to resolve complaints and disciplinary matters. Because the experience of colleges is that most complaints are routine and straightforward, the board of the college is now expressly permitted to authorize the registrar to independently deal with complaints as long as those complaints do not involve serious matters.

A serious matter is defined as something that would ordinarily be expected to result in limitations on practice, or suspension or cancellation of registration. An important safeguard included with this amendment is the requirement that the registrar report to the inquiry committee, which includes at least one-third public representation, on the nature of the complaint and the disposition of the matter.

A further set of reforms contained in this bill addresses the important issue of professional scopes of practice. This legislation marks a move away from an outdated model of exclusivity to a more effective arrangement that reflects contemporary, multidisciplinary practice.

With these changes there will be a small number of reserved actions that may be assigned by regulation to one or more professions whose members have the necessary training and qualifications. Reserved actions will be specifically defined and will be part of a broader definition of a profession's scope of practice. I want to emphasize that the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2003 does not in itself address scopes of practice for health care practitioners, although certainly the Health Professions Council's report makes a variety of recommendations in this area.

The actual scopes of practice will be defined for each profession by regulation. Once we've established the revisions to the statutory framework, the ministry will be working with all of the health professions to review and update scopes of practice, a process that will begin later this year and into the new calendar year. I feel this approach to regulating professional scopes of practice is fundamentally sound, and it is in the public interest.

The current outdated, outmoded approach has increasingly failed to benefit patients and promote consumer choice. I can tell you, some of the regulations for scope of practice are from 1908 and 1910, so it is time. Certainly, the health professions have evolved over the last hundred years, and it is time to update those scopes.

In summary, the self-governing colleges play a key role in health care delivery. These colleges ensure that health care consumers are protected and that the public interest is safeguarded by effectively governing the delivery of health care services by its members. It's very important that these colleges have the legislative authority to effectively fulfil their mandate.

Earlier this year members of the Legislature had been provided with a report by the provincial ombudsman entitled *Acting in the Public Interest? Self-Governance in the Health Professions: The Ombudsman's Perspective*. It certainly highlighted the need for improvements in some areas of professional self-governance in the health sector, and this report did support these proposed changes. It concludes that formalizing the ministry's role in overseeing professional colleges will ensure remedies are available in the extraordinary circumstance where a college fails to act in the public interest or does not appreciate its legal responsibilities to protect public health and safety.

In light of these views, I am pleased to be able to sponsor this legislation that will reduce administrative duplication while resulting in improved public accountability and care for patients.

Before concluding, I want to mention that I will be tabling some floor amendments to Bill 62. For example, section 2 of the bill is modified in relation to the issue of having one college regulate two or more health professions. Section 7 will be amended to correct a reference to the executive committee of a board. A number of minor changes to the bylaw-making authority in sections 9 and 10 will be made, and the most important change relates to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of B.C.

We are continuing provisions presently found in the Medical Practitioners Act that relate to the authority to deal swiftly with a medical practitioner whose own medical condition may pose a risk to their patients. This new section permits the college to take appropriate steps on an urgent basis without triggering the complaint and disciplinary process. This parallel process will, however, still be subject to natural justice requirements.

I look forward to hearing the comments of members on this very significant piece of legislation and

significant improvements to the framework on the governance of health professions, so I'll yield the floor to my colleagues who want to speak to this.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. We are at second reading stage of Bill 62. The Leader of the Opposition.

[1855]

J. MacPhail: I rise on Bill 62, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2003, and it is a rare opportunity — although this will be the second rare opportunity of today — that the opposition will speak to a bill where the majority of stakeholders are supportive of the changes. However, with Bill 62, the Health Professions Amendment Act, we have such a case here where the opposition is rising to support the bill, and this is the second time today I will congratulate the minister on the completion of what has become a long consultative process. I think this is being blanked out in Kelowna, so I'm safe to say this.

Looking through the statements from the B.C. Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of B.C., the Registered Nurses Association of B.C. and others, there are several statements commending the government for the changes over self-regulating professionals. However — and as you know, there's always a "however" — Bill 62, the Health Professions Amendment Act, reminds us of the inconsistency on matters such as regulating professions and the political games the government likes to play around this matter. This piece of legislation, while restructuring the controls over self-regulating health professions, allows those very same professionals who are being restructured in their regulation to maintain control over the administration of their own colleges.

Let's contrast that with Bill 51, the Teaching Profession Amendment Act. Bill 51 passed in the spring, and it shows a glaring inconsistency within this government. The Teaching Profession Amendment Act, Bill 51, is a restructuring of the College of Teachers, but the restructuring with teachers doesn't do what this piece of legislation does — Bill 62. It does exactly the opposite. It says that government and the Minister of Education will have control over the college and its administration.

At the time the Minister of Education made it clear that she and her government viewed B.C. teachers as a special interest group, unworthy of self-regulation. Why? Simple answer, and it's become even clearer since the spring that the answer is politics. The Minister of Education and the entire government have been clear about their dislike for teachers or even working with teachers. The Minister of Education wants control over teachers, and that is what she did with Bill 51, the Teaching Profession Amendment Act.

Let's be clear. That bill is exactly the same as this piece of legislation in what it is dealing with. It's dealing with the professional regulating body of a group of public servants or public employees who are professionals themselves. In this case, the Minister of Health

Planning has done wide consultation and has come to the conclusion after much consultation that, yes, there should be tighter controls by which the professions themselves regulate themselves.

That's not what this government is doing with teachers. The very people who give our children the education they need to succeed are stripped of their college, the College of Teachers, and they've had their contracts ripped up. The Minister of Education also refused to undertake the broad, open and cooperative consultation process like the one we saw with this legislation, Bill 62, the Health Professions Amendment Act.

With Bill 62 the government will create an inequality between health professionals and educational professionals, many of whom will be working side by side in the same institutions, many of whom will be working in the schools side by side. One group, the health professionals, will have control over their own futures and the futures of their colleagues, and the other, the teachers, will have had politics foisted upon them, and they will not have any control, because of Bill 51, over their professional future.

[1900]

Both are crucial to our well-being in this province — teachers and health care professionals. Both are fundamental to the well-being of our province, so I am going to ask perhaps not this minister, but at my first opportunity I am going to ask the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Education, why she supports different treatment, unequal treatment, for teachers and health care professionals, why she and her government are in favour of creating a professional gap between teachers and health care professionals.

I am hopeful at this opening sitting, before the Minister of Education flies off to Calgary to do who knows what, that she's actually paying attention to the debate in this Legislature where she should be, tomorrow and the day after, answering questions on these very matters. I will ask the Minister of Education: did she watch, and can she reverse her politically driven legislation based on the work that is being lauded by consensus around the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2003? Can she now stop her politics and give teachers the same rights granted to other professionals in this province?

Stay home, look after your own business, Deputy Premier, and try to do the right thing for all British Columbians. Stop creating wedges and do the right thing, the way that is now happening under this piece of legislation, the Health Professions Amendment Act. Who knows? For the very first time in this government's history, the opposition may stand up and support the Minister of Education, just as we are doing in supporting the Health Planning minister.

L. Mayencourt: It's a pleasure to stand here and speak in favour of the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2003, which has been put before us.

One of the things I was looking at was how we were managing the health professions in British Co-

lumbia. I understand that we have 16 of the health professions under this act already and that there remains outside of that six existing professional entities and, in addition to that, the nurse practitioners' position.

By moving all these professions under this one umbrella of the Health Professions Act, it's going to ensure we have this consistent framework for self-governance that will meet the common level of minimum standards to ensure greater public accountability. It does two things. It brings simplicity to the citizens of British Columbia, and it brings accountability to them as well.

I'm excited about that, because it means that in that simplification we are removing six other pieces of legislation that have frankly become redundant, and it's time for us to move the health professions into the twenty-first century, where we're all living. The minister has spoken about some of those regulations dating back from the early 1900s.

I'm also excited about the fact that it's reducing the 800 regulations that are tied to those six acts. That's important, because I've never heard of a regulation yet that didn't cost somebody something. Those regulations are obviously going to be costing something in the health care system, and that affects direct patient care. So we're going to have a more streamlined approach to regulating the professions, and I think that will ensure lower cost for the regulation of these professions.

In addition, another part of this bill that really appeals to me is the introduction of a new health professional, the nurse practitioner. The nurse practitioner is a new entity within our province, and it's something that nurses across this province have been calling for, for a long time. They have been increasing their abilities, their skills, their training, and they have had an increase in the ability of being front-line care providers in our hospitals, in our health care centres, in our mental health service delivery facilities, in communities that are remote and in communities that are urban in nature. This is a very good thing for all of British Columbia, because it allows them to rise up to the level they have been trained to, and it allows them to use the experience they have, the knowledge they have, to deliver better health care for all British Columbians.

[1905]

Another thing important to me is what the minister was speaking about, the scope of practice. Now, this is the legislative framework for the Health Professions Act, but what we're also talking about here is scope of practice.

Many members of this House, myself included, have met with people like the naturopathic physicians of British Columbia, chiropractors, optometrists and so on. They have concerns about the scope of practice. I think what we have seen here today is the minister making a commitment that over the coming year, an extensive consultation will take place with all of those professions to set down or lay out the scope of practice for each of those professions. I think that's very commendable on the part of the minister, just like when this particular bill was first introduced and we went

out and consulted with those health professions. We got their feedback. We got a lot of feedback on it. That has resulted in everyone feeling included in this, and I think that's been very well received.

This obviously comes from the former Health Professions Council's 2001 report, which was referenced by the minister. I think it's very consistent with the recommendations that were put forward by them.

Another important feature of this is the ability for our government... You know, we know that the health professions we have in British Columbia are very determined to deliver quality health care. They're dedicated to providing that in an ethical fashion, in a proper fashion, and this act will allow them to regulate themselves in that manner. In the unlikely event that one of the colleges or one of the professions fails to protect the public safety, this minister, this government and future governments will have the opportunity to step forward and defend the public interest. I think that is a very important part of this piece of legislation, and I am very grateful to the minister for the opportunity to speak to this.

There was an article in the newspaper a few days ago, and I'd just like to quote from it. It was an article on the RNABC. It's not that I want to single them out, but it's just an example of why this act is so necessary. In the process of regulating that profession, if someone was found to be in need of some remedial action or what have you, the public really isn't informed.

In this particular case, there was a conduct review process that was published in a very brief form in the *Nursing BC* magazine, but it did not tell us or tell the public anything about that. For example, in this instance two nurses were mentioned under the heading "Professional Conduct." It names the two nurses, but in neither case does it state the information or anything other than the fact that there are conditions on their practice that will remain in effect for the next two years. That means the public might have an indication that there is some sort of a problem with a professional, but they don't really have access to what the problem was. I think that's a very important thing so that people can make informed choices about their health care deliverers, if you will.

Finally, one last point on that is that once someone has gone through this period of two years, as in the case of these two individuals who were named in the *Nursing BC* magazine, there's no way for the public to know about that previous record. I think this act does provide the kind of certainty that citizens of British Columbia are asking for. It provides it in a simple and accountable manner, and I'm very glad to support it.

S. Brice: I'd like to compliment the minister on bringing forward this piece of legislation. It certainly is a cornerstone to the Ministry of Health Planning, and I would suspect that it will be many years before there will be as exhaustive and exhausting a review of all of the professions that are captured in the Health Professions Act. I know the minister and her staff have been particularly diligent about the degree of consultation.

[1910]

Embodied in the Health Professions Act are major professions which are large, which have well-established colleges and which have teams of people who can speak for them and lobby for them. Also, the act covers very small professions, and it's with those very small professions that I would particularly like to note the minister's sensitivity in recognizing that putting onto those professions the responsibility of having colleges, such as the audiologists.... The minister's office has been very sensitive and has done everything possible to allow for this transition. I think that should be recognized.

This, as I say, has been a long time coming, and we would be remiss if we didn't underscore the work of those who had served on the Health Professions Council, which provided the bedrock for this legislation. It, of course, brings these 23 health professions under a single statute. Why is this important? Of course, it's going to provide for accountability and self-governance. And why is that important? I mean, this document is not in and of itself the end. What does it lead to? It leads to increased public confidence. The public needs to have confidence. It needs to know that if something goes awry, there is a system that will be in place in order for this to be picked up.

Also, it requires, of course, that there is reporting. There is mandatory reporting now by registrants to report health professionals who pose a public risk. As has been pointed out here and I think should be repeated, very few cases like this exist, but because of the very vulnerable nature of the persons receiving assistance and the very serious work that these professionals do, it's important that these safeguards be in place. The public will now have access to information about health professionals and their disciplinary records. This is not something now that is going to be kept from people. They can take a look and make a determination about whether or not this is a health care professional that they want to have confidence in.

Now, every professional college will be required to have a quality assurance program, and this is the key-stone to maintaining a very strong network of health services. Otherwise, incidents can go and seem to be one-offs. In any organization, unless you can pick up all these one-offs and get systemic trends and see just exactly where the system is perhaps failing patients, you're doomed, basically, to allow those one-offs to continue. So quality assurance is a key component to the Health Professions Act.

The most exciting part of this is the reference to nurse practitioners, to enable the designation of the new health professional by the Registered Nurses Association of B.C. This is something whose time has come. As a member of the select standing committee, we travelled around the province and heard from the public how valuable they consider their nurses to be. I think nurses are oftentimes undervalued, quite frankly, within the whole scope of health professionals.

People who go into nursing are primarily driven to public service, to caring. They take a tremendous

amount of professional training now, and the nurses as a group are absolutely a critical part of the health care delivery system. Even within that group of health care professionals, there are those who can step up to take additional responsibilities. In our report from the select standing committee, entitled *Patients First: Renewal and Reform of British Columbia's Health Care System*, the committee's health report of 2001.... I'd like to quote from that.

[1915]

"Nurses are an integral part of the preventive health and primary care, but opportunities to work in these roles are few. ... The successful pilot project RN First Call, where nurses treated non-urgent cases in rural emergency rooms and clinics, could, if revived, go a long way to meet rural health care needs. In fact, 20 years' worth of research shows that nurse practitioners, RNs with advanced education, can perform many tasks done by family doctors. A federally funded study that looked at expanded nursing models throughout the country, recommended that team practice between doctors, nurse practitioners and other providers 'be the norm' in the delivery of primary health care, not only in rural areas but everywhere."

As a result of submissions to that committee, the committee recommended: "Nurses' scope of practice should be enlarged by licensing, training and employing nurse practitioners in a variety of primary care settings. The government can boost this process by supporting the joint Ministry of Health-RNABC nurse practitioner project, which is currently looking at recognizing the nurse practitioner role...."

So there it is. This legislation speaks to the message that was received from British Columbians, professionals and non-professionals, as we travelled around the province. I commend the minister for including this very forward-looking piece to this legislation, and I am certain that the entire piece of legislation, along with this addition of the nurse practitioners, will go a long way to providing the kind of community support, public confidence, and also assurance within the professions themselves that there are the checks and balances that are required.

J. Bray: I, too, rise in support of Bill 62, the Health Professions Amendment Act, 2003. I also want to, along with my colleagues — and I'm so warmed to include the Leader of the Opposition in this — congratulate the minister on the work she's done with respect to this act. This really is a large piece of legislation, but it has very positive impacts for health care in British Columbia now and for future generations.

One of the first aspects about the development of this act that I think is critical is the amount of consultation the minister and her staff engaged in, in the development of this piece of legislation. All 23 health professions had extensive consultations with the minister, and those consultations are reflected in the act. In part, we know this because, of course, their feedback on the tabling of this bill has been very positive.

There are some specific things that I would like to just highlight, not repeat all the things that my col-

leagues have talked about. You know, one of the things that we hear about in our constituency offices quite frequently with respect to some health professions is a sense the community has with respect to privacy: "How do we really know what's going on?" and "How can we participate as health consumers if we feel there is this veil of secrecy with respect to particular professions and professionals?" and "How do we find out?"

That's probably been a longstanding complaint with respect to health professions, and I'm so proud that, as government, we've finally decided to take that very difficult, very contentious issue and legally quite complex issue and deal with it head-on. We deal with it for one reason: because as a government, we've decided to put patients first.

Patients, as health consumers, must be part of the solution to our health care issues. They're the main player. They're the person who benefits from our health care system, and they're the ones that make their choices. More and more British Columbians are actively engaged in their own health care; more and more of them are actively involved in the delivery of health care in their communities — through volunteer activities, through supporting primary care pilots and other activities. But they lacked some critical information, not because there's a lot of health professionals that are disciplined or have problems; in fact, it's probably a very, very small percentage. It was the lack of the consumer to have the knowledge, to be able to access the appropriate information around public disclosure with misconduct, deregistrations and other activities that led to a concern and actually had an impact on all health professionals.

[1920]

Health consumers want to make sure they're making the best choice for themselves, their children and their elders, and this act addresses that in a way that ensures the profession's integrity is in place. Primarily, the health consumer gets to make the choice for their health care.

There are a few other really critical issues here. My colleague from Saanich South talked about it, but I think that perhaps this is something that has gone a bit under the radar and should really be brought out into the open, and that is the development and promotion of the nurse practitioner.

We have heard time and time again in many parts of this province — I was a member of the Select Standing Committee on Health; I've also been on three tours with the Select Standing Committee on Finance — that access to health care in some of our rural, remote communities is a concern.

There are a lot of people who traditionally think that health care is represented by a doctor and that a doctor is the only form of health care that's either available or appropriate. Those in the health professions know, in fact, there's a myriad of health professionals that can provide appropriate care for individual patients and their families. For instance, a lot of people choose to go to chiropractors because they believe and feel that is the best service for them. This act certainly allows this. We allow this in this province.

But nurses have always been relegated to an assistant's role. That's the perception the public have. In fact, when you go to the hospital, the vast majority of the time the bedside care you get is from the nurse. When you go into a primary care clinic, most of the service you receive is actually from a nurse, because nurses' training today is extensive. RNs are highly, highly trained professionals in our society, and their scope of practice covers a lot of the things that most general practitioners can do. Certainly, there are things your general practitioner should have exclusive domain over, because their training affords that, but the nurse practitioner, the new level, will ensure that rural and remote communities that perhaps can't sustain a general practitioner can still have that excellent quality of care on a much more regular basis, whether that be a nurse practitioner in residence or a nurse practitioner who can travel more frequently to remote communities to provide general diagnostics or general checkups — check for flus, sore throats. These types of activities can occur. I believe British Columbians are now understanding primary health care more and more and the reforms that are necessary, and are going to welcome the nurse practitioner into their communities as a primary health care provider.

It also recognizes that as we move forward in partnership with the federal government for primary health care reform, we must realize that the doctor is only one piece of the puzzle. The nurse practitioner can be there; the registered nurse can be there; the podiatrist can be there; the chiropractor can be there; the dietician can be there. All those can be available in primary care centres that recognize that the appropriate patient should go to the appropriate service first off, not after a round of referrals. Again, the nurse practitioner is a critical piece as we look to improve access for citizens in rural areas but also here in urban areas like Victoria, where we have the James Bay Community Project working to demonstrate the advantages of primary care.

I was very pleased that, again, the minister reiterated this in her opening comments, but I think now most people realize — but it's important to repeat again — that Bill 62 does not change the individual scope of practice of any of the professions. The same due diligence and consultation that went into the Health Professions Act will go into reviewing all the scopes of practice for all the health professions. We're doing it for the exact same reason that the minister brought forward Bill 62. We're going to put patients first; we're going to protect their safety; we're going to enhance health care; we're going to do our new-era commitments. Bill 62 is one more piece of that, and I congratulate the minister.

Mr. Speaker: On second reading of Bill 62, the minister closes debate.

Hon. S. Hawkins: I was just thinking that it's a rare occasion indeed when the opposition agrees. I should maybe have brought all my bills forward tonight.

Anyway, I was happy to hear the support this bill gets from both sides of the House. I do want to acknowledge the ten years of work the Health Professions Council put into this. I also want to acknowledge the diligence and the efforts of all the health profession colleges that worked with me and my ministry over the past year or so as we developed these very significant amendments. I want to thank the colleges for their cooperation in getting this bill before the House. Many, many thanks go to my ministry staff for the hours — and I can say literally hours — they've spent in fine-tuning these amendments so they work for the colleges and, more importantly, so they work for the public interest and public safety. Many people mentioned that this bill really is about putting patients first.

At this time I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the whole House to be considered at the next sitting of the....

Mr. Speaker: We'll do second reading.

Hon. members, the question is second reading of Bill 62.

Motion approved.

[1925]

Hon. S. Hawkins: I just thought I'd expedite things and get it over with. Anyway, I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House to be considered at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 62, Health Professions Amendment Act, 2003, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. B. Barisoff: I call second reading of Bill 42.

PROVINCIAL REVENUE STATUTES
AMENDMENT ACT (No. 2), 2003

Hon. B. Barisoff: I move that Bill 42 be read for a second time now. This bill, which I introduced on May 13, proposes a number of amendments to the Motor Fuel Tax Act and the Social Service Tax Act, which are administered by the Ministry of Provincial Revenue. The measures included in this bill will help achieve our goals of fair, efficient and equitable administration of tax and revenue statutes and collection of all outstanding amounts owed to government.

Over the past year extensive consultations have taken place with the fuel industry. The purpose of these consultations is to address industry concerns that some of the administrative and regulatory processes under the Motor Fuel Tax Act create competitive inequities, impose business barriers and result in revenue losses. The bill amends the Motor Fuel Tax Act to enable an implementation of a number of strategies to address these concerns, including authorizing of fuel dyeing at delivery sites where specific dye injector equipment is used; authorizing an allowance for a

business to dye fuel which reflects the cost of the dye that is currently financed by government as part of an initiative to remove the province from the business of purchasing and distributing dye; and requiring the registration of all businesses that sell coloured fuel to facilitate the information programs by the Ministry of Provincial Revenue which enhance voluntary compliance and revenue recoveries.

Consultations are also underway with businesses regarding reducing their administrative burden under the Social Service Tax Act. Businesses that purchase goods for their own business use are required to pay tax to their suppliers. However, in some cases the goods may be taxable or exempt, depending on how they're subsequently used. This occurs particularly when the exemption is for parts used for protection of machinery and equipment. Determining what will be used for taxable or exempt purposes at the time of purchase creates a considerable administrative burden. To alleviate this burden, this bill amends the Social Service Tax Act to authorize, prescribing by regulation, direct payment and managed compliance agreements with businesses. Under such agreements, businesses would purchase specific goods exempt from tax and remit the tax directly to the province either once the disposition is known or on an agreed-upon schedule. The details of such a program are still being discussed with the businesses and may differ according to business needs.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 42.

Motion approved.

Hon. B. Barisoff: I move that Bill 42 be referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 42, Provincial Revenue Statutes Amendment Act (No. 2), 2003, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. B. Barisoff: I call second reading of Bill 37.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR
STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

Hon. G. Bruce: Bill 37 amends the Workers Compensation Act and the Employment Standards Act. This bill is the third in a series of legislative amendments designed to help reach our new-era goal of a workers compensation system that is responsive to workers and employers.

The bill addresses compensation for surviving dependents of workers who die as a result of workplace injuries. In 2002 the WCB accepted claims for 157 work-related fatalities. Our number one goal, and that of the Workers Compensation Board's new board of directors, is to look at the best ways of education, consultation and enforcement in order to prevent workplace injuries and deaths, but when the unthinkable happens, government wants to ensure the deceased worker's surviv-

ing dependents are treated fairly and compassionately and are given the help they need to get on with their lives.

[1930]

Many of today's changes were guided by recommendations in the Alan Winter report released in May of 2002, following the core services review of the workers compensation program. That review included consideration of the 1999 royal commission report on the workers compensation program as well. To get feedback on the proposed changes, we met with a number of groups, including representatives from WCB, workers advisers, labour, business, and injured worker and survivor associations.

As a result of this thorough process, we are confident the changes in this bill take us closer to our goal of a more responsive workers compensation system. Among the changes will be a new program that, for the first time, provides lifetime monthly benefits to surviving partners under 40 who have no children. Under the new system, all partners of employees who die from workplace injuries will be in a better position to plan for the future, knowing a monthly income will be available to them.

With this bill, we are also maintaining the emergency one-time payment to all surviving partners. As well, the new compensation scheme provides a higher percentage of monthly benefits to older, childless surviving partners in recognition of the difficulties they may face if they have to re-enter the workforce. At the same time we are increasing the age limit for dependent children to receive benefits from the current age of 18 to 19 and from the current age of 21 to 25 for children in school.

The bill includes a change that will see surviving dependents retain 50 percent of the Canada Pension Plan survivor benefits instead of losing 100 percent. The legislation ensures survivors who have been employed will not have their own CPP retirement benefits impacted. It also changes the inflation indexing formula for survivor benefits from the full value of the consumer price index change every six months to an annual adjustment of CPI less 1 percent with a 4 percent gap. This is consistent with the formula introduced for injured workers benefits in 2002. These changes will be retroactive to June 30, 2002, when the workers compensation system was restructured to ensure sustainability.

As we work on one hand to provide fairer benefits to survivors, we're also working to lower the number of workplace fatalities. This summer I announced a task force, made up of senior representatives from B.C.'s forest industry and the Workers Compensation Board, to target the unacceptable rate of death and serious injury in our forests. Our forest industry provides direct jobs for 90,000 British Columbians, and their safety is critical for all of us. We want to work in partnership with workers, companies, contractors and the WCB to develop the solutions that will save lives, reduce serious injuries and improve safety.

While forestry is a high-risk industry, the rate of death and serious injury is much higher in B.C. than in other parts of the country and higher than in similar dangerous occupations. Those of us who live in forest communities have all known someone who has been either injured or killed in this line of work. We have seen the tragic consequences that workers, their families and co-workers face. These rates of serious injury and death are simply not acceptable. In the last ten years there have been 918 serious injuries and 250 accepted fatal claims in B.C.'s forests. The goal of the task force is to cut the death and serious injury rates in the industry in half over the next three years, with further reductions in later years. I've asked for an initial report on the task force's progress by late this year.

[1935]

This bill also provides that a person does not have to be a lawyer to give advice about the Workers Compensation Act or to represent workers or employers in a proceeding. Lay advocates have represented workers and employers for a number of years at WCB proceedings. This amendment ensures that workers and employers will continue to have access to administrative justice in a manner that has historically worked well in the WCB system. While not specifically regulated, lay advocates have clear practice guidelines to follow when appearing before the Workers Compensation Board and the appeal tribunal.

Changes in respect to the Employment Standards Act. Bill 37 also amends the act to more effectively protect children and provide clarification in a number of areas where the language is ambiguous or inconsistent. This bill repeals sections of the act that are outdated or no longer used. For example, there's a section that allows the minister to appoint a committee to review the act. Since this section was added in 1995, it's only been used once, although there have been various reviews and consultations on employment standards since then.

This bill also balances the needs of employees and employers with protection for vulnerable workers. Currently, an employer is required to have a permit issued by the director of employment standards before employing any child under 15 years of age. It doesn't matter who the employee is, what the job is or how long the job is going to last. It is exceedingly rare for such a permit to be refused, and any follow-up is based on complaints rather than close monitoring.

We are changing the rules to better focus on protecting children but still ensuring they can take a job when they want. The solution is to require only written consent of a parent or guardian to employ a child aged 12 to 15 and to back that up with clear standards for those workplaces that employ kids.

The average number of permits issued annually by the director of employment standards for children who want to work outside the film industry is about 300. I suspect we have far more than 300 young people working in family businesses, on farms, in stores, at country fairs and wherever. The permitting system, as it is cur-

rently set up, does not capture anywhere near the total number.

At this point I would like to remind employers they are legally responsible for proving the child's age and getting the required parental permission in writing before employment starts. Those who violate these rules will face penalties of \$500, \$2,500 or up to \$10,000. The House will remember that before last year, penalties for violating employment standards rules were discretionary. Now, however, they are mandatory. Before, they were discretionary; now they are mandatory, and the amounts are significant.

This government does not just rely on penalties to ensure employment standards rules are obeyed. Staff in the Ministry of Labour are also working proactively with industry to educate employers and employees on the rules. In addition, this government has put specific focus on the restaurant and agricultural sectors, where there's a high turnover of employees.

We are serious about protecting all employees but especially the most vulnerable. Under this bill we will be able to set employment conditions for children through the employment standards regulation. I will shortly be asking my cabinet colleagues to consider a new regulation covering children under 15 in the areas of hours of work, supervision and safety. One part will be for general employment for children aged 12 through 14, and the other will be specific to the film and television industry. Occupational health and safety concerns will continue, as they are today, to be addressed by the Workers Compensation Board.

In the general child employment regulation, this government has set out specific rules that apply to children between these ages. An employer must ensure that the child does not work during school hours on a school day, does not work more than four hours on a school day or 20 hours in a week when school is in session, and does not work more than 35 hours in a week when school is not in session. Also, the child is under direct, immediate supervision of an adult.

There will be different rules for children in film because the demands placed on these employees are quite different. British Columbia is the third-largest centre in North America after New York and Los Angeles. The industry is big and growing. Last year film and television productions in British Columbia reached almost \$1 billion. It's a business that is highly desirable, and we must be sure our rules match those in jurisdictions that are our competition, such as Hollywood and New York.

[1940]

The regulation covering children in film is the most comprehensive in Canada. Our film industry worked with staff in my ministry to develop the rules, and early drafts were taken to large studios in Los Angeles for their feedback. For children working in film, the other part of the regulation will be covered by a greater age spread. Children from 15 days to less than 15 years of age can work as performers or extras in film, radio, video or TV productions and radio or television commercials. This regulation will be very detailed and will

vary by the age of the child and whether school is in session or not. Some of the standards covered will be hours of work related to time of day for start and finish, maximum duration of the workday and the maximum amount of time before a recording device as well as minimum rest breaks, the requirement for on-site chaperones and the number of children permitted per chaperon.

Income protection for these young children will require the employer to deposit 25 percent of a child's earnings over \$2,000 on a production in trust for the child with the B.C. public guardian and trustee.

Because children working in the film industry can be very young, I want to make sure employers in this industry have an in-depth knowledge of the rules governing their employment. My ministry is currently in discussions with the film industry with a view to establishing a formal partnership to increase awareness and understanding of employment standards for children involved in film and the arts.

Government plans to bring both regulations into effect December 14, 2003, once cabinet has had an opportunity to provide their input and once Bill 37 has received royal assent. Until that time, the director of employment standards must approve and provide a permit for children aged 12 through 14 to work.

Over the past year we've taken a number of steps to give workers and employers greater flexibility in employment standards, to negotiate mutually beneficial relationships that help them compete and prosper. This is good for employers and employees.

This bill addresses our commitment to remove unnecessary regulation and implement employment standards that are fair, effective and enforceable.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 37.

J. Kwan: Bill 37 does three main things. It changes the Employment Standards Act to eliminate the child labour permitting system and allowing parental consent to be the only permit required. The language of the Employment Standards Act has changed in a very fundamental and significant way: "No hiring of children under 15 without director's permission" to "Hiring children." It modifies the Employment Standards Act with respect to minimum wage and overtime banks, and it makes changes to the Workers Compensation Act, notably with respect to survivor benefits and lay advocates.

The opposition will have questions relating to different sections of this bill, but the opposition is primarily concerned with the child labour portion of the bill.

The government likes to talk a lot about moving forward, and in fact, as we saw in today's question period and even just now from the minister himself, what they want to do is move forward. But one thing that is very clear about Bill 37, something that has widespread agreement throughout this province, is that this bill's provisions on child labour take B.C. a giant step backwards.

If this government proceeds with this bill, B.C. will have the weakest child labour laws in Canada. B.C. has

already had its labour laws weakened through Bill 48, legislation brought in by this government in the spring, which not only continued its wholesale attack on working people in this province but also took away protections from child labourers. In Bill 48 this government chose to transfer the responsibility for monitoring children in the workplace to the people employing the children and opened the floodgates to child labour in all sectors of the economy. With Bill 37 the government continues its regressive labour agenda and, in fact, is imposing on B.C. the weakest child labour standards in the country.

All across this country provinces have made specific rules to ensure that children are not left open to abuse and that their rights in the workplace are protected. Other provinces have rules — rules about the kinds of work and length of time that are appropriate for children under 16. Even Ralph Klein in Alberta has restrictions on the length of time that children can work. Perhaps the ministers who will be heading there tomorrow can find out and consult with Ralph Klein on their regulations relating to children under 16 who are in the workplace.

[1945]

If this government gets its way, there will be no restrictions — none whatsoever. The minister says: "Well, you know, maybe we'll bring in regulations. Don't worry." We know what that means in other situations.

What we see before us in Bill 37 is that there are no regulations on the type of jobs a child will hold, on how many hours the child will be working, and no limitations on when the child will be working, despite the fact that outside of Canada's borders the global push is to protect children from child labour and allow the freedom to focus on what a child's main work should be — his or her education.

The government's child labour bill, in fact, flies in the face of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child — article 32. Article 32 clearly articulates the need for specific legislation in regulatory language to protect children from economic exploitation and from performing any work likely to be harmful or interfere with the child's education or development. I'd like to quote article 32 into the record.

"(1) State parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development.

"(2) State parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, state parties shall, in particular: (a) provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment; (b) provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment; and (c) provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article."

In this government's willingness to bend over backwards to appease their business lobbyists — their

big-business backers — this government is willing to relax the standards on child labour to such an extent that not only is there no place in the country with such loose child labour laws, but it risks contravening the UN convention on the rights of the child.

Despite the fact that both Canada and B.C. are signatories to the convention on the rights of the child, being censured by the UN, I guess, will be nothing new to this government. Although it is considered unusual for Canada to be criticized for breaching international law, under this Liberal government's watch, B.C. has already been embarrassed internationally twice — chastised by two separate United Nations bodies for its extreme, divisive policies.

To refresh the memories of members in this House, the International Labour Organization ruled that the B.C. Liberal government had violated the UN convention on freedom of association, and called on the government to repeal the law declaring K-to-12 education an essential service and to amend five other statutes to ensure working conditions are negotiated rather than imposed.

The UN committee on the elimination of discrimination against women singled out the B.C. government in lambasting Canada for not meeting its obligations to women under international human rights law. But despite how this government has tried to scuff off and duck from this international censure, and despite how little respect they appear to have for international standards, the position of Canada and the official position of B.C. — and I would guess that most British Columbians would agree with this position — is that the best framework for any policies concerning children should be the convention on the rights of the child.

The Hon. Landon Pearson, a Liberal Senator and Canada's adviser on children's rights, has stated:

"Canada firmly believes that our actions must be guided by the convention on the rights of the child. The convention remains the instrument of reference, the essential legislative basis for the achievement of children's rights. The best framework for our work is the convention on the rights of the child as expressed by Canada in support of the UN General Assembly resolution of November 20, 2002, on the promotion and protection of the rights of children."

[1950]

Yet the provisions in this bill — relaxing child labour laws — clearly go directly against the UN convention's call for legislation and regulatory language to protect children from economic exploitation and from performing any work likely to be harmful or interfere with a child's education or development.

Bill 37, with no restrictions whatsoever on when or where or for how long a child aged 12 to 15 can work, makes B.C. not only a national but an international pariah. Child labour is a serious problem in many parts of this world, and B.C. is not immune to global causes of child labour. One out of every six B.C. families lives in poverty, and child labour increases in depressed economies.

Under this Liberal government and its failed economic plan, more and more B.C. families are finding

themselves without a paycheque, with fewer resources and, with this government's mean-spirited, extreme changes to income assistance, without even a safety net. Come next spring the two-out-of-five rules will then apply for income assistance recipients. That means if you've been on income assistance for two years out of five, you will be cut off. That's what this government has brought in, and that's what they're doing: slashing our social safety net.

The Employment Standards Act is a valuable law that is supposed to protect the most vulnerable workers in this province by setting minimum standards of wages in terms of employment for most workers in B.C. This is in accordance with the Minister of Skills Development and Labour's own website. In this bill the B.C. Liberal government is choosing to take away this protection from the most vulnerable workers of all: children aged 12 to 15. This is made very clear in the very language of the bill. Bill 37 changes section 9 of the Employment Standards Act in a very fundamental and significant way from, "No hiring of children under 15 without director's permission," to simply, plainly: "Hiring children."

The current act protects child workers by ensuring that a staff member of the employment standards branch reviews applications made by employers who want to hire children under the age of 15. The current act enables the branch to examine the worksite where the child will be employed and to stipulate conditions upon the terms of the child's employment. For example, a child worker employed in the film industry may need transportation to and from the worksite, an educational plan that enables the child to maintain his or her duties, or limitations upon the number of hours that the child can work.

With Bill 37, B.C.'s child labour laws will become the weakest in Canada. It will be easier for employers to hire children. Parental consent will be the only permit required, and proof of parental consent will not be filed with the employment standards office. Instead, it will be incumbent on the employer to produce it in the event of a complaint. Added to this, future regulations will be driven by complaints only. What is more, parents are not being given the power to shape the conditions of their children's employment, nor are they or their children receiving sufficient information about their rights in the workplace.

The minister has tried to justify its regressive policy on child labour by saying it's doing this because the current system of permitting gives a false sense of security, saying it lacks enforcement and that the permitting process is very bureaucratic. The minister says parents should be allowed to decide. The rationale is also given that employment standards has not tracked compliance or complaints. But the evidence suggests that child labour permits are regularly declined by employment officers, that parents often are the employer, and anecdotal information indicates that child exploitation is widespread in sectors such as the agriculture and garment industries, but the government has actively decided not to track compliance.

With this bill the B.C. Liberal government is paving the way for widespread child labour in establishing the groundwork for the exploitation of children. This government is willing to exploit children for the purpose of furthering its agenda. I am concerned. The opposition is concerned that under this new legislation, children will be working long hours and that perhaps their education will suffer.

[1955]

I'd like to just put on the record some information, statistics related to issues around education for children in the workforce. StatsCan's recent report *Learning, earning and leaving: the relationship between work while in high school and dropping out* has come to the following conclusion. The report confirmed previous research showing that there is a strong relationship between the number of hours students worked and dropping out of high school. It points to the fact that working and finishing high school can mix if working is done in moderation.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

Forty-four percent of students who work 30 or more hours a week reported dropping out because of wanting to work or having to work or because of money problems. Students who work 30 hours or more a week were 2.4 times more likely to drop out than students with moderate work schedules — between one and 20 hours. Students who did not work at all were 1½ times more likely to drop out than moderate workers.

The concern that a child will be scheduled to work night shifts is another issue that has been brought up. Nothing in the bill gives neither the child nor his or her parents a basis on which to object. I'm concerned that increasing the number of child workers in the workplace will pose a serious safety risk to the children in this province. The Workers Compensation Board tracks injury rates among young people in B.C. Studies have shown that young workers are more likely to get hurt in the workplace.

Right now the Employment Standards Act limits the employment of children under the age of 15, and StatsCan's statistics available from the WCB are based on young workers between the ages of 15 and 19 years. These statistics provide us with a glimpse of what will happen when the number of employed children under the age of 15 increases as a result of this bill and the changes made this spring under Bill 45.

Between 1992 and 1996, 14,000 disability claims were filed by workers between the ages of 15 and 19. The WCB report, *Protecting Young Workers, 2001*, provides:

"The injury rate for males aged 15 to 24 has historically been higher than for males aged 25 and over, more than for females of all ages and higher than the overall injury rate. In 2001 over 62,000 young Canadians from 15 to 24 years old were victims of industrial injuries, and almost 60 young Canadians lost their lives. Due to a variety of factors, young workers are at

a significantly higher risk of being injured on the job. Each day in B.C., 34 young workers are hurt on the job. Each week five of these workers are permanently injured."

Why are young people getting injured on the job? The WCB commissioned research designed to explore the underlying attitudes towards young workers and workplace injury among a range of stakeholders, including youth, parents, employers, educators, industry representatives, labour associations, and community and youth groups. The research revealed consistent themes why young people are injured. These include inexperience and lack of training, lack of confidence or understanding of their rights as workers, lack of preparation for the workplace, being asked to do more dangerous jobs, a sense of youth invincibility and unwillingness to ask questions.

As those changes proceed — coupled with previous changes from government, as employment standards are further relaxed and as the onus is not on the employer to provide information to their workers — we will see more people at their workplace at risk. I'm very concerned about the possibility that increasing child labour and decreasing the monitoring of child workers will lead to more workplace injuries and traumas sustained by children in B.C.

[2000]

I can't help but wonder how the Minister of Children and Family Development, the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development and the Minister of Education could support these changes when these ministers are responsible for protecting the interests of children and youth in the province.

This government has become, perhaps, so desperate to achieve their economic goals and appease their supporters that it is relying upon the exploitation of children as a way of improving B.C.'s economy. This government has abdicated its responsibility to respect and protect the children of this province. We, the NDP opposition, are deeply troubled by the government's willingness and even eagerness to relax all restrictions on child labour in this province.

The new era that the Liberal government wants to impose on British Columbians.... We're seeing its impact across our communities. We see it where people are getting hurt on a day-to-day basis. I know that the government, the minister and the Premier would just argue and advance arguments to say that the opposition are simply fearmongering, that none of this is true. Yet, if you look out in the community, so many of the issues and concerns the opposition have raised, unfortunately, have become reality, negatively impacting people. Even now, as we look, we see changes before us under this bill impacting children.

I don't believe the concern we've raised is fearmongering. The concern we've raised is shared by many people. The opposition has joined with groups such as the Society for Children and Youth of B.C., the Social Planning and Research Council, First Call!, B.C. teachers, the Vancouver school board and many individuals. They oppose this shameful bill, this piece of shameful,

backward legislation. They're calling for the government to engage in a discussion with stakeholders and craft new legislation and regulation that aligns with the UN convention on the rights of the child.

I know the minister will rise up and say, "We already consulted. We tabled the bill, and we may bring in regulation," but when you look at the bill itself, the language for the protection of children is not in the bill. Let's be clear. That's what counts. The bill will become law when this Legislature, with its overwhelming government member majority, rams the bill through. They will just pass it.

I want to be very clear that the opposition opposes this bill, primarily because of section 9. The changes relating to child labour are of great concern to the opposition, and the opposition will be voting against this bill.

Hon. G. Bruce: I think it's important that we're all very considerate about what we do here and that we know of what we speak. I think it's absolutely incredible, what I've just heard from the member opposite relative to this bill. We talk about injury rates and such in respect to young people in the workforce. Let's understand this. This bill we're presently debating is not in effect, is not in force. What we are talking about is rates of injury and the like that are in effect from the previous administration, which had ten years to fix this situation to make sure young people were well protected in the workplace. I find it just a little bit of a stretch to sit here and listen to that type of comment, when in fact what we're doing is strengthening the rules and regulations around young people in the workplace.

[2005]

Now, let's think about it for a minute — just basic common sense. You had all the rules and regulations, which the former administration put in place, and you had only 300 young people go through that permitting process. Do we not care about any of the other young people in the workplace? Do we just forget about them? I mean, that seems to me what the member opposite is talking about. We just keep the rules and the regulations, no penalties. All of them were voluntary penalties. Keep them in place, but never mind the rest of the young people in the workplace today.

Give me a break. Let's be clear on it. What we have right now in place is the fact that a young person between the ages of 12 and 15, if they wish to go to work in the workplace, has to go to the director of employment standards, and they have to get a permit from the director of employment standards. As I mentioned, during the course of the last few years, on average, about 300 have done so. We know that there are many, many more working in family businesses, working on farms, working in fall fairs, working throughout British Columbia, and so we want to make sure they're well protected.

We also have added, of course, in the amendments we made earlier on in the year, a much stronger penalty section, which instead of being voluntary penalties

— or discretionary penalties, I guess, is what they were — are now mandatory. When an employer steps across the line, they are faced, when they are found to be in contravention of employment standards, with a first fine of \$500. If that repeats, it's \$2,500. If it happens a third time, it's \$10,000. That will speak to making sure that young people and others that would violate employment standards do not do so.

Parents should be allowed to decide. You know, parents ought to have a role and a responsibility in today's society, and parents are responsible for their children. The employer must make sure, though, that the employer has on record, on file, a letter from the parent indicating that the parent knows where the young person is working and the hours of work and the type of work they're going to be undertaking.

Clearly, I just finished stating here that, first of all, the School Act takes precedence, in that no child should work during school hours. If a child works during the school week, it's a maximum of 20 hours. If a child works in the summer holidays, it's a maximum of 35 hours per week. We have strengthened and will be continuing to improve upon young people in the film industry, because we all want to see the film industry grow and expand in British Columbia. We're working both with the family advocate and with industry.

Interjection.

Hon. G. Bruce: It just begs reproach, Mr. Speaker, that we hear this sort of comment from the opposition, when they had ten years to actually bring in regulation if that's what they thought was necessary to improve the workplace, and they didn't. They sat there and did nothing.

This particular bill, Bill 37, in fact improves the workplace for young people, gives them the type of protection that they need, puts the onus on employers to make sure they live up to the rules and responsibilities and the regulations that this government is bringing in so that young people in the workplace are protected. But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We're actually also allowing for young people to go to work. What a novel thought. Somebody 12 to 15 wouldn't mind an after-school job, wouldn't mind a job in and around the province.

Now, I can understand why the opposition didn't care about it, because nobody did more to thrash the economy in the province and to drive jobs out of British Columbia. So why would they want to have an opportunity for young people to work in the province? The whole impetus of that former administration was to take the economy and thrash it, to make sure there weren't jobs here in British Columbia.

We're making sure that through the changes that are coming about, through what's happening in the economy in British Columbia, through Vancouver Island, through the north and through the rest of British Columbia, we will have a vibrant, dynamic and strong economy for young people, for middle-aged people and for guys like me to be able to have a job. [Applause.]

[2010]

Interjection.

Hon. G. Bruce: Oh, I love it. I can't wait until we can get to committee, so I can hear the drivel of questions that will go on about it, so I can say time and time and time again that we have rules and regulations in this province that make it safe for young people to work in British Columbia, that allow the employer and the employee to work together so there can be more flexibility in the workplace and so that we can build a vibrant and live economy for all British Columbians from the north of British Columbia to the south of British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 37 and look forward with relish to going into committee on this bill.

[2015]

Second reading of Bill 37 approved on the following division:

YEAS — 53

Falcon	Hogg	Halsey-Brandt
Hawkins	Cheema	J. Reid
Bruce	Santori	van Dongen
Barisoff	Wilson	Masi
Murray	Plant	Bond
Stephens	Abbott	Neufeld
Coleman	Orr	Harris
Nuraney	Brenzinger	Belsey
Bell	Chutter	Mayencourt
Trumper	Johnston	Bennett
R. Stewart	Hayer	Christensen
Krueger	McMahon	Bray
Les	Locke	Nijjar
Bhullar	Bloy	Suffredine
MacKay	Cobb	K. Stewart
Visser	Lekstrom	Brice
Sultan	Hamilton	Sahota
Hawes		Manhas

NAYS — 2

MacPhail	Kwan
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Hon. G. Bruce: I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 37, Skills Development and Labour Statutes Amendment Act, 2003, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. B. Barisoff: I call second reading on Bill 49.

PENSION STATUTES
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

Hon. S. Santori: I move that Bill 49 be read a second time now.

[2020]

As you may know, responsibility for the B.C. Pension Corporation moved from the Minister of Management Services to the Minister of Finance a short time ago. However, I will continue to carry this legislation forward on his behalf.

The Public Sector Pension Plans Act provides a statutory framework for the four public sector pension plans. Bill 49 clarifies and simplifies various pension provisions and provides the necessary tools for the board of trustees to manage the four public sector pension plans in the best interests of their plan members.

First, the bill will remove or replace obsolete terminology in the act, ensuring that definitions under the act are consistent with language used in the various joint trusteeship agreements between pension plan partners.

Second, the bill will provide the college pension board of trustees with the authority to make regulations retroactively. This retroactive rule-making ability will enable the board to more easily comply with federal and provincial regulatory requirements. The other three pension boards already have this authority.

Third, the bill will amend pension provisions in various statutes for statutory officers, such as the Ombudsman Act, to ensure that the statutory provisions are consistent with the public service pension plan rule that contributions cease after a member has accrued 35 years of pensionable service.

Fourth, the bill will legislatively transfer responsibility for the negotiation and administration of group health benefits for retired plan members from government to the four public sector pension plan board of trustees and clarify that post-retirement group benefits are not subject to the Pension Benefits Standards Act. This change in responsibility was implemented in May 2002 through order-in-council and is consistent with the principles of joint trusteeship. The amendments clarify accountability. The superintendent of pensions is aware of these changes, and he has no objections.

Fifth, while the college pension plan is already jointly managed, the bill will provide statutory authority for the college pension plan partners to enter into non-statutory joint management agreements, thereby enabling the college pension plan to operate under the same framework as the other three public sector pension plans: public service, teachers and municipal. In particular, the non-statutory joint management agreement will allow the college pension board of trustees to make pension plan rules by way of board resolution rather than regulation. The plan partners have requested this amendment.

Finally, Bill 49 will reduce the regulatory burden and red tape by facilitating the repeal of the pensioner group benefit funding regulation with the transfer of responsibility for group benefits from the B.C. Public Service Agency to the pension boards. Section 5 would have authorized the B.C. Pension management board to be

composed of appointments made by four separate pension boards, as opposed to the current process of having plan partners appoint the management board. During consultation following first reading, plan partners representing well over half of the pension membership indicated that they wanted to maintain the current process, as this was more consistent with their intentions when they entered into the joint trusteeship. Therefore, section 5 has been removed from Bill 49.

I move second reading of Bill 49, Pension Statutes Amendment Act, 2003.

Motion approved.

Hon. S. Santori: I move that Bill 49 be referred to a Committee of the Whole House to be considered at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 49, Pension Statutes Amendment Act, 2003, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. B. Barisoff: I call committee stage on Bill 38.

Committee of the Whole House

PERSONAL INFORMATION
PROTECTION ACT

The House in Committee of the Whole (Section B) on Bill 38; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 8:25 p.m.

Sections 1 to 60 inclusive approved.

Title approved.

Hon. S. Santori: I move the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 8:26 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

**Report and
Third Reading of Bills**

Bill 38, Personal Information Protection Act, reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Hon. B. Barisoff moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: The House is adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 8:27 p.m.