LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

First Session, 43rd Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday, February 24, 2025
Afternoon Sitting
Issue No. 7

THE HONOURABLE RAJ CHOUHAN, SPEAKER

ISSN 1499-2175

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Her Honour the Honourable Wendy Cocchia, CM, OBC

First Session, 43rd Parliament

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Honourable Raj Chouhan

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Premier and President of the Executive Council ..... Hon. David Eby, KC
Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities ..... Hon. Brittny Anderson
Minister of Agriculture and Food ..... Hon. Lana Popham
Attorney General and Deputy Premier ..... Hon. Niki Sharma, KC
Minister of Children and Family Development ..... Hon. Jodie Wickens
Minister of Citizens' Services ..... Hon. George Chow
Minister of Education and Child Care ..... Hon. Lisa Beare
Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness ..... Hon. Kelly Greene
Minister of Energy and Climate Solutions ..... Hon. Adrian Dix
Minister of Environment and Parks ..... Hon. Laanas / Tamara Davidson
Minister of Finance ..... Hon. Brenda Bailey
Minister of Forests ..... Hon. Ravi Parmar
Minister of Health ..... Hon. Josie Osborne
Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs ..... Hon. Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation ..... Hon. Christine Boyle
Minister of Infrastructure ..... Hon. Bowinn Ma
Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation ..... Hon. Diana Gibson
Minister of State for Trade ..... Hon. Rick Glumac
Minister of Labour ..... Hon. Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Mining and Critical Minerals ..... Hon. Jagrup Brar
Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills ..... Hon. Anne Kang
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General ..... Hon. Garry Begg
Minister of State for Community Safety and Integrated Services ..... Hon. Terry Yung
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction ..... Hon. Sheila Malcolmson
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport ..... Hon. Spencer Chandra Herbert
Minister of Transportation and Transit ..... Hon. Mike Farnworth
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship ..... Hon. Randene Neill
Minister Without Portfolio ..... Hon. Grace Lore

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Leader of the Official Opposition ..... John Rustad
Leader of the Third Party ..... Jeremy Valeriote
Deputy Speaker ..... Mable Elmore
Assistant Deputy Speaker ..... Lorne Doerkson
Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole ..... George Anderson
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly ..... Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel ..... Seunghee Suzie Seo
Clerk Assistant, Parliamentary Services ..... Artour Sogomonian
Clerk of Committees ..... Jennifer Arril
Committee Clerk ..... Karan Riarh
Committee Clerk ..... Darryl Hol
Senior Legal Counsel ..... Hayley Hill
Sergeant-at-Arms ..... Ray Robitaille
Director of Hansard Services ..... D'Arcy McPherson
Legislative Librarian ..... Peter Gourlay

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS BY PARTY

BC NDP

Anderson, Hon. Brittny ..... Kootenay Central
Anderson, George ..... Nanaimo-Lantzville
Arora, Rohini ..... Burnaby East
Bailey, Hon. Brenda ..... Vancouver–South Granville
Beare, Hon. Lisa ..... Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows
Begg, Hon. Garry ..... Surrey-Guildford
Blatherwick, Jennifer ..... Coquitlam-Maillardville
Boyle, Hon. Christine ..... Vancouver–Little Mountain
Brar, Hon. Jagrup ..... Surrey-Fleetwood
Chandra Herbert, Hon. Spencer ..... Vancouver–West End
Chant, Susie ..... North Vancouver–Seymour
Choi, Paul ..... Burnaby South–Metrotown
Chouhan, Hon. Raj ..... Burnaby–New Westminster
Chow, Hon. George ..... Vancouver-Fraserview
Davidson, Hon. Tamara / Laanas ..... North Coast–Haida Gwaii
Dhir, Sunita ..... Vancouver-Langara
Dix, Hon. Adrian ..... Vancouver-Renfrew
Eby, Hon. David, KC ..... Vancouver–Point Grey
Elmore, Mable ..... Vancouver-Kensington
Farnworth, Hon. Mike ..... Port Coquitlam
Gibson, Hon. Diana ..... Oak Bay–Gordon Head
Glumac, Hon. Rick ..... Port Moody–Burquitlam
Greene, Hon. Kelly ..... Richmond-Steveston
Higginson, Stephanie ..... Ladysmith-Oceanside
Kahlon, Hon. Ravi ..... Delta North
Kang, Hon. Anne ..... Burnaby Centre
Krieger, Nina ..... Victoria–Swan Lake
Lajeunesse, Dana ..... Juan de Fuca–Malahat
Lore, Hon. Grace ..... Victoria–Beacon Hill
Ma, Hon. Bowinn ..... North Vancouver–Lonsdale
Malcolmson, Hon. Sheila ..... Nanaimo–Gabriola Island
Morissette, Steve ..... Kootenay Monashee
Neill, Hon. Randene ..... Powell River–Sunshine Coast
Osborne, Hon. Josie ..... Mid Island–Pacifc Rim
Parmar, Hon. Ravi ..... Langford-Highlands
Phillip, Joan / Amshen ..... Vancouver-Strathcona
Popham, Hon. Lana ..... Saanich South
Rotchford, Darlene ..... Esquimalt-Colwood
Routledge, Janet ..... Burnaby North
Sandhu, Harwinder ..... Vernon-Lumby
Shah, Amna ..... Surrey City Centre
Sharma, Hon. Niki, KC ..... Vancouver-Hastings
Sunner, Jessie ..... Surrey-Newton
Toporowski, Debra / Qwulti'stunaat ..... Cowichan Valley
Whiteside, Hon. Jennifer ..... New Westminster–Coquitlam
Wickens, Hon. Jodie ..... Coquitlam–Burke Mountain
Yung, Hon. Terry ..... Vancouver-Yaletown

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF BC

Armstrong, Tara ..... Kelowna–Lake Country–Coldstream
Banman, Bruce ..... Abbotsford South
Bhangu, Harman ..... Langley-Abbotsford
Bird, Rosalyn ..... Prince George–Valemount
Block, Lynne ..... West Vancouver–Capilano
Boultbee, Amelia ..... Penticton-Summerland
Brodie, Dallas ..... Vancouver-Quilchena
Chan, Hon ..... Richmond Centre
Chapman, Brent ..... Surrey South
Clare, Sheldon ..... Prince George–North Cariboo
Davis, Pete ..... Kootenay Rockies
Day, Brennan ..... Courtenay-Comox
Dew, Gavin ..... Kelowna-Mission
Dhaliwal, Mandeep ..... Surrey North
Doerkson, Lorne ..... Cariboo-Chilcotin
Gasper, Reann ..... Abbotsford-Mission
Giddens, Kiel ..... Prince George–Mackenzie
Halford, Trevor ..... Surrey–White Rock
Hartwell, Sharon ..... Bulkley Valley–Stikine
Hepner, Linda ..... Surrey–Serpentine River
Kealy, Jordan ..... Peace River North
Kindy, Anna ..... North Island
Kooner, Steve ..... Richmond-Queensborough
Loewen, Kristina ..... Kelowna Centre
Luck, Tony ..... Fraser-Nicola
Maahs, Heather ..... Chilliwack North
McCall, Macklin ..... West Kelowna–Peachland
McInnis, Scott ..... Columbia River–Revelstoke
Milobar, Peter ..... Kamloops Centre
Mok, Lawrence ..... Maple Ridge East
Neufeld, Korky ..... Abbotsford West
Neufeld, Larry ..... Peace River South
Paton, Ian ..... Delta South
Rattée, Claire ..... Skeena
Rustad, John ..... Nechako Lakes
Stamer, Ward ..... Kamloops–North Thompson
Sturko, Elenore ..... Surrey-Cloverdale
Tepper, Bryan ..... Surrey-Panorama
Toor, Jody ..... Langley-Willowbrook
Van Popta, Misty ..... Langley–Walnut Grove
Warbus, Á'a:líya ..... Chilliwack–Cultus Lake
Wat, Teresa ..... Richmond-Bridgeport
Williams, David ..... Salmon Arm–Shuswap
Wilson, Donegal ..... Boundary-Similkameen

BC GREEN PARTY

Botterell, Rob ..... Saanich North and the Islands
Valeriote, Jeremy ..... West Vancouver–Sea to Sky

PARTY STANDINGS

Total seats – 93

BC NDP – 47 | Conservative Party of BC – 44 | BC Green Party – 2

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF RIDINGS

A

Abbotsford-Mission ..... Reann Gasper
Abbotsford South ..... Bruce Banman
Abbotsford West ..... Korky Neufeld

B

Boundary-Similkameen ..... Donegal Wilson
Bulkley Valley–Stikine ..... Sharon Hartwell
Burnaby Centre ..... Hon. Anne Kang
Burnaby East ..... Rohini Arora
Burnaby–New Westminster ..... Hon. Raj Chouhan
Burnaby North ..... Janet Routledge
Burnaby South–Metrotown ..... Paul Choi

C

Cariboo-Chilcotin ..... Lorne Doerkson
Chilliwack–Cultus Lake ..... Á'a:líya Warbus
Chilliwack North ..... Heather Maahs
Columbia River–Revelstoke ..... Scott McInnis
Coquitlam–Burke Mountain ..... Hon. Jodie Wickens
Coquitlam-Maillardville ..... Jennifer Blatherwick
Courtenay-Comox ..... Brennan Day
Cowichan Valley ..... Debra Toporowski / Qwulti'stunaat

D

Delta North ..... Hon. Ravi Kahlon
Delta South ..... Ian Paton

E

Esquimalt-Colwood ..... Darlene Rotchford

F

Fraser-Nicola ..... Tony Luck

J

Juan de Fuca–Malahat ..... Dana Lajeunesse

K

Kamloops Centre ..... Peter Milobar
Kamloops–North Thompson ..... Ward Stamer
Kelowna Centre ..... Kristina Loewen
Kelowna–Lake Country–Coldstream ..... Tara Armstrong
Kelowna-Mission ..... Gavin Dew
Kootenay Central ..... Hon. Brittny Anderson
Kootenay Monashee ..... Steve Morissette
Kootenay Rockies ..... Pete Davis

L

Ladysmith-Oceanside ..... Stephanie Higginson
Langford-Highlands ..... Hon. Ravi Parmar
Langley-Abbotsford ..... Harman Bhangu
Langley–Walnut Grove ..... Misty Van Popta
Langley-Willowbrook ..... Jody Toor

M

Maple Ridge East ..... Lawrence Mok
Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows ..... Hon. Lisa Beare
Mid Island–Pacific Rim ..... Hon. Josie Osborne

N

Nanaimo–Gabriola Island ..... Hon. Sheila Malcolmson
Nanaimo-Lantzville ..... George Anderson
Nechako Lakes ..... John Rustad
New Westminster–Coquitlam ..... Hon. Jennifer Whiteside
North Coast–Haida Gwaii ..... Hon. Laanas / Tamara Davidson
North Island ..... Anna Kindy
North Vancouver–Lonsdale ..... Hon. Bowinn Ma
North Vancouver–Seymour ..... Susie Chant

O

Oak Bay–Gordon Head ..... Hon. Diana Gibson

P

Peace River North ..... Jordan Kealy
Peace River South ..... Larry Neufeld
Penticton-Summerland ..... Amelia Boultbee
Port Coquitlam ..... Hon. Mike Farnworth
Port Moody–Burquitlam ..... Hon. Rick Glumac
Powell River–Sunshine Coast ..... Hon. Randene Neill
Prince George–Mackenzie ..... Kiel Giddens
Prince George–North Cariboo ..... Sheldon Clare
Prince George–Valemount ..... Rosalyn Bird

R

Richmond-Bridgeport ..... Teresa Wat
Richmond Centre ..... Hon Chan
Richmond-Queensborough ..... Steve Kooner
Richmond-Steveston ..... Hon. Kelly Greene

S

Saanich North and the Islands ..... Rob Botterell
Saanich South ..... Hon. Lana Popham
Salmon Arm–Shuswap ..... David Williams
Skeena ..... Claire Rattée
Surrey City Centre ..... Amna Shah
Surrey-Cloverdale ..... Elenore Sturko
Surrey-Fleetwood ..... Hon. Jagrup Brar
Surrey-Guildford ..... Hon. Garry Begg
Surrey-Newton ..... Jessie Sunner
Surrey North ..... Mandeep Dhaliwal
Surrey-Panorama ..... Bryan Tepper
Surrey–Serpentine River ..... Linda Hepner
Surrey South ..... Brent Chapman
Surrey–White Rock ..... Trevor Halford

V

Vancouver-Fraserview ..... Hon. George Chow
Vancouver-Hastings ..... Hon. Niki Sharma, KC
Vancouver-Kensington ..... Mable Elmore
Vancouver-Langara ..... Sunita Dhir
Vancouver–Little Mountain ..... Hon. Christine Boyle
Vancouver–Point Grey ..... Hon. David Eby, KC
Vancouver-Quilchena ..... Dallas Brodie
Vancouver-Renfrew ..... Hon. Adrian Dix
Vancouver–South Granville ..... Hon. Brenda Bailey
Vancouver-Strathcona ..... Amshen / Joan Phillip
Vancouver–West End ..... Hon. Spencer Chandra Herbert
Vancouver-Yaletown ..... Hon. Terry Yung
Vernon-Lumby ..... Harwinder Sandhu
Victoria–Beacon Hill ..... Hon. Grace Lore
Victoria–Swan Lake ..... Nina Krieger

W

West Kelowna–Peachland ..... Macklin McCall
West Vancouver–Capilano ..... Lynne Block
West Vancouver–Sea to Sky ..... Jeremy Valeriote

CONTENTS

Monday, February 24, 2025
Afternoon Sitting

Page

Routine Business

Introductions by Members 135

Members' Statements 135
- Issamba African Arts and Cultural Centre
  - Nina Krieger
- Hockey Coaching Accomplishments of Jon Cooper
  - Rosalyn Bird
- Work of Pete Stamper in Recycling and Circular Economy
  - Steve Morissette
- Social Service Organizations in Chilliwack
  - Heather Maahs
- Coldest Night of the Year Fundraising Walk
  - Jessie Sunner
- Freedom's Door Addiction Recovery Centre and Work of Peter Lees
  - Kristina Loewen

Ministerial Statements 138
- War in Ukraine and Third Anniversary of Invasion
  - Hon. David Eby
  - Á'a:líya Warbus
  - Jeremy Valeriote

Oral Questions 140
- Forest Industry Trade Issues and Proposal for Carbon Tax on U.S. Thermal Coal
  - John Rustad
  - Hon. David Eby
  - Ward Stamer
  - Hon. Ravi Parmar
- Critical Minerals and Mining Projects
  - Jeremy Valeriote
  - Hon. Ravi Kahlon
  - Hon. Jagrup Brar
- Emergency Services at Delta Hospital
  - Ian Paton
  - Hon. Josie Osborne
- Ambulance Station and Service in Kitwanga
  - Sharon Hartwell
  - Hon. Josie Osborne
- Rural Retention Incentive for Health Care Professionals
  - Scott McInnis
  - Hon. Josie Osborne
- International Trade Offices
  - Teresa Wat
  - Hon. Diana Gibson

Petitions 146
- Scott McInnis

Tabling Documents 146
- Property Assessment Appeal Board, annual report, 2024
- B.C. Treaty Commission, annual report, 2024

Government Motions on Notice 146
Motion 1 — Appointment of Special Committee to Review the Public Interest Disclosure Act
Hon. Mike Farnworth
Motion 2 — Powers and Role of Finance Committee
Hon. Mike Farnworth
Motion 3 — Appointment of Special Committee to Appoint Statutory Officers
Hon. Mike Farnworth
Motion 4 — Powers and Role of Public Accounts Committee
Hon. Mike Farnworth
Motion 5 — Powers and Role of Private Bills and Members' Bills Committee
Hon. Mike Farnworth
Motion 6 — Powers and Role of Children and Youth Committee
Hon. Mike Farnworth

Orders of the Day

Second Reading of Bills 149
Bill 2 — Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner Continuation Act
Hon. Niki Sharma
Steve Kooner
Paul Choi
Stephanie Higginson
Hon. Niki Sharma
Bill 3 — Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2025
Hon. Laanas / Tamara Davidson
Trevor Halford
Hon. Sheila Malcolmson
Hon. Christine Boyle
Hon. Ravi Parmar
Peter Milobar
Jessie Sunner
Hon. Spencer Chandra Herbert
Hon. Bowinn Ma

Private Members' Motions 177
Motion 7 — Response to U.S. Tariffs Proposal *(continued)*

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025

The House met at 1:34 p.m.

[The Speaker in the chair.]

Routine Business

Introductions by Members

Hon. Ravi Parmar: As all the members in the House will know, three years ago Russia began an unjust and unprovoked war on Ukraine. Little did I know at that time how much of an impact that would have on me personally.

It was just over two years ago that I was in Ukraine myself as part of a humanitarian mission with a good group of people from Langford, and I've stayed in touch. That same group is going to be heading to Ukraine in a couple of weeks. It has fundraised hundreds of thousands of dollars.

[1:35 p.m.]

I have just built so many impactful relationships with people there and also people from the Ukrainian community here in Victoria. I'm honoured to be able to introduce in this House a number of people that are here for the Premier's ministerial statement.

Dmytro Borysenko, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Victoria branch; Hanna Anikeychyk, vice-president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Victoria branch.

Anastasiia Zievako, ambassador for political inquiries, Ukrainian Canadian Congress; Kateryna Bandura, public relations director for the UCC.

Robert Herchak, president of the Ukrainian Studies Society.

Andriy Fabrikov, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Cultural Society of Vancouver Island.

Vetrichenko Nataliia, secretary of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress; and Bryan Melnyk, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

Will the House please join me in making them all feel very welcome.

Bruce Banman: It is my pleasure, actually, to introduce a familiar face to this House. Jason Goertzen is up in the gallery.

Jason actually just finished coming out of some minor surgery. He had a spill on his bike, and I believe there was a fractured clavicle and a few ribs. In spite of the fact that he was in surgery, I understand, yesterday, he's here.

I just want the House to be thankful that he's here and give him a very round welcome.

Hon. David Eby: I rise to welcome a couple of guests in the House from the University of British Columbia.

Melanie Stewart, as former Deputy Minister of Education and Child Care, was instrumental in helping the province respond to unprecedented population growth, the early childhood education program, through our child care initiative.

A remarkable public servant has joined UBC. President Antoine Bacon poached her from us. I think he's done some other things as well.

They're both here to meet with members of the House, to talk about the research and economic-driving activities of UBC, as well as the experience of students, training up the next generation of leaders in our province. I'm so glad to have them here. I know that UBC touches the lives of many of the members' constituents across the province.

Please all join me in making them feel very welcome here today.

Hon. Bowinn Ma: We are joined in the House by a valued volunteer of mine, a trusted adviser and cherished friend, Mahdiyar Biazi, who has joined our team in Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation. He is also my Farsi language instructor.

[Farsi was spoken.]

Would the House please join me in welcoming him to this place.

Nina Krieger: Today we are joined in the House by representatives from the Issamba Centre, neighbours to my constituency office in Victoria–Swan Lake. Office manager Melvin Carbonel and volunteer Aaron Leidenius support the important work of the only African cultural centre and hub for people of African descent on Vancouver Island.

I look forward to sharing more about this organization later this afternoon.

I ask that the House please join me in making them feel very welcome.

Members' Statements

ISSAMBA AFRICAN ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTRE

Nina Krieger: Thank you to the lək̓ʷəŋən-speaking people, the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, on whose territory we gather.

Victoria–Swan Lake is proud to be home to the Issamba African arts and cultural centre. As we enter the final week of Black History Month, I'm grateful that I have the opportunity to highlight the work they do every day to shape our province and uplift the people that live here.

[1:40 p.m.]

Home to the African art and cultural contributor society, Issamba was founded by visionary and advocate Pulchérie Mboussi. Since 2012, the centre has promoted the rich and diverse cultures of Africa and the Caribbean

through arts, education and community initiatives, such as the Black in B.C. Leadership Summit and AfriCa Fest.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Arts and Film, I cannot overstate the importance of ensuring that diverse voices are represented in the arts. Issamba's work preserves and promotes the rich history, cultures and traditions of the Black diaspora. This empowers people to become an integral part of Canada's cultural fabric and affirms the value of diversity for us all.

Issamba also plays a significant role in the fight against anti-Black racism and systemic racism more broadly. In 2022, they led and convened a pilot project which directly contributed to the government's Anti-Racism Data Act.

I thank Issamba's professional team and volunteers for their unwavering dedication to promoting cultural awareness and fostering community resilience. Their contributions are deeply appreciated, and we look forward to many more years of inspiring and important work.

The Speaker: Member, before I recognize the next member to make a statement, we, by mistake, missed the Member for Juan de Fuca–Malahat. He wanted to make an introduction.

Please proceed.

Introductions by Members

Dana Lajeunesse: I am honoured to be joined in the chamber today by students from the Shawnigan Lake School and their teacher, Paul Klassen. It's incredibly important for the next generation to learn about the work we do here as MLAs.

I hope the whole House will join me in making them feel welcome.

Members' Statements

HOCKEY COACHING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JON COOPER

Rosalyn Bird: Living in northern B.C., we unlock a reservoir of resilience and strength that defines our communities and leaders. Each challenge embraced, whether it's braving harsh winters or enduring economic shifts, only fuels our unbreakable spirit.

Leaders in our community emerge not only as voices of resilience but beacons of hope and integrity. One such leader from my incredible riding of Prince George–Valemount is Jonathan D. Cooper, the Canadian-American professional hockey coach.

John is currently the head coach of NHL's Tampa Bay Lightning, and, as we are all aware, last week at the 4 Nations hockey tournament, he led the Canadian team to a win. John is Prince George's first-ever NHL coach. He won back-to-back Stanley Cup championships in 2020 and 2021, and he is the longest-tenured head coach in the NHL.

John's father, Bob, is a leader in the Prince George construction industry, establishing a highly successful business, RJ Cooper Construction, in 1967. It continues to operate today. In 2013, Bob stated, laughing, "I guess we did a good job with him," hearing his son was to become the head coach for Tampa Bay.

After the win last week, Coach Cooper said, via Sportsnet: "I just hope Canada is proud, because every player in that room is proud to be Canadian. Did we need a win? Not only for our team, but Canada needed a win. The players bear that on their shoulders. They took it seriously. This one was different. It wasn't a win for themselves. This was a win for 40-plus-million people. The guys knew it, and they delivered."

In the face of adversity, leaders help us to rise together, turning obstacles into stepping stones. As we strive to make life better in British Columbia, let us remember that our strength lies not in individual journeys but in recognizing what we can accomplish together.

United we stand; divided we fall.

WORK OF PETE STAMPER IN RECYCLING AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Steve Morissette: It is my pleasure to take this time to congratulate the majority owner and CEO of KC Recycling, Pete Stamper, in our Kootenay-Monashee riding on his recent award of a King Charles III medal for his work in the circular economy.

Pete intentionally brought his family to B.C. from Seattle about six years ago. He brought them for safety, schooling and lifestyle. Pete and family live in Rossland for the outdoor lifestyle and mountain culture it provides.

[1:45 p.m.]

This award is not just a recognition of business success; it's an acknowledgement of being a contributor to the community and making things better.

I think a large part of receiving this award has also come from the way he builds relationships and communicates enthusiastically about the importance of his work. Pete's work has a large impact on the greater Trail area and the region beyond.

Every week 50 semi trucks of lead-acid batteries are collected from the western parts of the continent and delivered to Pete's facility, keeping them out of landfills. Virtually 100 percent of the materials of the batteries are recycled and sold back into battery production. This is the largest facility of its type in western Canada and the Pacific Northwest.

Since 2022, with supporting grants from our government, his business and workforce have grown from 40 to 60 direct jobs. That has provided many individuals and

families, right at home, with reliable and meaningful work, paying bills and keeping food on the table.

I would also like to congratulate Pete and family in advance for gaining Canadian citizenship later this spring.

Again, congratulations on your well-deserved award, Pete.

SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS IN CHILLIWACK

Heather Maahs: It is truly an honour and a privilege to stand in this House today to pay tribute to some of the incredible organizations that look after our most vulnerable and needy people in Chilliwack.

I had the opportunity to have a tour through the Salvation Army premises and was truly amazed at all the wonderful ways they care for so many struggling people in the city. They provide them with food, shelter, clothing, even a spot to park their belongings while they simply enjoy the luxury, something we take for granted, of having a shower and using a washing machine and dryer for their clothing.

Pastors Matt and Fiona, Josh, Warren, Chris and Scott and all the countless volunteers who work tirelessly — I was humbled by their dedication and hearts for the people of this city.

I visited with Pastor Scott from Ruth and Naomi's Mission, who described to me the sites they oversee for youth, as well as adults and families, who just need a leg up for a while and a place to stay. They also have many wonderful people working at these sites providing much-needed services.

They support 26 men and eight women in residential recovery. They also provide 100 shelter beds each night. As with the Salvation Army, these places are a means to an end. It's not easy, as more and more of their resources are stretched so thin, but you never hear a word of complaint from them.

Last but definitely not least is TYDEL Foods, run by the incomparable Brigida. She serves 700-plus seniors. In her own words, she says: "At TYDEL Foods, we realize some seniors are struggling so badly that they eat every third day just so they can afford their medication and housing. Some have become our 'hidden hungry,' and we must do better and be better, especially to those most vulnerable."

There are many more in Chilliwack, but how incredible. I'm truly humbled by the labour of love these organizations bestow on our community.

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR FUNDRAISING WALK

Jessie Sunner: This past Saturday communities across the province came together to walk in their local Coldest Night of the Year event, to help combat homelessness and poverty.

It was especially meaningful for me to partake in this year's walk, which took place in my community of Surrey-Newton, a community where so many local organizations work tirelessly to support vulnerable individuals and raise awareness about critical issues like poverty, food insecurity, mental health and housing challenges.

There was an outpouring of support from a number of local community groups, including the five organizations that hosted this year's walk.

[1:50 p.m.]

The event was led by Moving Forward Family Services, which provides affordable and accessible counselling supports to underserved communities across Canada; Seva Foundation, which supports various local charities through funds raised in its Seva thrift store; the South Asian Community Hub, which offers culturally sensitive wraparound services for individuals and families facing health and social challenges; the South Asian Legal Clinic of B.C., which provides low-cost and low-barrier legal services and education and legal advocacy; and Guru Nanak's Free Kitchen, which provides warm meals to those in need in the Downtown Eastside as well as across the Lower Mainland.

The work of these organizations does not go unnoticed in our community, and I am deeply grateful to those for hosting this year's walk and for the work they do day in and day out throughout the year.

I also want to thank the volunteers, the participants, the donors and everyone who made this event a success. Your participation speaks volumes about the strength of our community and your compassion for those in need.

Thank you for walking together to make a difference so we can ensure that no one in our community is left out in the cold.

FREEDOM'S DOOR ADDICTION RECOVERY CENTRE AND WORK OF PETER LEES

Kristina Loewen: Today I have the honour of recognizing Peter Lees from Freedom's Door. Freedom's Door is a men's addiction recovery centre in Kelowna Centre. For nearly 20 years, Peter has dedicated himself to serving the most vulnerable, beginning at other organizations like Karis House. His tireless work recently earned him the King Charles III's Coronation Medal, a true testament to his kindness, compassion and work ethic.

It's impossible not to feel inspired around Peter. His infectious joy shines through every conversation. I heard a story from a recent alumnus who credited Peter with not only helping him overcome addiction but also helping him enter a four-year engineering program at university.

Another notable graduate from Freedom's Door is Levi Nelson. He attended in 2015. He's gone on to become one of four Indigenous designers of the medal for the Invictus Games.

Founded by Tom Smithwick in 2002, Freedom's Door now boasts a chapel, a gazebo, several gathering areas and a long waiting list — all achieved without government funding, relying solely on community generosity. Their abstinence and faith-based approach, along with a strong good-neighbour policy, inspires participants to give back. Whether it's picking up garbage, shovelling snow or cutting the grass for new parents of triplets when it grows to about a foot tall, their impact is clear. Their neighbours love them.

The 90-day program at Freedom's Door helps participants understand the biological, psychological, social and spiritual roots of addiction, guiding them back to hope, worth and purpose. My favourite quote on their site is: "We talk in group of spirituality because the worst outcomes of addiction are total loss of hope, loss of worth, of value and of purpose."

I am so impressed with Freedom's Door's success rate and return of quality of life to individuals. We need more programs like this that truly heal and restore lives.

Thank you, Tom, Peter and Freedom's Door.

Hon Chan: Hon. Speaker, I seek leave for an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

Hon Chan: It is truly exciting to welcome students from Richmond Secondary School in my riding of Richmond Centre to the B.C. Legislature today. They are the future leaders of our province, and who knows, one day we may see some of them here as MLAs.

I had the privilege of visiting this school for the Remembrance Day ceremony last November, and I was truly impressed. The band and the student emcee did an outstanding job.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize their hard work.

Let's all give them a big round of applause and warmly welcome them to the B.C. Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Members, earlier, the Member for Juan de Fuca–Malahat introduced students from his riding. I think they have arrived now, so we can wave at them.

Welcome.

The Hon. Premier to make a ministerial statement.

Ministerial Statements

WAR IN UKRAINE AND THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF INVASION

Hon. David Eby: I rise today to mark the third anniversary of one of the darkest days of modern history. Three years ago Russia invaded Ukraine. Russia launched an unjustified, brutal attack on a peaceful neighbour.

The scenes of Russian aggression shocked the conscience of people around the world. Helicopters attacking airports. Civilians fleeing across shattered bridges. Tanks rolling up city streets. Those fleeing the invasion knew what a Russian occupation meant for them. We saw bodies of Ukrainian civilians lying beside bicycles as if they'd been shot for sport. We saw victims of massacres lying in courtyards and mass graves.

[1:55 p.m.]

But we also saw scenes of incredible and remarkable bravery. Outnumbered soldiers fighting off attackers. Unarmed civilians blocking the path of tanks. A woman in a head scarf confronting an armed invader saying: "Put these seeds in your pockets so at least sunflowers will grow when you fall."

I'm happy to report that after three years of slaughter, deprivation, air raids and unspeakable horrors, Kyiv stands free. Ukraine remains an independent, sovereign nation, as its citizens want it to be, and may it ever be such.

Ukraine did not start this war. Russia is unquestionably the aggressor in this illegal, immoral, unnecessary war. The pretext for the invasion was that the Ukrainians needed security. They needed security from what was clearly the threat from Russia. Russia has failed to conquer Ukraine because of the bravery of the Ukrainian people, their armed forces and their democratically elected president.

We saw that unvanquished Ukrainian spirit on display at the Invictus Games in Vancouver and Whistler: 35 resilient Ukrainian warriors competing, winning 30 medals, including 12 golds. Ukrainians are indomitable. They've shown that spirit in their long struggle for independence.

You may have heard of the paramedic Yuliia Paievska; she's also known as Taira. She organized a volunteer ambulance corps called Taira's Angels, saving Ukrainian civilians, Ukrainian soldiers and, yes, even Russian soldiers. She was captured and tortured by the Russians. When she was rescued, she needed both hips replaced. She then competed in earlier Invictus Games and went on to win two medals.

The war may be far away geographically, but for many British Columbians, it is very close to their hearts. Canadians have historic and contemporary ties to Ukraine. That's why so many Canadians have stepped forward to help that nation and its people in their time of need.

Some Ukrainians have even found sanctuary here in very faraway British Columbia. So many people opened their doors to Ukrainians in an expression of humanity and solidarity.

I remember Shirley Bond, a member from Prince George, talking about how Prince George welcomed 170 displaced Ukrainians, with more on the way. Volunteers met them at the airport. They gave them furniture, supplies to start their new lives. There were uncountable acts of kindness. I

know that the Ukrainians would do no less for us if the roles were reversed.

This is an historic moment. It's a time that calls on all of us to be strong of heart and clear-eyed, to have a strong moral centre. That's why British Columbians join other Canadians in standing with the people of Ukraine as they defend their land.

It is unacceptable to have dictators bully and attack peaceful neighbours. The free democratic world must uphold Ukraine's independence, their sovereignty and their territorial integrity. We are in a very dangerous place indeed if we allow bullies and dictators to run roughshod against democratic and peaceful neighbours. Democratic societies like our own offer the greatest freedoms and opportunities for people.

It seems we are increasingly in a topsy-turvy world. Spirited political debate has always happened, but it was built on a shared understanding of basic facts. We could disagree on an approach, but we agreed on the underlying character of the issues we faced.

Now some call into question the basic facts around science and history. They ask us to disbelieve things we can see with our own eyes, that we can hear with our own ears. Lies and disinformation are the building blocks behind recent statements about Ukraine and its leaders.

To be clear, President Zelenskyy is no dictator. There is a dictator in this conflict. His name is Vladimir Putin. The Russian threat to Europe is so obvious that Sweden and Finland, after 75 years of resisting joining NATO, despite sharing borders with the Soviet Union, have now joined NATO. The Swedes and the Finns understand that a threat to Ukraine is a threat to them. And a threat to Ukraine is a threat to every nation that wants to remain independent.

We live in an age when trade and political alliances are shattering, and new ones need to be formed. As just one example, the threat of tariffs, or worse, from our southern neighbour jeopardizes 200 years of relationship. In all of human history, you'd have a hard time finding two countries that work together so fruitfully and peacefully as ours. A trade war is obviously the last thing we want, but we will do everything necessary to protect the people and businesses of British Columbia.

[2:00 p.m.]

In these troubled times, it's more important than ever that free and democratic people band together. We stand with the Ukrainian people against Russian aggression.

We salute their bravery. We salute their resilience. They deserve a fair and just peace, with their independence and sovereignty not only preserved but made stronger than ever.

Á'a:líya Warbus: I want to recognize the Premier for bringing attention to this dire anniversary and the conflict that we see around the world today.

Today I rise to address the devastating impact of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. As we witness the loss of so many lives, we must take a moment to reflect on the profound grief experienced by all those who have lost loved ones during the tragic time we are seeing unfold.

Our hearts are with those who mourn, and we extend our deepest sympathies to all that are affected. This conflict has left a deep scar on countless individuals and families and the entirety of communities. It's taken lives, destroyed homes and displaced countless people. The impact is felt far beyond the immediate front lines and continues to ripple through every corner of the world. It is a stark reminder of the preciousness of life and the human cost of war.

War exacts a heavy toll on those who survive it. The trauma, both physical and psychological, can last long after the conflict ends. Communities that once thrived now face the painful task of coping and then rebuilding, knowing that much of what was lost may never return. Children grow up in environments shaped by violence and fear, carrying with them the scars that may persist through generations. For many, the devastation is not just the loss of loved ones, but the loss of a future that they once imagined.

It's very difficult for us to process here the scale of the tragedy, but we must acknowledge the ongoing suffering and uncertainty that continues each day. While words cannot undo the damage done, we can reaffirm our commitment to support all measures that can help bring about peace and a just resolution.

In these incredibly difficult times, it's more important than ever to focus on the future, and our collective goal should always be to find a path forward that ensures the safety, dignity and well-being of all people. Let us continue to advocate for diplomacy, dialogue and peaceful efforts that bring us closer to a lasting resolution.

The human cost of conflict must not be ignored. We must remain committed to building a future where peace prevails for all.

Jeremy Valeriote: As the Premier and the Opposition House Leader have noted, three years ago human dignity, sovereignty and peace were threatened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The result has been hundreds of thousands of people killed or wounded, cities turned to ruin, millions of Ukrainians displaced and a destabilization of global politics.

I have to say, on a personal level, I'd hoped we were beyond this. I'd hoped we were better than this: fighting and killing each other for national territory when there are existential threats to our way of life.

As we enter the fourth year of this war and humanitarian crisis, it is more important than ever for British Columbia to extend its unwavering support to Ukraine. We cannot allow geographical distance or time elapsed to

render us apathetic to the brutalities inflicted on Ukrainians. We must not ignore the violence against the Ukrainian people that continues just as fiercely today. We must stay vigilant against hate and fight back against the influx of disinformation, mistrust and deception coming from Russia, Putin and those under his influence.

We must ensure that peace is led by Ukrainian leaders and acknowledge the need for international support to rebuild. That effort must be led from Kyiv based on Ukrainian interests, not financial interests out of Washington. We must not let global leaders bully Ukraine and use this crisis for their own personal gain. The sovereignty of Ukraine is not up for debate, just as our Canadian sovereignty is non-negotiable.

[2:05 p.m.]

Above all, we must remember the people of Ukraine: the many innocent lives lost, families separated and vibrant communities torn apart; the millions displaced and severed from their homes; the dreams, hopes and desires that make up Ukraine lost to needless war.

While remembrance and reflection are important, they must also be met with action. This crisis is ongoing, and it's our duty to stay committed to Ukraine and its people. Last year in this House, Sonia Furstenau said that this crisis should serve as a wake-up call to us all about the importance of unity and resilience.

This sentiment is just as relevant as it was last year, and I encourage us all to rally together behind our friends in Ukraine, to continue fighting alongside them for their sovereignty and right to self-determination, to ensure nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine, to foster a British Columbia that is welcoming and safe for all Ukrainians who need it, to be optimistic and hopeful for our future together and to create a world in which we might cast aside the horrors of war in exchange for respectful dialogue, cooperation and peace.

Oral Questions

FOREST INDUSTRY TRADE ISSUES AND PROPOSAL FOR CARBON TAX ON U.S. THERMAL COAL

John Rustad: B.C.'s forest sector has been without a softwood lumber agreement for eight years. Thousands of jobs have been lost. Mills have been closed. Families and communities have been devastated. For eight years, the Premier and his government have done nothing to solve the softwood lumber problem that we have. He likes to wrap himself in the flag, but this is more about posturing for politics as opposed to actually doing something for workers.

The Conservative Party of British Columbia has put forward a plan to place a carbon tax on U.S.A. thermal coal, keep this revenue in a trust and use it as leverage to get a deal done with the Americans.

To the Premier: will you implement this plan?

Hon. David Eby: Our forestry industry is facing huge challenges. The recent proposal to increase tariffs on them, which they are seeing, is costing jobs and livelihoods.

I'm glad to see the Leader of the Opposition standing up to say that he is seeking ways to retaliate against unfair tariffs. Frankly, I hadn't heard him say that. It's a significant departure. It's important that in this House, when the U.S. is attacking industries in Canada, we all stand together to say: "If you hit us, we'll hit you back. We're going to make sure that Americans feel what you're imposing on Canadians."

We don't want this fight. We're going to stand up for it.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Shhh.

Hon. David Eby: The member knows there are big challenges with the federally regulated industry of railways and ports. But I am happy to work with the member to find ways to retaliate against unfair tariffs against Canadian industries that we can all support, because we've got to stand up for B.C. businesses, including in the forestry sector.

Honestly, it is a relief to hear him talk about retaliation, because this House needs to be united in the face of this unprecedented threat from our neighbour to the south.

The Speaker: Leader of the Official Opposition, supplemental.

John Rustad: Well, it's clear why nothing has been done for eight years. There were no tariffs; there were no issues. There were duties that were put in place. Clearly, this Premier did not understand the challenge facing a forest sector and doing absolutely nothing.

Now he wants to stand up to champion B.C. and helpfully…. I'm glad he wants to stand up to champion B.C., but what about all the workers that lost their jobs? What about the forest sector that has not had a champion in this government for eight years and that has been devastated?

We need plans, not rhetoric. Our Conservative Party has put forward plans to eliminate the job-killing carbon tax, not the consumer side but also all of it, because it kills jobs and makes us uncompetitive. We put a plan forward to open our mines, to export our natural gas, to be able to support the jobs and support a province, to make sure that British Columbia can remain strong.

The Americans have postured about Canada becoming their 51st state.

I can tell you, Premier: not on my watch. That will never happen here in British Columbia.

[2:10 p.m.]

It's time to rake the Americans over the coals and deal with this issue. This is why we're asking for this carbon tax to be put in place. We need to be able to have leverage to deal with the Americans to get a softwood lumber agreement in place. And yes, there's a threat of tariffs, but this is an ongoing, eight-year challenge we've had that the NDP have done nothing on.

Once again, to the Premier: will you implement a carbon tax on the U.S. thermal coal coming through British Columbia — we have the ability to do that; use it as the leverage that's needed to get a softwood lumber; and get our forest workers back to work?

The Speaker: Members, all questions and comments must be directed through the Chair.

Hon. David Eby: I guess I'm just…. I'm glad for the member changing his position on this, but it is a change in position.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member.

Hon. David Eby: Let me read the….

Interjection.

The Speaker: No. Just let's listen too.

Hon. David Eby: The member said that he's against retaliatory tariffs because he thinks it's unfair to American Republicans. He said: "It's dangerous and irresponsible for the Premier's NDP to specifically tariff only Republican states, who may not be at fault, simply because the current U.S. President is Republican."

He's opposing our retaliatory tariffs against red states that are upholding this attack on Canadian workers and our economy. Now, if he wants to work with us to find areas where we can retaliate, where we can all stand together and support those things, I'm happy to do that. There are major challenges with his….

Interjections.

Hon. David Eby: The member knows there are major challenges with his proposal around federally regulated export industries, around placing provincial charges on that. If it were easy to do, absolutely, we would do it. We're looking for every possible way. We're looking for possible things to do.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. David Eby: Anything that is possible, we are exploring it. I'll take the member's idea and explore it, but there are major challenges to doing that. That is a federally regulated industry, railways. It's an export good that goes through a federally regulated port, and we can't place export taxes on products like that. So we'll explore it.

Again, to the member, we have been consistent, and we will be consistent. We will retaliate against the Americans for imposing unfair tariffs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members, let's hear the answer. Members, let's hear the answer, please.

Hon. David Eby: We will retaliate against the Americans for unfair tariffs. If the members want to work with us on that, I welcome that change of heart.

Ward Stamer: B.C.'s forest industry is under great threat with U.S. tariffs that could reach as high as 55 percent. B.C.'s forest product exports make up 24 percent of B.C.'s total commodity exports. These tariffs would devastate an industry that has been crippled by this NDP government.

To be clear, we had mills closed and communities negatively impacted before the threats of tariffs. Today we proposed a plan that will raise revenue on U.S. coal shipped through B.C. ports and a plan that would support B.C.'s forest industry if the U.S. won't back down on their tariffs.

Will the Forests Minister support our plan and work with us to support a complete Team Canada?

Hon. Ravi Parmar: Everyone in British Columbia knows how vital our forest sector is to our province. It has been for the past 100 years and will be for the next 100 years.

Duties on B.C. and Canadian softwood lumber exports to the United States are unjustified. It's why on my first official day as Minister of Forests, I sent a letter to my federal counterparts asking them to do everything in their power to stand up for B.C. forest workers and to stand up for our forest industry.

Our work didn't stop there. We launched the new Softwood Lumber Advisory Council because we're putting the full weight of B.C. in the ring on this fight.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. Ravi Parmar: Now, to the members opposite, when we launched that softwood advisory council, the member opposite who asked the question said: "There's a bunch of union representatives. I don't know why they need three or four union representatives on a council such

as this, and we've got some serious concerns and questions in regards to that."

[2:15 p.m.]

Why would the member be concerned about having workers on a softwood lumber advisory council?

I would ask the member — I sent him a letter: did he meet with those union leaders?

Ward Stamer: Remember, for clarity, that the softwood lumber agreement has been sitting on the books since 2015 without anything done. This government has been here for eight years, and they've done nothing on this file.

So 65 percent of B.C.'s softwood lumber is shipped to the U.S. That is lumber and forest products, which is the top exported commodity from B.C. to the U.S. The NDP's inaction in response to U.S. tariffs is threatening to shut down our entire forest industry.

If the Forests Minister is unable to support a proposal for taxing shipment of U.S. thermal coal and using those funds to support our B.C. industry, will he at least agree to bring it swiftly to his recently established B.C. softwood advisory council to get their opinion on our proposal and commit to making it public?

Hon. Ravi Parmar: Breaking news. Does the member opposite know who was the Minister of Forests back in the previous government? The Leader of the Opposition. What did the Leader of the Opposition do on this file? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Shhh, Members.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members, come to order.

Hon. Ravi Parmar: I welcome any ideas, any solutions to be able to address this. I welcome any solutions to this long challenge that has been going on since prior to when I was alive, I might add.

I was in Sacramento just a couple of weeks ago. I was speaking to community leaders, to lawmakers who almost lost everything down south, with devastating wildfires impacting the southern part of California. British Columbians know all too well the devastating impacts of wildfires. It's why we have a strong working relationship between B.C. Wildfire and Cal Fire.

The meeting I was able to secure down there was with the California Building Industry Association, where they jointly put out a statement. Dan Dunmoyer, who's the head of the California Building Industry Association, said…

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. Ravi Parmar: …and I would quote: "Tariffs could add $35,000 to $45,000 to a home build."

We know how devastating softwood lumber duties and tariffs are to British Columbians, but Americans know how devastating they are to those people who are just trying to rebuild their homes.

CRITICAL MINERALS AND MINING PROJECTS

Jeremy Valeriote: The B.C. Green caucus eagerly awaits details on the plan to fast-track approval of critical mineral projects. Having worked in the mining industry, I'm glad to see its renaissance supporting the electrification of our economy, as long as recycling of critical minerals is as prominent in our priorities as raw extraction.

However, at least two of the four mines specified by the government are primarily gold and silver projects, neither of which is considered a critical mineral in Canada. Yes, some geological deposits have critical mineral by-products, but we need to focus any streamlining efforts on projects that are central to the energy transition.

My question is for the Minister of Mining and Critical Minerals. Does the ministry use a different definition of critical mineral than the Canadian government?

Hon. Ravi Kahlon: I want to thank the member for the question.

The Premier has asked me to work with my colleagues to ensure that we are able to do three things when it comes to responding to the threat of the tariffs from the U.S., President Trump's administration.

First, of course, is to respond. There has been lots of debate, and it's great to hear the opposition party finally agree that they believe that there should be a strong response from British Columbia.

Of course, diversifying is going to be a critically….

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Are we done?

The minister will continue.

Hon. Ravi Kahlon: Thank you, hon. Speaker.

This is a serious topic. I'd assume that members across the way would want a serious response and not have heckling.

Interjections.

[2:20 p.m.]

The Speaker: Shhh, Members. Members.

The executive council has the right to put whoever they want to answer any question being asked. We have done it before, when the other side was on that side.

Minister, are you done?

Please continue.

Hon. Ravi Kahlon: Thank you, hon. Speaker.

Of course, one of the key parts of that is strengthening our economy. Colleagues across this side are working on that.

It's great to hear that the member across the way supports the opportunity that critical minerals play for the economy in British Columbia, for workers in British Columbia.

We look forward to continuing to work with the member to expand all types of mining opportunities that will help strengthen B.C.'s economy and also ensure that we're able to have the resources to support the clean transition that we want to see here in British Columbia and across the country.

The Speaker: Member, supplemental.

Jeremy Valeriote: The government's stated goal is to promote development by speeding up permit approvals, yet a recent audit by SFU and UBC academics found that economic factors like commodity prices play a more significant role in delaying mining projects than do provincial regulations.

It's not just a matter of cutting red tape. The audit's conclusion was that the B.C. government is approving mining operations that aren't economically viable and that B.C. mines regularly failed to meet their economic forecasts. For every 100 jobs predicted, only 12 were actually created.

My question, again, is to the Minister of Mining and Critical Minerals. If we're to invest public resources to fast-track these projects, how can British Columbians have faith that these mines will create a significant number of jobs when the historical data tells a very different story?

Interjections.

Hon. Jagrup Brar: So you got one.

Thanks to the member for the question.

Mining provides 40,000 good, family-supporting jobs to the people of British Columbia and minerals that are critical to our low-carbon future.

The mining and mineral exploration sector is a foundational part of British Columbia's economy, and we are supporting it to grow. With rich minerals, the projects in B.C. have an opportunity to drive growth and create good jobs for the people of British Columbia. We are advancing projects that could supply nickel, rare earth elements, niobium, tungsten and cobalt, all in the Canadian critical minerals list.

That's why we launched phase 1 of B.C.'s critical minerals strategy, which includes taking action to expedite critical mineral projects and maximize federal funding to grow the economy and create good jobs for the people of British Columbia.

EMERGENCY SERVICES AT DELTA HOSPITAL

Ian Paton: My constituents in Delta were shocked this weekend. Accidents happen, people get injured, and when they do, they expect their local emergency department to be open. But this past weekend in my community of Delta, you could not do that.

For two whole nights, the ER was closed and, when seconds mattered, told my constituents to drive half an hour or more to Surrey Memorial, where wait times were up to 18 hours long.

To the Minister of Health: after eight years of NDP governance, how can you accept this abject failure to deliver emergency health care in the province of B.C.?

Hon. Josie Osborne: Thank you to the member for the question.

I want to start by saying I share his very deep concern for what had to take place this weekend in his constituency and for the people who live in his riding and the surrounding area. Everybody wants to be able to depend on the emergency department, knowing that it is there for them when they need emergency care.

These decisions are not taken lightly, and Fraser Health and other health authorities facing this situation do everything that they can to ensure that there is sufficient staffing in an emergency department because it is so critical.

We are doing so much work to attract physicians, nurses, health care workers — everybody that we need to run every aspect of our public health care system here in British Columbia. When these very difficult decisions need to be taken, they are done in a way to help protect people by ensuring that the B.C. emergency health services knows what's happening, that the public is alerted at a time so that they understand what is happening.

[2:25 p.m.]

But we have so much work to continue to do, attracting new physicians, credentialing internationally trained graduates and bringing in new nurses, and we're going to continue doing this work so that we can end these types of diversions.

The Speaker: Delta South, supplemental.

Ian Paton: For eight years in this seat in the Legislature, I've heard the same responses over and over again.

The emergency room is supposed to be a 24-7 service, yet under this NDP government, you can't guarantee the ER will be open when you need it. Thinking of the sounds and sirens at night around Ladner and Tsawwassen and wondering where that poor heart attack or stroke victim will be transported to and how long it will take, or will they die on the way in an ambulance?

Again, to the Minister of Health: when will you fix your government's failure to ensure B.C.'s emergency rooms are open when trauma strikes?

The Speaker: Through the Chair, Member.

Hon. Josie Osborne: Thank you to the member for the follow-up question there.

Again, there is so much work to do to build out the health care workers that we need to ensure that every aspect of our health care system is functioning in the way that British Columbians need and depend on.

We have so much to be proud of here in our public health care system. I know that the doctors and the nurses and the workers in those hospitals are feeling this, and they too…

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. Josie Osborne: …are impacted by this. They are working so hard.

We didn't get into this problem….

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. Josie Osborne: We did not get into this problem overnight. That is why we are taking short-term steps, through the work that we are doing to attract more physicians, nurses and health care workers, but longer-term steps too, like building a new medical school in Surrey through SFU.

When the opposition leader was in government, he had the opportunity to open a new Surrey medical school, and he said no.

We are going to continue to take every step that we can, with every tool that we have in our tool belt, to build our health care workforce in a time of a global shortage so we can end these closures.

AMBULANCE STATION AND SERVICE IN KITWANGA

Sharon Hartwell: I stand here today talking about the community of Kitwanga, which is way up north.

They have been fundraising for their ambulance station for over ten years. The building that they were currently using was built in 1940, and it's an outdated, old forestry service building, which is now condemned. The space is the only ambulance station in the area, and the next closest one is 45 minutes away in Hazelton.

The residents have raised $900,000 through bake sales, bingo games and local business donations, yet not one thin dime from this government after repeated asks. Residents have already lost lives due to the lack of emergency services in the region.

Will the minister step up to fund this critical piece of public safety infrastructure in B.C.'s North?

Hon. Josie Osborne: Thank you to the member for the question and for raising the profile of what I know has been a real challenge for rural and remote communities, in terms of equitable access to health care and knowing that the emergency health care system is there for them when they need it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. Josie Osborne: When people call 911, they want to know that the ambulance is going to be there. Since 2017, we've seen a significant increase in the number of calls around the province, and we've taken action to strengthen the services in the emergency health system. That includes adding over 1,500 permanent new full-time paramedics, 77 new ambulances, five new air ambulances — all part of strengthening the system.

I invite the member to provide my office with more details, specifically about the proposal that she raises today in the House, so that I can address it and get back to her with the information that she needs.

The Speaker: Member, supplemental.

Sharon Hartwell: Thank you for that.

But we know public safety isn't a strength for this government. They've waited way too long. You would think providing basic ambulance services would be the least this government could do. Industry has committed to help fund the station because of the need to support those working in B.C.'s north.

You keep talking about the "true north strong and free." Well, let's step up and show them how that's done.

[2:30 p.m.]

Hon. Josie Osborne: Thank you again, to the member there.

I agree. People living in the North, people living in any place in British Columbia, need to know that the ambulance system is there for them in their time of need. That's why we're going to continue to take action to strengthen

the paramedic system — to work with the union, to work with the employer — to ensure that ambulances and paramedics, first responders, are there for people when they are needed.

That includes the agreements that we have signed with paramedics to increase wages, improving response times, and we are seeing results. We're not going to let up. We're going to continue this work.

Once again, I invite the member to provide my office with more information so that I can respond to her.

RURAL RETENTION INCENTIVE FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Scott McInnis: The provincial rural retention incentive provides up to $8,000 a year for health care professionals who work in remote and rural communities. Kimberley and Cranbrook are a seven-hour drive from Kelowna and a daunting 12-hour trip from Vancouver.

Knowing this reality, my question to the Minister of Health is as follows. Why are health care workers in these communities denied this very important financial incentive?

Hon. Josie Osborne: Yes, the provincial rural retention incentive is used to help fill some of the highest-need gaps that are being experienced in remote and rural communities.

It is a priority of this government to ensure that there is more equitable access to health care. That means helping to recruit more people to live the great rural lifestyle that those of us who live in rural communities know about.

There is a defined set of communities and occupations that are eligible for this incentive. We continue to take feedback from community leaders, from health care workers and from others so that we can make changes and adapt and monitor as needed.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE OFFICES

Teresa Wat: B.C.'s economy is under threat. Diversifying trade is one option to support those in this dire time. The Premier should call up our B.C. trade office in Beijing.

Oh no, wait. You closed it.

What about one in Shanghai? Oh no, closed too.

How about Guangzhou? Closed.

How about Hong Kong? Closed.

I can continue the list. Tokyo, closed. Seoul, closed. Manila, closed. Jakarta, closed.

Wait. Singapore, a very important city, closed.

What about the four offices in India, one of our very friendly countries? New Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh and Hyderabad — all closed five years ago. Five years of potential trade diversification lost.

How can this Premier claim to be diversifying trade when his own government closes our own B.C. trade offices?

Hon. Diana Gibson: Thank you, Member opposite, for the opportunity to talk about what's really happening in our trade offices.

In fact, we opened new offices in multiple countries in the last couple of years and consolidated our offices. We consolidated our offices in order to save money. The member opposite and their party ask for public accountability and judicious spending of public money. We have saved taxpayers' dollars while ensuring that we have better access for our businesses to diplomatic and investment opportunities.

Our exports have grown in countries — South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, Germany, the United Kingdom; over 50 trade and invest offices in over 14 markets.

[2:35 p.m.]

We are laser focused. This government is laser focused on diversifying trade to meet this crisis moment for our province. We're going to stand up and defend jobs for British Columbians and support our communities every day.

The Speaker: Member, supplemental.

Teresa Wat: Time and time again, our previous government has found that B.C. needs to have our own trade offices. But in 2018 and 2019, this government, on the 31st of December, called all the 13 trade offices and told them that it's closed. They haven't even had the time to pay their invoices. It's so embarrassing. Their excuse is to try to save money.

We have proven that we cannot not have our own B.C. trade offices but work with the federal trade commissioner, because they won't promote a B.C. trade office.

So what is this Premier talking about with diversifying our trade offices? The government didn't care about diversifying trade five years ago. How can anyone believe this Premier will do it this time?

Hon. Diana Gibson: The member opposite knows that it is not true. It is false. We have kept our trade offices functioning better and more affordably. We have increased….

Interjections.

The Speaker: Shhh.

Hon. Diana Gibson: Since we implemented the trade diversification strategy….

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. Diana Gibson: The member opposite knows we have had a trade diversification strategy since 2023 that has increased exports 23 percent. We have the least dependent province on the U.S. We are very trade-diverse compared to the rest of the country, and we will continue to ensure that we have more diverse trade relationships, with trade missions and trade agreements that are supporting jobs across our economy.

We signed an agritech agreement with the Netherlands. We partnered with Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corp. for Transport and Urban Development to deliver innovative and clean solutions for the future of transportation in our province.

[End of question period.]

Petitions

Scott McInnis: Pursuant to my question in question period, I have a petition here with approximately 500 signatures on it from the East Kootenay branch of the B.C. Nurses Union requesting that they receive the provincial rural retention incentive.

Tabling Documents

Hon. Niki Sharma: I present the 2024 annual report of the Property Assessment Appeal Board.

Hon. Christine Boyle: I have the pleasure to present the B.C. Treaty Commission annual report from 2024, in accordance with the Treaty Commission Act.

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I have a series of motions to move. I have let the Opposition House Leader know what they are, as well as the Green Party House Leader. They are the straightforward committees.

I call Motion 1 on the order paper.

Government Motions on Notice

MOTION 1 — APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE ACT

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I move Motion 1, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper, to appoint a special committee to review the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

[That a Special Committee to Review the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* be appointed to review the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* (S.B.C. 2018, c. 22), pursuant to section 50 of the Act.

That the Special Committee have the powers of a Select Standing Committee and in addition be empowered to:

a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Special Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
c. conduct consultations by any means the Special Committee considers appropriate;
d. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and,
e. retain personnel as required to assist the Special Committee.

That the Special Committee report to the House by February 19, 2026, and that during a period of adjournment, the Special Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.

That the Special Committee be composed of the following Members: *Darlene Rotchford* (Convener), *Rosalyn Bird*, *Jennifer Blatherwick*, *Dana Lajeunesse* and *Lawrence Mok*.]

The Speaker: The question is the adoption of the motion.

Motion approved.

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I call Motion 2 on the order paper.

MOTION 2 — POWERS AND ROLE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I move Motion 2, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper. The motion provides a terms of reference for the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

[That the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services be empowered to exercise oversight of each of the following statutory officers: Auditor General, Chief Electoral Officer, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Human Rights Commissioner, Information and Privacy Commissioner and Registrar of Lobbyists, Merit Commissioner, Ombudsperson, Police Complaint Commissioner, and Representative for Children and Youth. This includes:

a. considering and making recommendations on the annual reports, rolling three-year service plans, budgets, and any other matters respecting the effective and efficient administration of each statutory office;
b. inquiring into and making recommendations with respect to other matters brought to the Committee's attention by a statutory officer; and,
c. considering and making decisions regarding the terms and conditions of employment of each statutory officer arising as a request of a statutory officer during their term of appointment.

That the Committee be designated as the Committee referred to in sections 6, 7, 19, 20, 21 and 23 of the *Auditor*

General Act (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2) and that the report in section 22 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2) be referred to the Committee.

That the Committee be designated as the Committee referred to in sections 47.02 and 47.03 of the *Human Rights Code* (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 210).

That the Committee be designated as the Committee referred to in section 3 of the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* (S.B.C. 2000, c. 23).

That, in addition to the powers previously conferred upon the Select Standing Committees of the House, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services be empowered to:

a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
c. conduct consultations by any means the Committee considers appropriate;
d. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and,
e. retain personnel as required to assist the Committee.

That the Committee report to the House as soon as possible, and that during a period of adjournment, the Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.]

The Speaker: The question is the adoption of the motion.

Motion approved.

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I call Motion 3 on the order paper.

MOTION 3 — APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO APPOINT STATUTORY OFFICERS

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I move Motion 3, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper, to appoint a Special Committee to Appoint Statutory Officers.

[That a Special Committee to Appoint Statutory Officers be appointed to select and unanimously recommend to the Legislative Assembly the appointment of:

a. an individual to hold office as Auditor General, pursuant to section 2 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2);
b. an individual to hold office as Chief Electoral Officer, pursuant to section 4 of the *Election Act* (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 106); and,
c. an individual to hold office as Conflict of Interest Commissioner, pursuant to section 14 of the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act* (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 287).

That the Special Committee have the powers of a Select Standing Committee and in addition be empowered to:

a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Special Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
c. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and,
d. retain personnel as required to assist the Special Committee.

That the Special Committee report to the House on each of its recommendations as soon as possible, and that during a period of adjournment, the Special Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.

That the Special Committee be composed of the following Members: *Janet Routledge* (Convener), *Harman Bhangu*, *Linda Hepner*, *Stephanie Higginson* and *Qwulti'stunaat / Debra Toporowski*.]

The Speaker: You have heard the question.

Motion approved.

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I call Motion 4 on the order paper.

MOTION 4 — POWERS AND ROLE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I move Motion 4, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper. The motion provides a terms of reference for the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

[That all reports of the Auditor General of British Columbia transmitted to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly be deemed referred to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts. For greater certainty, the following exceptions are provided:

a. the report referred to in section 22 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2) shall be referred to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services; and,
b. reports of the Auditor General respecting the Legislative Assembly prepared under the provisions of the *Legislative Assembly Management Committee Act* (R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 258) shall be referred to the Legislative Assembly Management Committee.

That the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts be the Committee referred to in sections 10 and 14 of the *Auditor General Act* (S.B.C. 2003, c. 2).

That, in addition to the powers previously conferred upon the Select Standing Committees of the House, the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts be empowered to:

a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
c. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and,
d. retain personnel as required to assist the Committee.

That the Committee report to the House as soon as possible, and that during a period of adjournment, the Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.]

The Speaker: You have heard the question.

Motion approved.

[2:40 p.m.]

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I call Motion 5 on the order paper.

MOTION 5 — POWERS AND ROLE OF PRIVATE BILLS AND MEMBERS' BILLS COMMITTEE

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I move Motion 5, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper. The motion provides a terms of reference for the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills.

[That the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills be empowered to consider:

1. Public Bills in the Hands of a Private Member committed to the Committee pursuant to Standing Order 84A and within 30 sitting days of a Bill's committal:

a. report each such Bill back to the House with or without amendment; or,
b. recommend back to the House that any such Bill not proceed further.

2. Private Bills referred to the Committee pursuant to Standing Order 105 and to report to the House on any such Bill as soon as possible.

That, in addition to the powers previously conferred upon Select Standing Committees of the House, the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills be empowered to:

a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;
b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;
c. conduct consultations by any means the Committee considers appropriate;
d. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and,
e. retain personnel as required to assist the Committee.

That the Committee report to the House as soon as possible, and that during a period of adjournment, the Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.]

Motion approved.

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I call Motion 6 on the order paper.

MOTION 6 — POWERS AND ROLE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH COMMITTEE

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I move Motion 6, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper. The motion provides a terms of reference for the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

[That the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth be empowered to foster greater awareness and understanding among legislators and the public of the B.C. child welfare system, including the specific needs of Indigenous children, youth, families and communities, and in particular to:

a. receive and review the annual service plan from the Representative for Children and Youth (the "Representative") that includes a statement of goals and identifies specific objectives and performance measures that will be required to exercise the powers and perform the functions and duties of the Representative during the fiscal year;
b. be the Committee to which the Representative reports, at least annually;
c. refer to the Representative for investigation the critical injury or death of a child;
d. receive and consider all reports and plans transmitted by the Representative to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; and,
e. undertake, pursuant to section 30 (1) of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act* (S.B.C. 2006, c. 29), a comprehensive review of the Act or portions of the Act at least once every five years, but by no later than April 1, 2027, to determine whether the functions of the Representative described in section 6 are still required to ensure that the needs of children and young adults as defined in that section are met.

That, in addition to the powers previously conferred upon Select Standing Committees of the House, the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth be empowered to:

a. appoint of its number one or more subcommittees

and to refer to such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee and to delegate to the subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;

b. sit during a period in which the House is adjourned, during the recess after prorogation until the next following Session and during any sitting of the House;

c. conduct consultations by any means the Committee considers appropriate;

d. adjourn from place to place as may be convenient; and,

e. retain personnel as required to assist the Committee.

That the Committee report to the House as soon as possible, and that during a period of adjournment, the Committee deposit its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, or in the next following Session, as the case may be, the Chair present all reports to the House.]

Motion approved.

Orders of the Day

Hon. Mike Farnworth: I call second reading of Bill 2, Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner Continuation Act.

[Lorne Doerkson in the chair.]

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 2 — ACTING CONFLICT OF INTEREST COMMISSIONER CONTINUATION ACT

Deputy Speaker: We'll call the House back to order, and today we'll call on the Attorney General to begin second reading and to move the motion on Bill 2.

Hon. Niki Sharma: I move that the bill now be read a second time.

This bill, the Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner Continuation Act, creates temporary legislation to allow the acting commissioner's appointment to continue until the next commissioner can be appointed for a five-year term.

The Members' Conflict of Interest Act states that a commissioner must be appointed who is an officer of the Legislative Assembly. The commissioner serves a vital role by overseeing and disclosing processes for members, reviewing allegations of contraventions of the act and promoting public confidence in elected public officials as they conduct public business.

The 2024 provincial general election prevented the typical recruitment process from taking place before the commissioner's appointment expired on January 6, 2025. The Hon. Victoria Gray, KC, was appointed acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to ensure that this important office did not become vacant.

Pursuant to the Members' Conflict of Interest Act, this acting appointment will expire after 20 sitting days or, according to the current parliamentary calendar, on April 7, 2025. The next Conflict of Interest Commissioner will not be appointed by that date, as time is required for a thorough recruitment process to be conducted by a special committee. The bill will permit the acting commissioner appointment to continue until the next commissioner can be appointed to avoid a vacancy in the office.

The bill includes a clear time limitation to ensure that a recruitment process takes place to enable the Legislative Assembly to make a recommendation for the next Conflict of Interest Commissioner to be appointed for a five-year term.

I just wanted to comment and show my appreciation for the acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

[2:45 p.m.]

We have a lot of new MLAs here in the House on both sides, and what they will find is that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and her office is a very useful process in order to make sure that members can understand what their commitments are to abide by any conflict-of-interest rules. I also say that it's very accessible. Any member that at any time has a conflict or even a question about what might be a conflict can seek out the advice of this office.

That's a very useful tool, and I think even more important now, when we think about how our democratic institutions and our structures are in place to keep this building and our governmental process — to have the integrity of the public and for people to know not only that individual members can get the guidance of the conflict commissioner but that she is also the watchdog to make sure that every single one of the members in this House is acting in accordance with the rules.

I just want to thank Victoria Gray, KC, for agreeing to serve on an acting basis following the end of her official term at the end of 2024, as well as for her service for the previous five years. Ms. Gray served for 16 years on B.C.'s Supreme Court between 2001 and 2017.

A little bit about her background that makes her a really good candidate. We're grateful for her continuing to act as an acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Before her appointment as a judge, Ms. Gray practised law for 19 years as a commercial litigator in Vancouver. From 1993 to 1998, while she was practising law, she was also an adjunct professor at the Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia, teaching civil litigation.

Ms. Gray has served on a number of boards, including the Law Foundation of B.C., YWCA Metro Vancouver and West Coast LEAF Legal Education and Action Fund Society, all of which she served as chair. Ms. Gray is also

an active musician, recently playing instruments with the Victoria Symphony and Palm Court Light Orchestra.

The Conflict of Interest Commissioner, even if they do not get to the point of a formal ruling, plays a vital role in our democracy. Beyond their duty to investigate complaints, the part of the work that tends to generate headlines, the commissioner is there to provide guidance and advice to members at any point.

Very, very few of us elected here ever intend to engage in a conflict of interest. Some do, and that is regrettable. But most don't. I want to be clear on that point. We come here with good intentions to serve our communities. Many of us come here with pre-existing business relationships. Many of us have spouses or partners who are involved in their own line of work. None of this is illegal or even necessarily a problem.

But it is critical that a clear line is drawn between the public interest, which we are here to uphold, and the private interest of a member. Where that line is in doubt, unclear or in any way not obvious, the commissioner is there to guide and interpret the act to ensure compliance.

Some stats from the most recent annual report that are helpful to our debate here today. In 2021, the office received 138 requests; in 2022, 113. And in 2023, they received 105.

If the commissioner concludes, for example, that one of us will not be in a conflict of interest in a certain situation, that opinion will be binding. As a result, that MLA can avoid conflicts of interest and act with confidence on the basis of the commissioner's advice. This sort of work doesn't make headlines, but it is critical guidance to all of us in this place.

Of course, sometimes there are those who come here with nefarious intent. I'm sure that's none of us here in the chamber right now or in government, but that role of the commissioner in these situations is, of course, critical.

As noted, the commissioner often does not get to the point of a ruling. There are only five published rulings from the last decade. To see the work of the commissioner only through the lens of published rulings is to misunderstand the commissioner's work.

As I noted, if this legislation does not pass, the position of the commissioner will be vacant on April 7. That is the 20th sitting day, the final date for the current interim appointment. It will take some months for the legislative committee to do its work and engage in a proper search.

I just want to talk a little bit about the critical importance of that special committee and the independence. Of course, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner serves all of us in an impartial way. That special committee will be tasked to make sure that a search is done in an appropriate manner, and that all of the processes in order to ensure that our next conflict commissioner is the right fit for such an important job…. I'm grateful to the committee for undertaking that work and the work they'll be doing in the coming months.

[2:50 p.m.]

Should the position become vacant, there would simply be no commissioner. This would create a big gap not only for the integrity of this institution and our democracy but also for members that are just starting up, becoming members and understanding what their roles are.

That's a big process, and I know for a fact that Victoria Gray sits down with each member early on in their career to help them understand and go through their disclosure forms. That's a really important process — to make sure that every member is starting off with the right information, understanding their obligations. There's a real good look at any potential conflicts that might arise due to their business dealings or those of their spouse or related family members.

So of course, nobody would agree that that position should be vacant. As we all know, when we go away to campaigns and elections, the public service is here to make sure that the business of government continues. In this instance, it was a matter of timing, where the vacancy was created during the time of the election, and it needs to be remedied by a piece of legislation, to make sure that the situation where there isn't an acting conflict commissioner just doesn't occur.

That way, the public can have the reassurance that there is someone on hand to guide decisions — someone for members to reach out to, to discuss whether situations may be in hand — and that there's someone for the public to count on to investigate, should any unthinkable conflict, willingly or not willingly, arise for a member.

I was reflecting, as we are often doing now, on the importance of our institutions and the importance of understanding the checks and balances that are in place to make sure that the public can have confidence not only in this institution but also in democracy. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner is one such institution.

It's important that we reflect on how, without these institutions…. We can see this happening in the States. If they're undermined or if we, as members in this institution, don't uphold these institutions and the rules they lay before us, things can easily degrade. Public interest and private interest can be blurred, and decisions of government can be influenced through those private actions, in a wrong way. I'm really proud of the work that the conflict commissioner does, and that the whole office does, to make sure that's not the case here in B.C.

A little bit of history about how the act came to be. It was a Social Credit government that introduced the Members' Conflict of Interest Act in 1990, but it was the B.C. NDP that first advanced the concept in a previous private member's bill. In response to an egregious run of scandals under the government of that time, that initial 1990 legis-

lation established this office, but it was only introduced under extreme duress.

It was the B.C. NDP government that renovated the act in 1992, expanding and enhancing the commissioner's powers. In fact, my colleague the Government House Leader, the member for Port Coquitlam, spoke to that legislation in the House in 1992, one of his first speeches in the place. I won't put on my accent for the Government House Leader, but I will read a little bit from his speech because I think it's worth remembering and reflecting on.

> "Whether we like it or not, the public holds us to high standards in terms of conduct both inside and outside the House — how we do our dealings here and, in particular, our private financial dealings. I think they have to have confidence in us.
>
> "I think there are two ways in which they see that confidence. One is the personal integrity of each member, and the other is the integrity of the act that we're governed by. This act is by far the most comprehensive, toughest act in the country.
>
> "I think it's very important that we send the right signals to the public. This act addresses that. It sets a standard which we have to abide by, and that's what the public wants. It's about restoring confidence and faith.
>
> "If we accomplish that this session, I think we've gone a long way towards restoring honour to this profession. I think it is an honourable profession. I'm very proud to be here in this House, and that's why I have no problem with supporting this act. I think it's probably one of the most important and fundamentally right things that we do in this session and this term."
>
> [2:55 p.m.]

I just concur with these statements that every member, when they get the trust of their community to sit here in these chairs, upholds these positions with the integrity and the respect of the public that it deserves.

That means we ensure that we are not financially benefiting personally from any decisions held here. The public can have confidence not only that everybody sitting in this chamber is acting in accordance with the rules but that there's oversight to make sure that no rules are breached. We have the confidence of the public to do that.

Each and every one of the members in this House, I know, will take their obligations under the conflict-of-interest laws and the commission seriously. They'll submit their disclosures, and they'll make sure that they recuse themselves from decisions where a conflict might be implicated. That's how the public maintains respect in a democracy, and that's how we keep the institutions going.

I just want to end by talking a little bit more about what will happen after this. A special committee is struck, just like we do with a lot of the independent officers in the House. Once that special committee is struck, they will be tasked to doing a search to ensure that the candidates are screened properly, that they're interviewed properly and that they are selected before they can act in the role of something like a conflict commissioner.

That is work that will happen shortly, and I trust the staff here at the Legislature to make sure that happens in an expedited way. I would just ask that each member not only support this bill but also support what underlies this bill, which is our respect for our democracy, our integrity in our roles, and making sure that the public can maintain the confidence in the work that we're doing here — preventing things like what's happening in other countries, where those lines are getting blurred every day.

It calls upon us to act with more strength, more integrity and more solidarity when it comes to these rules, both written and unwritten, that keep our democracy strong.

Deputy Speaker: The chair will recognize the member for Richmond-Queensborough.

Steve Kooner: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this House today.

I come before you with a mandate to speak not only on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House but for all those who share our commitment to accountability and good governance.

For my colleagues on this side of the House and across the aisle, I am back. If you missed me last Thursday, I was getting mouth surgery. I'm sure everyone here is happy to see me back. Although my mouth is still in pain, I'm here to talk to you about this bill. I want to note that the pain from my surgery was planned. The last-minute extension in this bill is unplanned, and it is symbolic of the ill-prepared and inept attitude constantly displayed by this reactive government.

I'm glad to be back in the House to respond to this piece of legislation that the current Attorney General is proposing. Even though my mouth is still in pain, the duty to serve the people of British Columbia compels me to speak on this pressing issue. I stand here ready to scrutinize the legislative proposal laid before us, a proposal that, in my view, is symbolic of the broader pattern of neglect and mismanagement.

I see that the government is asking to have a continuation for the acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I am here to announce, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, that we will be supporting the bill. But the bottom line is that we wouldn't need this extension if they'd done their job the first time. The position should have already been properly staffed.

Let us not lose sight of the critical matter at hand. The government now seeks to extend the term of the acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner, a move that may seem like a simple administrative adjustment but that reveals a deeper, worrisome pattern.

Why are they asking for an extension now? This is typical NDP incompetence. The government should have

been focused on proper staffing in the first place. This is just another prime example of this government's incompetence. We wouldn't need this if it had been done properly the first time.

[3:00 p.m.]

The foundation of B.C.'s public service relies on good planning and execution, not hasty fixes and not ad hoc extensions. We are now being forced to rectify what should have been managed correctly from the outset.

It is clear to everyone that there is an ongoing theme of NDP complacency. The current provincial government is surrounded by a toxic air of failure, and I think we all know the expiration is near. It is not an overstatement to say that this is symbolic of a recurring trend, a trend marked by complacency, mismanagement and a worrying lack of foresight.

Now, let me bring to your attention the real-world consequences of such administrative failures. Across B.C., residents have already suffered the impact of inaction. In my neighbouring riding, Delta Hospital emergency services recently shut down for multiple days.

This government has failed to deal with tariffs and refuses to properly advocate for the people of British Columbia. There has been zero positive action on the drug crisis killing our people. Instead, they make the situation worse with decriminalization and safe supply.

These are not isolated incidents. They form an ongoing theme of reactive, short-term solutions that fail to address the broader issues plaguing our province. This is an ongoing theme of reactivity from the expired NDP. They are short-sighted and are constantly caught off guard.

Today we face more than a mere procedural extension. We confront a legacy of mismanagement that has eroded the trust and betrayed proud British Columbians. Our province deserves decisive, forward-thinking leadership that prioritizes strength and our shared values, not temporary fixes and weak responses.

I call on my colleagues to reject the error of complacency and incompetence. The time for half measures is over. It is time to put B.C. first. We must unite to send a message to those who undermine our future. I call upon my colleagues to join me in sending a clear message.

The era of big government, complacency and incompetence will soon be over. British Columbia deserves more, and together Conservatives will ensure that better days are on the horizon for our province.

Paul Choi: I'm here to speak on a critical piece of legislation, the Acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner Continuation Act. This role is vital for keeping our democratic process transparent and ethical, and I look forward to explaining why this matters to all of us.

The context of Bill 2 here is very small, but it's a very important piece of legislation. It ensures that the current acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner remains in office until a new commissioner is appointed by the Legislative Assembly. This will ensure that we avoid any vacancy in the commissioner's position.

What is the Conflict of Interest Commissioner? With a lot of members here who are new, I think it's important that we go over this. It's an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly, and it provides advice to MLAs concerning obligations under our Members' Conflict of Interest Act.

One of the most important things, of course, is that their mandate is to promote public confidence in elected officials as we conduct public businesses. The public confidence is important in any public servant, as we know, but it's even more crucially important for all of us here, who are in a privileged position as lawmakers to impact millions of lives, potentially. In other words, with greater power must come greater responsibilities to avoid conflict of interest.

[3:05 p.m.]

Now, the commissioner is an independent office, as we discussed. It's this independent office that they hold that must be there in place to ensure that we as MLAs remain free of bias and any hidden agendas and by providing confidential advice, which is very critical, so that we can go and get the advice we need beforehand and make sure and have the confidence that it's confidential. It will help us to ensure that we maintain public trust in the work we do.

A member can consult with the commissioner at any time, as we know, to ensure that they are not just free of actual conflict but perceived conflict as well. This is where it can get sometimes confusing. That really is important — that we have access and that we have commissioners who are in place for us to seek advice for every little situation that might come up in our day of us doing our work as well.

We know that under the act, sometimes the way it's worded can raise questions and can become confusing. I myself looked at the act and was looking at, as what we as members have heard, the limit of $250 when we're doing our work and there is a potential gift that's received. That's under section 7 of the Members' Conflict of Interest Act. It's under section 7(3), accepting extra gift.

Most of us new MLAs know there is a $250 limit, but something most of us may not know is that that $250 is also limited by total value received directly or indirectly from one source in any 12-month period. This is where it can get confusing, and this is where we have to ensure that we have a commissioner, that we can go and seek advice. That 12-month period — we don't know when it ends and when it begins. We may need clarification in that aspect as well.

As we know, sometimes we don't know certain items and their value. This is where we can get clarification as well. We know that many items can be deemed to be a certain value from one source versus another source. So even

seeking clarification on which source we need to rely on for the value that is calculated is critically important.

I also remember, when I was working as a police officer, this one time that I was working with my partner. It was near Christmastime, and I was working on the road with my partner. We were sitting in the patrol car, and we were just writing up a report. We know that as police officers, public-facing public servants, similar to the work that we MLAs do here, we're not allowed to accept any gift.

Now, at that time, there was an old lady that came out from her house where we were parked in the street. She knocked on our window, and first instinct was that, of course, she wanted to complain about something. Maybe, perhaps, she wasn't happy that we were sitting there for too long. A lot of thoughts went through our heads. When we rolled the window down, what she told us was that it's Christmas, so she wanted to wish us merry Christmas and give us a box of chocolates.

Now, typically, when a member of the public offers us any gift, we would refuse it. But she was so sweet, and we could not, for good of our heart, refuse that gift.

Interjection.

Paul Choi: Absolutely.

So we ended up receiving it, but then after we had received it, there was a long discussion between me and my partner in the car on what we should do with that lovely box of chocolates. We went on into discussion about the fact…. Did she give it to us because we are police officers? Did she give it to us because of the office we hold? Would she have given us this box of chocolates if we were just random strangers walking down the street?

After a lot of discussions, we couldn't throw the box of chocolates away, but we ended up declaring it and then giving it to our police department for them to deal with.

[3:10 p.m.]

I thought back to that time when I was looking at this member's conflict of interest and when I got the application initially, once I was elected, to submit to the commissioner…. I wished that there was some sort of avenue like we have as MLAs where we could consult in those sorts of situations. There are so many situations that we come across as we're working as MLAs that might raise an actual or perceived conflict. This is why, for me personally, I was really wanting to speak to the bill and, of course, support the bill that is being presented here.

We know that in addition to providing confidential advice, our commissioner oversees the disclosure process. For a lot of us here who are new MLAs, it was a new experience, having been contacted by the commissioner's office and required to submit an application process.

For me personally, those applications sometimes required some clarification, and even reaching out to them, seeking clarification and guidance, I thought was very valuable. Once I submitted the application, there was feedback that was given for me to give clarification back. It's really critically important for that reason that we have a commissioner in place.

It's also important, as our Attorney General has clarified, that we need to be able to have a mechanism where we can respond to allegations that a member has potentially contravened an act. This is to ensure that the public has confidence that we are being held accountable and will act impartially and will always put the interest of the public at the forefront. If there is an inquiry that's needed, of course, the commissioner will oversee that to ensure that there is a safeguard for the ethical standards that are required for us.

Now, normally a new commissioner would be appointed. However, last year was an unusual year, as we know. It was the 2024 provincial general election that was held, so there was no fall legislative session. This now requires a legislative committee to select a new commissioner, but it could not be appointed until recently, causing delays.

We know that the current acting commissioner, Hon. Victoria Gray, remains in a critical position to fill the gap until the formal appointment of a new commissioner will take place. My colleague the Attorney General has spoken about the background of the commissioner, but I personally know her to be a very well-known, respected lawyer and a judge with significant experience.

She, of course, has a background in a bachelor of music and a bachelor of laws from the University of Toronto. She was appointed to the B.C. Supreme Court in 2001 and served as a justice for 16 years until retirement in August 2017, making us confident that she has the right experience and knowledge to continue to act as our acting commissioner.

She practised law for 19 years as a commercial litigator in Vancouver before that, and of course, she was an adjunct professor from 1993 to 1998 at Peter A. Allard School of Law, teaching civil litigation. Again, I have also obtained my master of laws from UBC, and I have heard how she was an amazing professor in school.

She is also a musician, and in my opinion, that is what keeps her grounded and makes her very in touch with different aspects of our lives and society, as well, not just focused solely on law.

She serves on the board of the Law Foundation of B.C.; YWCA Metro Vancouver, as a chair; West Coast LEAF society, as a chair.

She played oboe for the Victoria Symphony and Palm Court Light Orchestra.

[3:15 p.m.]

In recognition of her notable, significant contribution to the legal system in B.C., she was appointed King's Counsel in 1997.

Our commissioner has been acting and working as a commissioner for the last five years, and with that combination of experience, we're confident that she is the right

person to continue to be the acting commissioner until a new person can be appointed.

The purpose of Bill 2 is to ensure, as we discussed, we have acting Commissioner Victoria Gray continue in the office until a new commissioner can be appointed. Without this legislation, we know there will be a vacancy as of April 7.

It's a straightforward but crucial measure. It extends the current acting conflict-of-interest term until a permanent replacement can be appointed. Without it, we'll face a vacancy that will leave all of us here, MLAs, without clear ethical guidance and the public without assurance that their elected officials are held accountable.

A special legislative committee will need approximately six to eight months to conduct thorough research and find a new commissioner. We know that as crucial as this role is, that's not a process we want to rush.

Normally the act allows for an acting appointment to continue for 20 sitting days, and that's where on April 7, it will come to an end. This new legislation will extend that acting appointment beyond the 20-day limit. The act will automatically be repealed in 2026, by which time a new commissioner will be in place.

I'd also like to add that this isn't the first time that something like this has happened. There is a precedent where similar stand-alone legislation has been used in previous cases — for an acting Police Complaint Commissioner, an acting Information and Privacy Commissioner — to keep key oversight roles filled as well.

In summary, this is small, but it's a vital piece of legislation. We have to ensure that we have this bill in place so that we do not have any vacancies or gaps in our conflict commissioner office. We are confident that our commissioner, Victoria Gray, has the right expertise and knowledge to continue to act as the commissioner. We have to ensure that the public confidence is maintained throughout the process.

I want to thank everyone for your attention. I want to say that it is vitally important that the role of Conflict of Interest Commissioner is about more than just rules; it's about maintaining the rules and the public's trust in the people that they have elected, which is all of us here. By supporting this legislation, we are affirming our commitment to transparency, accountability and the ethical standard the people of British Columbia deserve.

Stephanie Higginson: It's my first time. I'm actually kind of standing up to tell a personal story. I was inspired by all of the talk about the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and I thought maybe I would share how helpful the office has been to myself as a new MLA.

I promise not to take the full 30 minutes, because I'm just winging this, but I thought my stories were actually important to share with the members to understand the importance of the continuity that we may have if this bill is supported by all members.

I stand to speak in support of the stand-alone bill extending the term of acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

[3:20 p.m.]

Even before I became an MLA, I started leaning on the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to answer questions about my family and our business and what it would mean if I became an MLA. Would I be able to serve as an MLA without impacting my family's business?

I started emailing the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and they spent a lot of time walking through with me what I would need to know and do as an MLA. My family owns a sawmill. Forestry is a really topical and important sector right now, and I knew then that we were going to be talking about it a lot. I wanted to make sure that I could be compliant and that I could serve my constituency well, knowing that we are held to a higher standard.

I also have a close, direct family member who is a registered federal lobbyist. I didn't want anything that I was doing to negatively impact that close family member. So I had a lot of questions before I even decided to become an MLA about what my family connections, my family business, would mean if I became an MLA.

The Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the commissioner herself, Victoria Gray, were really helpful at helping me navigate this so that I could, if I was successful in the election — which I was, because here I am — make sure that I could navigate these things properly and not have an unintentional misstep.

As was already said here today, we all come here with very, very good intentions, and I wanted to make sure that I could represent my constituents properly. As I said, I am a person who thrives on compliance, and this is an office where you've really got to be compliant.

As an MLA now, I have leaned on the Conflict of Interest Commissioner repeatedly since I was successful in the election, and the advice has been invaluable. For the general public, what that means to British Columbians is that there are a lot of questions we have to answer because we're held to a higher standard. I think what I've learned through this process is that it should give British Columbians a lot of trust in the way this office operates to ensure that all of us in this chamber are held to that higher standard and aren't accidentally, or maybe even nefariously, having a misstep.

I've really appreciated the support I've gotten from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. She has been really helpful to me. She has helped me navigate questions on things like confidential advice on obligations under the act. She supported me in the disclosure process. She has helped to ensure that my disclosure statements were completed correctly.

As a small business owner that also self-directs their investments, the process was very, very confusing for me and my family. I leaned on the Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and Victoria Gray a lot through the process. I was very thankful for the robust advice that I was provided. The Conflict of Interest Commissioner also helped me navigate this maze to fulfil my intentions to be compliant with this critical act.

I believe that I will be sitting on this committee. There have been a lot of committees. I think that my fellow new members know it's a bit hard to keep up, but I think I'm on the special committee that will be in charge of conducting a thorough, in-depth process to find a new commissioner. As we heard, it's going to take six to eight months for this to be done properly, and it needs to be done properly for this critical role.

Through this process, with so many new members, it only makes sense that the current Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Victoria Gray, stay while that thorough search is conducted. Having the office fall empty seems completely ridiculous to me when we have someone who is so qualified and so willing to continue to serve British Columbians. With so many new people, having anyone but the current and experienced Conflict of Interest Commissioner remain in place seems like it's not the right idea. She's the right person to stay in place.

I heard some questions from the members opposite about why now, and that's a very clear answer. It's because the committee that's needed to conduct the search couldn't be appointed until we were sitting. In the fall, the most important demonstration of democracy that brings us all here was happening: an election. This is one of those things where the timings sometimes bump up against each other, and that's what happened in this particular situation.

[3:25 p.m.]

With record turnover of members in this House, we're fortunate, I believe, that the current commissioner has agreed to stay on and serve. I'm grateful to Victoria Gray for agreeing to continue to serve British Columbians.

These are the reasons that I stand in support of this bill extending the term of the acting Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, I'll call on the Attorney General to close the debate this afternoon.

Hon. Niki Sharma: With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading.

Motion approved.

Hon. Niki Sharma: I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House to be considered at the next sitting after today.

Motion approved.

Hon. Niki Sharma: I call second reading of Bill 3.

BILL 3 — PROTECTED AREAS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AMENDMENT ACT, 2025

Hon. Laanas / Tamara Davidson: I move that this bill be now read a second time.

Amendments are proposed to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act. Provincial parks are B.C.'s natural treasures and play a vital role in preserving ecological, recreational and cultural values. B.C. has one of the largest protected area systems in North America. There are over 1,000 provincial parks, recreation sites, conservancies, ecological reserves and protected areas covering more than 14 million hectares, or approximately 14.4 percent of provincial land base.

I love B.C. parks. Hiking along the trails and learning more about the flora and fauna within the park system has been a lifelong passion of mine. I also love learning more about the Indigenous communities that are within the park systems or beside them.

This bill proposes amendments to rename two class A parks to include Indigenous place-names. Acknowledging the Indigenous place-names allows British Columbians to connect with the history and cultures of our province and supports ongoing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples throughout B.C. and the implementation of the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, UNDRIP.

Article 13 of UNDRIP specifically refers to place-names. Being an Indigenous woman, I know the important role that place-names play in Indigenous cultures. I know that it connects us all when we call the place by the proper name. It's important for Indigenous peoples to feel a part of the history and a part of the culture and the framework within our B.C. systems.

Enderby Cliffs Park will be named Tplaqín/Enderby Park. Tplaqín means "cliff" in Interior Salish.

Maquinna Marine Park will be named Nisṁaakqin, which means "our land that we care for" in the nuučaaṅuł language.

A lot of hikers and people that use the park system have already begun calling these different places by their Indigenous place-names. Local community hikers, especially, and rock-climbers have been referring to them in posts that we see on social media and in different areas where they've started to use the name. This is important work for British Columbia to do.

Second, the bill continues the routine practice of adding to the protected area system, modifying protected area boundaries, improving protected area boundary descriptions and making administrative changes.

These amendments will add land to three class A parks. I will now detail these additions.

[3:30 p.m.]

Wells Grey Park near Clearwater will have 33 hectares of land added. This land was purchased by the ministry in 2022 to protect wetland and forest that is surrounded by the existing park on three sides.

Cinnemousun Narrows Park on Shuswap Lake will have three hectares of land and three hectares of adjacent lakeshore added. The three hectares of Crown land has no encumbrances and is surrounded by the park on three sides. Three hectares of lake foreshore on Shuswap Lake, in the front of the property, is also being added. This popular water access park will have more contiguous protection and management of the land and beach areas as a result of these amendments.

Naikoon Park, on Haida Gwaii, is in my riding, and I have the pleasure of enjoying so much time spent there. I know firsthand how important it is for many visitors to Haida Gwaii to have access to campsites, facilities and the beautiful nature within the parks. My family has gone there to take photos of my nieces in their graduation dresses. Visiting Hereditary Chiefs have taken photos with their regalia on within Naikoon Park. It is a special place.

Naikoon Park on Haida Gwaii will have 104 hectares of land added. This land was purchased by the ministry. There are two parcels: 65 hectares purchased in 2023 and 39 hectares purchased in 2024. These properties are both in holdings surrounded by the existing park, and protecting them provides more contiguous protection and management of park values.

At Naikoon Park, the amendments also remove one hectare of land to allow for the expansion of the neighbouring Tlell Cemetery. The cemetery is an in-holding surrounded by the existing park. There are only a few burial plots remaining in the cemetery, and this amendment provides the space that will be needed in the cemetery for multiple generations. It's really important for our community members to know that they are able to be buried in the community that they lived in, that they grew up in and that they contributed to.

Kilby Park, in the Fraser Valley, will be formally transferred to the province's heritage branch in the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, which has managed the park and adjacent Kilby Historic Site since 2003. Transferring the property will allow the heritage branch to efficiently operate the park as an integrated part of the Kilby heritage site and continue to maintain it for people to enjoy.

The amendments also make several administrative changes and improvements to legal descriptions.

First of all, Kiskatinaw Park near Dawson Creek…. The amendments correct the mapped location of an existing statutory right-of-way for B.C. Hydro. This bill also continues our work of moving from metes and bounds, and lot and parcel descriptions, to mapped boundaries called official plans. Official plans are more accurate, understandable and practical for field surveying.

Due to improvements to data and mapping techniques that are used to spatially represent features on the land base, updated official plans sometimes result in changes to the approximate area figures in the legal descriptions. The actual area on the ground that is included in the protected area has not changed.

Eight ecological reserves — Columbia Lake Ecological Reserve, Fraser River Ecological Reserve, Nechako River Ecological Reserve, Parker Lake Ecological Reserve, Race Rocks Ecological Reserve, Skagit River Rhododendrons Ecological Reserve, Tacheeda Lakes Ecological Reserve and Vance Creek Ecological Reserve — and three parks — Kiskatinaw Park, Skagit Valley Park and Maquinna Marine Park — will have their existing boundary descriptions replaced with official plans.

[3:35 p.m.]

The ecological reserves that are moving to official plans are also being moved from schedule B to schedule A of the act. Schedule A of the act is comprised of ecological reserves with mapped boundaries. Schedule B is comprised of ecological reserves which have been continued by adoptive reference to their original orders-in-council.

In addition to moving these reserves to schedule A, we are rescinding the original orders-in-council, as these are no longer needed. Over 14 million hectares of our province is contained within our provincial protected area system, and these amendments continue our ministry's commitment to improving this system.

The ministry is also working closely with Indigenous peoples to find meaningful ways to recognize their culture and connection to these protected lands. The proposed new park names demonstrate this commitment.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister, for opening debate today on Bill 3.

Trevor Halford: I want to thank the minister across the way. My comments are going to be brief on Bill 3, because I think a lot of the work can be canvassed at committee stage, some of which I'll highlight.

We are, in British Columbia, truly blessed to have the parks that we do. In my riding, I know, I've got Peace Arch Park, which is a B.C. park. It's a great place to get away when you need to, which I often try and do.

With this piece of legislation here, I think that, obviously, it's very administrative in nature. It's also got some components there too regarding name changes, which the minister highlighted moments ago.

For us, some of the areas we want to canvass are just issues related to hydro, to consultation that's been potentially done on the name changes. It will also be an opportunity for my colleagues whose ridings some of these chan-

ges and parks exist in to canvass the minister and staff on what these changes mean to them and to their constituents and, ultimately, how they came to be, particularly around consultation.

I know the minister made the comment on the one-hectare removal to support the expansion of the community cemetery, which I believe exists in the minister's riding; also, the renaming of the two parks with Indigenous names; and then, obviously, moving some of the parks from ecological reserves, which is a schedule B park, to parks with plans, which is schedule A — all stuff that we will look forward to canvassing in committee stage.

With that, I will take my seat. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on second reading.

Deputy Speaker: The Chair will now recognize the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

Hon. Sheila Malcolmson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this legislation expanding protected areas and bringing the vision of parks truly in alignment with the priorities and responsibilities of our government.

In a way, this is a funny time to be talking about park boundaries. Everybody is feeling under tremendous pressure and significant worry about the state of jobs, the economy, the threat of tariffs from the south, from the American President. Be assured our government is working very hard, and working in partnership, to be ready for anything. This is all hands on deck. It's certainly a significant concern, and all of government is focused on this risk and protecting British Columbians, keeping us as strong as possible.

At the same time, the work goes on. I really am grateful to the Minister of Environment and Parks for bringing this bill forward and for, especially, giving the opportunity on a dark day in February to talk about some of the really, truly beautiful places in British Columbia — the imperative to conserve them, to recreate in them, and the opportunity for families across British Columbia to be truly immersed in beautiful B.C. and, significantly, the partnerships that allow this protection to happen.

[3:40 p.m.]

I'm thinking, because I come from a long time of working in the ocean kayak industry, of the really generous hospitality extended to us by ʕaaḥuusʔatḥ people — in particular in Clayoquot Sound, the beautiful, rugged west coast; and the just unique and breathtaking opportunity as an ocean kayaker right in the surf, right in the water to be on the edge of our continent.

The true, true west coast. The crashing of waves against the coastline, and the rise and fall of…. An 18-foot kayak is pretty big, but still, you…. It's an extremely humbling opportunity. The delicacy of getting on and off surf beaches, but especially that rise and fall of the coast, watching bull kelp rise and fall. This is an area where sea otters were reintroduced after the atomic weapons testing in Alaska in the '70s. This is one of the strongest areas where sea otters came back.

To have Maquinna Marine Park, which kayakers and recreators will know as geothermal hot springs, a really famous place to visit for boaters, people all over the coast…. It turns out that Maquinna Marine Park is not the right way to refer to this area. ʕaaḥuusʔatḥ let our government and let the minister know that it's not appropriate for a park to be named after the name of a chief, a former chief.

So ʕaaḥuusʔatḥ — thank you to ʕaaḥuusʔatḥ people — have provided the name Nisma̓akqin, and this legislation returns the name of ʕaaḥuusʔatḥ people to this land and to this park. Nisma̓akqin means "our land that we care for" in the nuučaan̓uł language.

I know the impact of a change like this, because in the riding which I represent…. I'm honoured to have worked with Snuneymuxw First Nation and Chief Mike Wyse and his council for 20 years now. In earlier legislation, they asked the former Environment Minister, George Heyman, to return the name of Saysutshun to what we had been calling Newcastle Island Provincial Park. Newcastle, because of the very deep mining history in Nanaimo, but to the people first to name it, it was Saysutshun. So now it is again, because of a similar bill last year or two years ago.

If anybody has an opportunity to visit Saysutshun Island, there is fantastic storytelling. My friend — Dave Bodaly is his English name; Laxiya is his Hul'qumi'num name. Fantastic storytelling, cultural interpretation — something I know visitors to our region have been hungry for, for a long time.

We're very grateful to Snuneymuxw for stepping up on what is an economic development function for them.

The water taxi is now run by the Snuneymuxw economic development arm, Petroglyph. If you get to Saysutshun Island, you can see what we call…. These are not spirit raccoons, like a spirit bear up on the Great Bear Rainforest. We have champagne raccoons, kind of pinkish fur. It's worth the trip. It's also just a beautiful kayaking area and a beautiful park with an old-style grandstand, like a sprung floor from the dances back in the '20s. All of this still remains.

But again, we're not calling it Newcastle anymore. Saysutshun is the word.

To the ʕaaḥuusʔatḥ people, I know that a change like this is important, and returning names is something that we are trying to do every time we open up the legislation.

Another significant part of this legislation…. For me, because my background is environmental resource studies and because my grandmother Betto and my mother, Ann, really raised me with a very strong commitment to conservation and ecology, I'm so happy to be able to talk about additions to parks in this legislation as well.

In every case, I believe these are parcels of land adjacent to or within existing park boundaries. We especially

are aware, in my region, where I represent the east coast of Vancouver Island, there is not a lot of Crown land, so creation of parks is not always simple.

When opportunities come up that private sellers want to sell to the provincial government, then the ministry, the B.C. Parks function, purchases land.

[3:45 p.m.]

I also want to raise my hands to the B.C. Parks Foundation, which is doing fundraising and strategic purchases often. They can purchase land that is available and then have a trusting relationship with B.C. Parks.

In time, when we have the budget in place, we're able to make these parks whole. That is what has happened in a number of these parks today. These are all parks that can be managed within the existing budget of B.C. Parks because, again, these aren't significant expansions. We found that there were no tenure conflicts or compensation implications from these additions.

The first one that really stood out for me is Wells Gray Park. It's a place that I've had the real good fortune to be able to go back-country skiing. The kind of place where you'll ski into the lodge on day one and then skin up beautiful forested hills and have this opportunity to powder ski, telemarking. It's just absolutely gorgeous and really hard. I'm not saying I'm really good at it, but it sure is a beautiful way, for someone that lives at sea level, to really challenge your lungs and aerobic capacity.

To do it in the company of friends, carrying your lunch in your knapsack, of course being very careful to be avalanche aware…. We're always practising with avalanche beacons and having a plan to test the stability of the slope so that nobody ever gets in any trouble.

Wells Gray is a real gem, summer and winter, and, in this case, 33 hectares of land that the province purchased, including wetland and forest. These parcels were surrounded on three sides by the existing park. Again, it's a very natural way to expand the park in a way that is sustainable in these times when our budget necessarily needs to focus on things that are direct affordability measures for people.

More than anything, and just in case my nephews Ross and Ben are watching….

Yes, now I'm getting to the part that is about you.

Two summers ago we got to visit, up in Haida Gwaii, the beautiful Naikoon Park.

Today, with this legislation, we're adding two parcels, 104 hectares. Each hectare is 2½ acres, so that's quite a significant piece of land. It was purchased by the ministry for addition to the park.

Again, same as with the Wells Gray example, these were parcels of land that were surrounded by the existing…. They were kind of like a little hole in the doughnut of the park. Probably to most people, they won't notice any difference, but certainly for the animals and plants that are reliant on this, they know that they will be permanently protected.

The first part of Naikoon Park that I just really want to paint a picture of for members of the House is where I got to visit two summers ago with my nephews Ross and Ben McVeigh, the Tow Hill Blow Hole. The boardwalk there is completely accessible. It was endorsed by the Rick Hansen Foundation and by CNIB.

The minister might tell me afterwards how I should have pronounced this. Taaw Tldáaw is how, I think, the northern Haida, the Old Massett village, they describe it. But this is how my nephews described it: "The beach and surfers were super cool." That's pretty good, eh?

We also visited Agate Beach, where they said: "The gem hunter was a pleasure." You'll meet folks that are out looking for agates. The late, great John Horgan would want to hear about this. People that are out looking for agates on the beach, rolling their rocks as they go, and they passed on some of their wisdom to my nephews. It was pretty neat to show how they're able to find these gems.

Then the end of our holiday. This is once Ross and Ben and their mom and dad — Claire, my sister, and Ian — had headed back for the rest of their holiday. My love, Howard, and I spent a bunch of time in Misty Meadows campground. To see black bears right in the campground and to have sandhill cranes fly over us was something I will never forget.

[3:50 p.m.]

Sandhill cranes, as you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, came back from extinction, or at least extirpation, on our continent. To see them with their crazy sound flying over top of us was really beautiful.

Now, another interesting piece about this is this part, the sandhill crane part of Naikoon Park, which is huge…. It goes from the very top of Graham Island to the east side of Haida Gwaii, right down to Tlell. It's a significant, significant stretch of land. It is very close to the community of Tlell. This is another mechanism that's built into this legislation. We are proposing in legislation to delete one hectare of land for the purpose of considering expansion of the Tlell Cemetery.

There are only two burial plots remaining in the Tlell Cemetery. There's no other readily available land. So our government was very grateful to work with the local community and, together with the Council of the Haida Nation, to do this work — to be able to find a win-win here. We're adding significant land holdings in this legislation, and also to be taking out a slice of park for a community benefit is extremely important.

Tlell also is the place that we as a family got to go to the Edge of the World Music Festival. That's what it's called: edge of the world. What a blast. If you ever get a chance to go, please do. The atmosphere, because it's so contained, so community-focused, was really joyous. The lineup of

local performers was really top-notch. My nephews were invited up on the stage. They got to dance with the band.

Again, this conservation commitment. I think because so many of the festival-goers were staying in the park itself, you'd see tables all the way around that were helping educate people about the conservation values of the land that they are in.

To have my nephews, who'd spent a lot of time in Gwaii Haanas building inside old dead urchin shells hotels or hospitals or jails, depending on the day, for hermit crabs…. They were quite concerned about some of the warnings about the invasive green crab. So here in the middle of the music festival is a table where people young and old are being taught by biologists about how to identify a green crab.

My nephews were able to say: "You know, they were crabs, and they were green, so we're pretty worried." Then to have the biologists be able to say, "Well, let's look at the edge of their shell. Let's look at the marking. Show me your photos," and they're like: "Oh well, these are not invasive crabs that you saw down on Faraday Island in Gwaii Haanas, the national park. We're now entering your data into our database. You are now citizen scientists, and we are now marking one more place that there are not these invasive crabs." All of this happening, again, within the community of Tlell.

We know that the conservation ethic is built in everywhere. It does feel to me…. Even though ordinarily I would hate to lose any protected area, to have just this one hectare go, in recognition of community as part of environment…. That's very much the B.C. Parks ethic and, again, part of our commitment to reconciliation and working together with others — the title decision with Haida.

For us to be in this chamber and hear the power of the Haida drummers, the president of the Haida Nation speak to remind our government about our responsibility to work together…. That's the kind of action that gets built into just a line in a piece of legislation here to make things right and to protect the environment at the same time. It's the kind of win-win that our government is committed to carrying on.

With that, I indicate, of course, my wholehearted support for the legislation. Know that we will continue to make these kinds of amendments and updates as we work together and protect more land and continue to fulfill our reconciliation commitments and continue to protect and make British Columbia beautiful.

Deputy Speaker: Just a couple of quick housekeeping moments. I've heard a couple of electronic devices this afternoon. I'd ask you to silence those.

I heard the bold crunch of a cracker earlier, if you could imagine. There should be no food in the chamber.

Hon. Christine Boyle: I have the honour of standing to speak in support of Bill 3, Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2025.

[3:55 p.m.]

I want to start by saying I'm so proud of my colleague Minister Davidson for the work she and her team have done on this significant bill, which contains proposed amendments to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act. This act will expand three existing provincial parks, as well as rename two parks to recognize Indigenous connections to land.

Minister Davidson and her team are already delivering results for people. I want to respond not only in my role as Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, as I believe these changes will have positive, long-term impacts for furthering reconciliation across the province, but I also want to respond as a resident of B.C. who loves and believes in the value of our parks and wild spaces almost as much as I know I will grow to love standing here and speaking about legislation about parks and wild spaces.

I am a parent of two — what's the appropriate word? — lively children. We live right in the heart of Vancouver, so when we get to go on summer holidays to B.C. parks, which we do every single summer, I get to see my kids go feral, really run wild, in the trees and along the beaches and make all the noise that they do in our home but with more space and less echo.

I see them run with abandon and get dirty, dig into the soil and come back to the tent covered in sand. Much as it pains me, as the person who will sweep the tent out after, it means so much for my city kids to be out in these beautiful spaces. It means so much to me that we continue to protect and expand those spaces.

We know our population is growing across B.C. To have these beautiful spaces protected for all of us to enjoy and also for their own sake, not just for human use but for ecosystem health and wildlife use as well — I'm excited, for all of those reasons, about this important work.

Bill 3 proposes, as I said, amendments to rename two class A parks to include Indigenous place names. Article 13 of the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples, UNDRIP, specifically refers to place names. This work is intrinsic to B.C.'s effort, as a whole, to advance reconciliation, including the recommendations by the Declaration Act action plan passed unanimously in this House.

As Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, I'm pleased to see this bill reflect those changes that were made in partnership with First Nations. I talk a lot about DRIPA. I meet with Chiefs and councils and nations to talk about, particularly, how that large-scale, systemic work lands on the ground for communities and how we make sure we're implementing it in meaningful ways.

Updating, changing place names is a key piece of that, because it allows people to see themselves and their cul-

ture in the place that they have stewarded since time immemorial. Indigenous place names often reflect the geography, the history and the cultural significance of a place, whether they were given prior to colonization or in partnership with governments today.

The first park that is proposed to be renamed is Enderby Cliffs Park near Salmon Arm, which will be renamed to Tplaqín/Enderby Cliffs Park. I know sometimes we hear, in name changes, concern about people who have known a place by one name continuing to find it. The new name, Tplaqín, means "cliff" in Interior Salish. This name change comes at the request of the Splatsin First Nation to better reflect their name for the area.

[4:00 p.m.]

Enderby is near and dear to me because one of my near-and-dear friends grew up there and speaks, as I know so many residents from communities around the province do, with so much warmth about his home community and his enthusiasm for going back whenever possible and the way that the community supported him growing up, the way that the community supported his mom when she was ill.

When I was reading through an initial draft of the legislation, I reached out to this friend to hear about his stories of Enderby Cliffs Park. I can't share all of them in these chambers, but I will share that he had many fond and a couple rowdy memories of growing up and spending time with friends in this park.

I think about and I talked about my young kids and the wild abandon with which they enjoy B.C. parks. But for so many teenagers as well, our parks are an important living-room space for them to gather with friends and maybe get out of their parents' home for a moment and have that breathing room to be in nature, to connect with the earth and to connect with one another, even if it is in ways, consuming beverages or whatever else, that I won't mention in this chamber. Important public spaces for all of us.

I just wanted to name…. I know each of these places is important to the communities that they're in, and Enderby brought up stories and good reconnections for me, as well, on that front.

The second park is Maquinna Marine Park near Tofino, which is to be renamed Nisma̓akqin Park. Nisma̓akqin means "our land that we care for" in nuučaan̓uł. That renaming, I thought, was so powerful. What a perfect name for a community to give a park that has been part of their home for countless generations: our land that we care for. The ʕaaḥuusʔatḥ First Nation provided the name, clearly with thought and significance to what this piece of land means to the community and the nation.

I want to talk a bit about the significance of place names because, as mentioned, these changes are a partnership with Indigenous communities and local governments, reminding us that our work can't be successful without these vital collaborations.

The renaming of places to their Indigenous names is a reflection of our government's commitment to advancing reconciliation with First Nations. It's a step toward preserving and promoting the true historical context of these places and ensuring that their significance is not lost.

By embracing these names, we honour the stories and traditions and knowledge that have been passed down through generations. I'm always heartened to see the support from local governments and the public when these name change discussions begin and that engagement and involvement to get to the point that we're at now, as is the case with both of these examples — strong community involvement, community support and local government support for these changes.

Members may know that I previously served for six years as a city councillor at Vancouver city hall and worked closely with local government colleagues around the province on a whole range of important issues that are important to British Columbia.

I remember being at city hall in Vancouver when the Vancouver park board passed a motion to recognize Indigenous place names in Vancouver's parks and beaches, which has helped to open up all kinds of new pathways for communication and consultation in Vancouver's parks.

Similarly, I brought a motion forward to Vancouver city hall to recognize the Year of Indigenous Languages a few years ago, which aligned with the park board's work being done around renaming and aligned with city work, as well, on that front.

When I take my family to a place and we see its Indigenous name, I'm grateful. Often we will search the name. We'll practise how you pronounce the new name. There are a number of places in my home community in Vancouver where additional names have been added or names have been changed. Of course, it's some work to learn new pronunciations, to get accustomed to a new name for a place, and it's an important learning opportunity.

I have always really appreciated, as I've worked with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Sḵwx̱ wú7mesh and səlilwətaɬ, the repeated teachings that I have had and practise I've had in pronunciation, the willingness from community to hear you say it wrong a few times before getting it right, that space for learning alongside one another.

[4:05 p.m.]

Then, as is often the case, audio clues, whether it's…. I have seen place name signs with an audio button so that a person visiting the site can press the button and hear right there how to pronounce the new name.

I also know that in places like shíshálh on the Sunshine Coast, they have quite an extensive library of audio clips on their website, so that you can look up the name of a place and hear a language speaker from the nation say it again and again so it sticks in your head.

I know that well because I was using that resource just this past week. Minister Neill and I were up in shíshálh for

a celebration at the longhouse there, and I had speaking notes. My speaking notes contained a number of words that I had to learn to pronounce along the way, and what a helpful resource it was to be able to go on the website and hear the proper pronunciation of them.

So I am grateful for those opportunities in place names across the province, where we are learning our history together, where we're recognizing culture and the connection between culture and language and land. I'm grateful to be part of a collective learning journey with my kids, with my family, asking those questions together. That wasn't the case when I was a kid, and I am grateful to see and feel that progress underway.

Bill 3, in addition to the renaming of two parks, proposes expanding B.C. parks and protected areas by adding 143 hectares to three provincial parks: Naikoon, Wells Gray and — I'm going to make sure I pronounce this one right — Cinnemousun Narrows near Sicamous, which will see three acres added to land and three hectares of lakeshore added.

Wells Gray Park, near Clearwater, will see 33 hectares to protect wetland and forests.

Naikoon Park, on Haida Gwaii, will add 104 hectares of private land to further protect ecosystems and wildlife habitat.

I have been to some but not all of these parks in our beautiful province. The ones I haven't yet had a chance to be at, I looked up Google reviews for. I thought if I can't….

Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, Minister. No electronic devices while you speak. Apologies.

Hon. Christine Boyle: Oh yes, sorry. I am new at this.

I looked up Google reviews for some of the parks that I wasn't able to go to myself. I thought: "Who better to tell us in these chambers what great places these are than residents across B.C. who have visited themselves and then gone online and shared what they thought?"

There was a rich plethora of advice online about each of these parks. Some of my favourite pieces included very detailed descriptions of where to park or what area was the steepest.

The best review that I read came from Wells Gray Park. It said, "This park is a beautiful place to visit if you like to be eaten alive by mosquitoes," which I don't want to be taken as a criticism of Wells Gray Park, because while I was looking for funny reviews to be able to share here, 99 percent of them were actually just glowing recommendations about the waterfalls and the views and the freshness of the air and the friendly people you'll run into.

I admit I was looking for much more humour than I got. It turns out that British Columbia residents and tourists to our beautiful parks who take the time to go online had almost unanimously marvelous things to say about each of these parks.

Anyone who is in the habit of looking for online reviews of places, as I do all the time for restaurants and whatnot, knows that it is actually very much not the habit of the internet to be so glowing in their recommendations of a place. I think it says something very strong about our B.C. parks that people are putting the effort in to go online and give such glowing recommendations for them.

[4:10 p.m.]

The sentiment from all of these reviews was first and foremost that these are stunning parks that every British Columbian should visit in their lifetime, and of course, that at certain times of the year, these parks also happen to be the choice destinations for mosquitoes hosting their own family reunions — countless reviews in there, urging people to remember to bring bug repellent or to be prepared to donate blood.

I want to go back to speaking about the amendments specifically related to Naikoon Park. The amendment includes a transfer of one hectare from Naikoon Park to WLRS — Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. This land is under consideration for the expansion of the Tlell Cemetery on Haida Gwaii. There are only two burial plots left in the cemetery. The province of B.C. and Haida Nation have worked together on these changes, and we're grateful that Haida Nation is supportive of the boundary changes to this park and of this work.

In particular, I want to name, as many members in the House will know, my gratitude for the strong relationship that the province has with the Haida Nation. For over 20 years, Haida Nation and the province of B.C. have been working together on new approaches to reconciliation.

In 2023, Haida Nation, the province and Canada signed the Changing Tide framework for reconciliation, and B.C. passed the Haida Nation Recognition Act, which recognizes Haida Nation as the holder of Haida title and rights and the Council of the Haida Nation as the governing body of the Haida Nation.

In April of 2024, B.C. and the Haida Nation signed a next phase of the Haida title lands agreement, called Rising Tide, which legally recognizes Haida Aboriginal title throughout Haida Gwaii, the first of its kind in Canadian history.

While there was great celebration at the time, as a new minister, I want to take a moment to congratulate the Haida Nation and Canada on the Big Tide Haida Title Lands Agreement that was announced last week.

Canada's recognition of Haida Aboriginal title on Haida Gwaii is significant and aligns with the work that the province has done. I know that a number of us were sorry to not be able to be there in person for that celebration between Haida and Canada. It was the day before the throne speech, and we, of course, were also honoured to be here.

I was grateful to have met with Gaagwiis last month in Vancouver, and I'm strongly supportive of the incred-

ible leadership that they have. I'm grateful to have partners like him in this work.

I said I haven't been to Wells Gray Park, but I will tell you that I was fortunate to have been in Naikoon Park just this past summer with my family. I was on a holiday with my then nine-year-old and my spouse, and we were getting my nine-year-old accustomed to long family hikes — or as we call them in our family, forest walks, so that they're marginally less intimidating. Sometimes we bring candy to bribe him along the way. Please don't judge my parenting. I'm doing my best to get him into the forest there.

We had miscalculated the length of the hike. We were hoping to get to a shipwreck in Naikoon Park, and we had miscalculated the length of it. About one third of the way in, the people coming back the other way were reinforcing for us, much to the dismay of my nine-year-old, that it was in fact quite a distance still ahead, and we were running low on candy.

I will admit that I in particular was keen to get to the shipwreck, so we made a family deal that my partner and son would turn back, and I, keen to go for a jog anyway, would run the rest of the way out and then FaceTime them from the shipwreck so that they could sort of see it but without all the misery of dragging a nine-year-old on an 11-kilometre hike.

We did just that. I got to have a beautiful run through the forests and along the river and then the shoreline of Naikoon Park. I also got to have a peaceful hour alone on a family holiday, which is a priceless portion of any family holiday. Yes, thanks for recognizing that.

[4:15 p.m.]

I got to the end, unfortunately, to no cell phone reception, but I'm happy to share, with any member in this House, the photos that I have of this stunning shipwreck out on the water near the edge of the park, and I can tell you the pricelessness of that moment. Then I jogged back, just quickly enough to catch my family as they were on their way out of the park, one of many memorable stories of British Columbians visiting these parks and of the importance of the work that's being done to protect and expand them.

I know many of us in these chambers are still getting to know one another, and I can think of no better way to connect with our own caucus colleagues and across the aisle than getting to hear stories of your experiences in these B.C. parks. I think it is truly a non-partisan experience to be able to hear about and appreciate the beauty of the parks that we have across this province.

I will conclude by saying I am so proud of the work that this government is doing, in partnership with First Nations, to look after natural spaces in this province. I'm grateful to Minister Davidson for the specifics of this bill, and I look forward to working in partnership to continue this important work.

Deputy Speaker: Debate will continue on Bill 3, and we'll recognize the Minister of Forests.

Hon. Ravi Parmar: Mr. Speaker, to begin, I haven't had an opportunity with you in the chair to offer my congratulations to you in taking on this very important role as Deputy Speaker.

I've known you for a number of years now. You've always been a stand-up guy who has represented his community, one of the first members that I've spoken to on the other side when I took over as Minister of Forests. I've always appreciated our relationship. Congratulations. It's really great to see you up there in the robes.

I just want to begin by acknowledging my thanks to the Minister of Environment and Parks, to be taking a role in such a critical portfolio and to be able to bring in legislation within months of taking on that role. The minister has had a long-standing career in the federal service and has done such incredible work in her community with the Haida Nation. I remember meeting her for the first time here, prior to this House, when different legislation was being introduced. I so appreciate the work that she does.

I think as we talk about Bill 3, in this legislation to make amendments to the Park Act, it serves as an opportunity for us to be able to thank the public service for the incredible work that they do in the Ministry of Environment and Parks, and also in other ministries. Legislation isn't just confined to one ministry; it touches so many other ministries.

As exciting as it is for us to be able to stand up in this place and to be able to talk about this legislation, to share some of the stories that my colleague has just shared about her experiences with her family in our great provincial parks, what an opportunity it is for us to be able to celebrate the great work that the public service has done on the ground in communities, bringing this work to this Legislature and making it official. I just wanted to acknowledge that.

What a history we have had here in British Columbia with protecting our natural heritage — Strathcona Park, the first provincial park in British Columbia a long, long time ago — and where we have come to. I'm so proud of the work we have done on this side of the House, continuously, year over year, expanding our provincial parks and a whole host of things. The reason why we do that: parks are not just protected spaces. They are not just places for conservation. They are absolutely essential for biodiversity, for climate resilience and for the public's well-being.

That's what I hope to be able to speak to in the time that I have today: all of those different pieces that I think really speak to this legislation, Bill 3, and the importance of bringing this legislation forward and planning for the future of British Columbia, stewarding our lands, looking after our landscape.

We have been doing that for a long time here in this province. There's also a lot of recognition, which I'll speak to in a little bit, of the role of First Nations, the role of Indigenous peoples, who have been the stewards of this land since time immemorial.

[4:20 p.m.]

I'm looking forward to being able to share some of my own stories with the nations that I've worked closely with and the connection that I've been able to build through the work with and the connections with provincial parks as well.

Again, expanding and properly managing our park system and the work that my colleague the minister has done by bringing forward this legislation, Bill 3, ensure that future generations, future British Columbians, can experience B.C.'s natural beauty. I might add that it's not just British Columbians that enjoy our provincial parks. Everyone enjoys our provincial parks.

I had an opportunity, prior to the election, to represent, I would argue, the most beautiful constituency in the province. I still represent the most beautiful constituency in the province, Langford-Highlands.

An Hon. Member: You were doing so well.

Hon. Ravi Parmar: I was doing so well.

I represented, prior to the election, not only the communities of Langford and Highlands, which I represent…. I love it. It's super easy. Langford and the Highlands — that's my riding. Two incredible communities, home to two provincial parks, I might add, that I'll touch on.

I also represented East Sooke, Sooke, Otter Point, Shirley, Jordan River, all the way out to Port Renfrew. I say that because my predecessor always said: "Name those communities, because if you forget to name those communities, they will know. They'll be paying attention." To be able to have the connection with the regional directors at the time, Mike Hicks and then Al Wickheim, to know that our provincial parks and our regional parks, but in particular our provincial parks, were not just being enjoyed by British Columbians…. They were being enjoyed by people from all over the world.

I often joke. The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation…. I had a bit of a different upbringing. I always wanted to camp as a kid, but my parents said: "We came from camping in India, so why would we go out and camp here?" Maybe the Minister of Mining would understand and appreciate that. So I never really got a chance to experience true camping. It wasn't until high school that I really got a chance to truly enjoy our provincial parks and, again, acknowledge the beauty we have here.

Now, as I said, our provincial parks, through this legislation…. Bill 3 acknowledges the work that we've done, but it also acknowledges the work that we continue to need to do with expansions and, obviously, the work with name changes.

People from Europe, Americans — everyone enjoys our parks. But let's be very clear. Let's be crystal-clear. British Columbians love our provincial parks. We welcome people from all over the world to enjoy our provincial parks. These are provincial parks, not provincial state parks.

So Google, make that correction. These are provincial parks.

To our friends down south in the United States: come on by any time. If you're heading out to Port Renfrew, to Juan de Fuca provincial park, make sure you stop by and support our local restaurants and local camping grounds, and enjoy our provincial parks as much as you want. In the good times, in the summertime, when things are really nice and dry and even now, when things are a little wet, enjoy those provincial parks.

Mr. Speaker, I think you and I will agree those provincial parks are not today, nor will they ever be, for sale.

I want to spend some time talking a bit about stewardship of our provincial parks. As Bill 3, and this important work that my colleague has done in bringing forward this legislation and talking about expanding provincial parks, 143 hectares to three existing parks…. Protecting land is only and truly one part of the equation. We must also actively manage and steward it to address growing challenges.

As the Minister of Forests and the Minister Responsible for the B.C. Wildfire Service…. Like I said in this House previously, British Columbians know all too well the devastating impacts of wildfires to our communities. MLAs in this House, new MLAs and also those previously that have served as local government officials and just live in communities know the devastating impacts of wildfires.

The fact that it's increasing in severity due to climate change, which requires us to better steward our lands, to have better forest management and also to have better fire mitigation strategies…. As part of this work that we're doing through Bill 3 and the amendments, we also need to make sure that we are addressing invasive species.

[4:25 p.m.]

I didn't get an opportunity to be in Vancouver this week, with the House in session, at the Invasive Species Council of B.C., but I got a chance to beam in virtually and record a video. We know that threatening native biodiversity in our parks requires ongoing intervention as well, and it's so important, as part of our collective work in regards to this, that we're doing that work, for sure.

Also, as I touched on previously, tourism impacts are massive for our communities, especially here on the south Island — I would say the entire Vancouver Island. People come to British Columbia for a whole host of reasons, to be able to celebrate the absolutely beautiful province in every corner of our province. Expanding our provincial parks, as my colleague the minister has done through Bill 3, recognizes that this is an economic strategy, as well, that this

is an opportunity to be able to put British Columbia on the forefront.

Again, I joke about it. The amount of people that I met when I represented Port Renfrew, as an example, and would just pop into a provincial park once in a while to be able to check out some work that we had done in the provincial parks, to be able to create….

Parking can be a bit of a challenge in our provincial parks, without a doubt. They're busy, absolutely busy. Washroom facilities, accessibility — those sorts of pieces I'm sure I'll touch on in the time that I've got.

To have been able to see, over the course of the last number of years as an MLA, the tourism benefits of our provincial parks is incredible. I think of a small business that was formerly in my community, a little café in Shirley. They benefited from the expansions that we've made, the accessibility work that we've done to the Juan de Fuca provincial park, as a prime example.

Collectively, whether it's the tourism impacts, invasive species or wildfires, it's so important that we continue our work to invest in stewardship and ensure that our parks remain healthy, accessible and resilient for many years to come. Because if we don't, we will take them for granted. Again, it is why it's so important that this legislation, Bill 3, builds on the work that we've done in the past and ensures that we're preparing for the future as well.

I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment as a new minister, and in particular as the new Minister of Forests and the minister responsible for the B.C. Wildfire Service, to touch on the impacts that wildfires have occurred to our provincial parks — in particular, Wells Gray Provincial Park in 2024…. We had to close many campsites at Wells Gray because of lightning strikes.

Because of the hard-working men and women of the B.C. Wildfire Service…. The Wildfire Service has just done incredible work; 2023 and 2024 were some of the worst wildfire seasons on record. In fact, 2023 was the worst wildfire season on record in British Columbia; 2024 was the fourth-worst wildfire season on record. Just in those two years, close to $2.5 billion in damage occurred that has cost British Columbians.

How can you put a price on our provincial parks? It's why it is so important that as we build off of these challenging years, the 2023 and 2024 wildfire seasons — again, 2023 being the worst wildfire season on record — we expand and properly manage our parks as well.

I'm so proud to be able to work, as the minister responsible for the B.C. Wildfire Service, with my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks on this important work, to ensure that we institute natural firebreaks so we can preserve old-growth forests, wetlands and riparian zones and ensure that we're doing all of this good work. Bill 3 provides us with an opportunity, as we're expanding our parks, to be able to look at this important work.

I hope other members will have an opportunity to be able to speak to what provincial parks mean to them as well.

As we do that work, we also need to ensure that we acknowledge and support traditional Indigenous land management practices, such as controlled burns, which help reduce wildfire risk. We have wildfire risk reduction projects happening everywhere across this province. We have added dollars to the Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. as a prime example of that. We need to encourage sustainable forestry practice as part of that. That's the work I'm leading in the Ministry of Forests, but it's important that we begin this work in our provincial parks.

[4:30 p.m.]

I remember meeting in Vanderhoof just a few weeks ago with the mayor and council, and them pulling out a map and sharing with me the impacts of wildfires that have happened in their provincial parks and how it has led to growth.

[Mable Elmore in the chair.]

It is a commitment that I made with them — that we collectively work together to be able to address those challenges. I look forward to the opportunity, with Bill 3 and the work that the ministry is doing, to be able to address those challenges as well.

I want to touch on the connection between parks and well-being. I don't know about you, as someone who lives fairly close to a provincial park, just down the road from Gowlland Tod Provincial Park…. I've got two provincial parks in my constituency of Langford-Highlands, Gowlland Tod Provincial Park and Goldstream Provincial Park. I welcome my colleagues on this side of the House and the colleagues on the other side, if you happen to be sticking around for the weekend, to check them out.

With Bill 3 and the amendments that we're making to this, it provides us an opportunity to be able to acknowledge the well-being aspect of our provincial parks as well. Studies have shown that access to nature improves physical and mental health and well-being. It reduces stress and promotes outdoor activity as well.

I think there was no greater time that our provincial parks were used than during the pandemic, when we couldn't meet in the chamber. We couldn't meet in many different places. We had to protect one another, and provincial parks served as an opportunity for us to be able to gather and spread out and just enjoy nature.

I know that so many of my constituents in Langford-Highlands fully utilized Goldstream Provincial Park and certainly used Gowlland Tod Provincial Park as well.

I think it was a greater acknowledgement of how important it is for us to acknowledge when we're doing this work — when we're bringing forward amendments like the amendments that my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks has brought forward in this legislation — that, again, provincial parks are not necessarily

just for conservation. They're not just for protection, but they're for our enjoyment as well.

Parks provide so many economic benefits, like tourism — again, bringing in millions and millions of dollars through sustainable tourism and recreation industries. I'm just getting a quick opportunity in my time as Minister of Forests to be able to see that through our Rec Site and Trails programs. It's so important that we build on this work through Bill 3 and continue investing in protected areas that enhance our local economy, support Indigenous-led conservation efforts and, again, continue to strengthen our community resilience.

I touched on, previously, wildfires. There's so much work that we can do in partnership with wildfire risk reduction projects in provincial parks through our Crown Land wildfire risk reduction fund, which we're already doing in tandem between the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Environment and Parks. It's so important. You have one of the parks that we're expanding, Wells Gray, that has been impacted by wildfires in previous years.

One of the other things I wish to speak on in the time that I have is an acknowledgement, I think, in this legislation — a key aspect of it. There are two pieces I want to talk about.

Firstly is the expansion. This is a massive expansion to our provincial parks. I'm so proud, on this side of the House, of the work that we've done on this.

I think of my predecessor Moe Sihota, when he served as the Minister of Environment back in the '90s, and the work that he did to be able to expand provincial parks. That work led to benefiting so many of my constituents in Langford–Juan de Fuca and now Langford-Highlands as well. It's great to see our new Minister of Environment and Parks continuing on with those New Democratic values of making sure that all British Columbians get a chance to benefit from our stewardship as well.

With this legislation, Bill 3, we are expanding B.C.'s parks and protected areas by adding 143 hectares to three existing provincial parks — Naikoon, Wells Gray and Cinnemousun Narrows. As part of this work….

It's an acknowledgement that some of these provincial parks were established in times where there wasn't formal recognition of Indigenous rights and title. There wasn't formal acknowledgement of the meaningful role that government must play, all governments must play, of meaningfully engaging with Indigenous peoples, with First Nations. I think that is what's unique about this amendment and why I am so excited to be able to speak to Bill 3.

[4:35 p.m.]

I hope my other colleagues on this side of the House and others on the other side will speak up to it as well. This was done in meaningful dialogue and consultation with Indigenous peoples, with First Nations.

That's unique, because for a long time, we weren't doing that as a government. We would often talk…. I presume, as I wasn't there 40, 50, 70, 80 or 100 years ago, when we first talked about Strathcona Provincial Park. I'm sure back then we weren't inviting First Nations to our table. We weren't inviting First Peoples, those who have been stewarding our land since time immemorial, to the table to be a part of these conversations, to be able to hear directly from them on the importance of stewarding those lands.

It's so important, as the Minister of Forests, who has had a chance to travel much of the province…. I was on a road trip just a few weeks ago. I visited Smithers, Burns Lake, Terrace, Fraser Lake, Fort St. James, Vanderhoof, Prince George, Williams Lake, Quesnel, a few places in the last little while, to be able to hear directly from Indigenous peoples, in particular First Nations leaders, on the important role and to see the connection that's been formed.

When we've talked about provincial parks in the past, in my community of Langford–Juan de Fuca, now Langford-Highlands, as my colleague from Juan de Fuca–Malahat represents…. We've talked about the challenges when we've looked to expand provincial parks. There have been concerns raised by nations that we have not meaningfully engaged with them. We haven't given thought or consideration to the impacts of expanding parks on First Nations. It is so important that we engage with people.

My colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation talked about, whether it's online or on the site of these provincial parks, acknowledging the Indigenous names, the ancestry, the territorial acknowledgement.

I'll tell you. It wasn't too long ago that I had an opportunity to be at Juan de Fuca Provincial Park when I was the MLA for the region — to be able to see a beautiful board display from the paaʔčiidʔatx̣ Nation, the people of the seafoam, as they're known as, beautifully constructed. This was a great partnership between B.C. Parks, the CRD and the paaʔčiidʔatx̣ Nation that acknowledged the territories. To be able to see little kids run up and take a look at the history….

We often talk about the enjoyment of our provincial parks — running around, lots of running around, sometimes up big hills and down hills and taking some falls and getting some scrapes. What I remember as a kid growing up was all the scrapes on your knees going through our beautiful provincial parks. Not to try to bore this for the kids at home, these are history lessons for us as well. It's an opportunity for us to be able to acknowledge that these parks, before they were parks, were and continue to be territories for local nations.

Through the work that my colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is doing through the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act…. I'm so proud that this legislation and the legislation we're bringing forward, like Bill 3, is being done through that lens, through true, lasting and meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples.

For me, when I see this legislation come forward, and I see the name change, which I'll touch on, I think of the relationship that I was able to build previously with the paaʔčiidʔatx̣ Nation and the work that goes into not only expanding parks but recognizing those territories and making sure that it's not just done on a website, that it's done physically on the ground for people to enjoy.

That's why this legislation is so meaningful, because it speaks to renaming two parks to traditional Indigenous names that recognize the significant cultural values and, again, supports ongoing reconciliation as well.

I think it falls upon all of us. I think of this in my communities. Often when we name things in recognition of Indigenous peoples, the first thing people are worried about is: how do you pronounce that? You don't want to, in this case, embarrass yourself or disrespect a nation as well. It's so important that this work is now collectively all of us. As it's been introduced, Bill 3, in this House, it's an opportunity for all of us to be able to practise these names. I think it's an opportunity for all British Columbians to do so as well.

[4:40 p.m.]

Enderby Cliffs Park near Salmon Arm will be renamed to Tplaqín/Enderby Cliffs Park. Tplaqín means "cliff" in Interior Salish.

Maquinna Marine Park near Tofino will be renamed Nisma̓akqin, which means "our land that we care for" in nuučaan̓uł.

This is such a great opportunity for the generations today to be able to acknowledge these names and to just watch a year or two, or five or ten years from now, these names will just be flying. They'll be used, and there'll be an acknowledgement of our past and how important reconciliation is on our journey as well.

I know that provincial parks mean so much to British Columbians, and it's why it's so important that we do our level best to be able to make additions whenever we can. We take this opportunity to be able to provide an opportunity for British Columbians to be a part of this work and to be able to enjoy these parks.

As an MLA, I learned very quickly that one of the most controversial days as an MLA in our community office…. I know that there are a lot of new members on both sides of the House, so I'm giving you a bit of a heads-up. When the first day of provincial parks booking happens, that's a pretty controversial day because sometimes the website doesn't necessarily work, or sometimes people are just jamming on there online and trying to get their booking in. So usually when it doesn't work out for them, they're calling their MLA's office, so just a heads-up for folks.

We've done lots of work over the years to be able to rectify those challenges and to be able to address the high volume of people that are coming online and taking advantage of our provincial parks. I know that with this legislation, Bill 3, there will be a lot of people getting an opportunity to be able to enjoy these five parks that we speak to, the two that I named, and of course, Naikoon, Wells Gray and Cinnemousun Narrows provincial parks as well.

Provincial parks serve as an opportunity for us to be able to acknowledge the beautiful province that we live in. Again, I think of my own personal connection to provincial parks growing up as a kid, visiting with my parents in provincial parks. Often, what we did in our family was that we would just go on a little bit of a picnic in our provincial parks as well. That's a memory I hold quite dearly with my parents and my grandmother and my siblings. I know that all British Columbians have that connection with provincial parks as well. There are so many of them across the province.

With this legislation that we've brought forward, it's an acknowledgement of the great work that has been done through the last number of years on stewarding our provincial parks; protecting our provincial parks; again, protecting the biodiversity; protecting parks from wildfires; and on climate resilience. We know that climate change is having a devastating impact on our lands, and it's so important for us to be able to address that, not just through dealing with it when wildfires occur, but all the important work that happens prior to that as well.

Also, it's an opportunity for us to be able to acknowledge that a lot of fun happens in our provincial parks. I remember the last time I was at Gowlland Tod Provincial Park, I and a couple of buddies that were going up came across someone who was getting engaged. That was really nice. They didn't have…. It was just a person who was proposing, and they didn't have someone taking a photo. So we took the photo and provided it to them. That was really special to be able to see.

Provincial parks have a meaningful place in my heart, as they do for all British Columbians. I just wanted to provide my opportunity through Bill 3 in this legislation, the park act amendment for B.C., to be able to speak to the value of our provincial parks and the work that my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Parks, has been doing since she was sworn in as the minister to stand and defend our parks and to steward them and to expand them.

A lot of work is done through this legislation, but there's so much more work to do.

What a pleasure to be able to stand in this House and be able to speak to this legislation and the important work that we're doing on this side of the House on this important project.

Peter Milobar: Wow, a lot to unpack there on a bill that had almost nothing to do with most of what the speech was. I say that because Bill 3 certainly….

Interjection.

Peter Milobar: Sorry, did you want to be the designated speaker? I know you are trying to kill the clock, Minister.

Interjection.

[4:45 p.m.]

Peter Milobar: Oh, okay. Perfect. You wanted us to speak just a minute ago. Would you like me to have the floor, or would you like the floor back?

Interjection.

Peter Milobar: Okay, thank you.

You know, it's interesting how testy the government is instantly. Here we are on our, essentially, third day of sitting in the Legislature, and we're watching the government filibuster, for the viewers at home, Bill 3, which is a standard housekeeping bill that comes forward every year as the Minister of Environment and their staff do some updated mapping on B.C. Parks systems.

So 134 hectares is absolutely an expansion of B.C. Parks. It's certainly not the government trying to get to the 30 by 30 things that we talk about with parks across the country. This is housekeeping, cleaning up of mapping.

When you think of the size of Wells Gray Park, which used to be in my former riding, 134 hectares spread out around the perimeter of a park means that they've changed the map adjustment by about six inches on the perimeter, if that, of Wells Gray Park. When you add in how many parks this bill deals with, that's the scale and scope and magnitude, for the viewers at home, that this government is dealing with here today.

I say that because this is a returning government that, despite the fact of that, should have, you would have thought, had legislation that was already being worked upon heading into this session and heading into the election.

Even if they didn't, it's been over three months since cabinet was sworn in, yet the best this government has for us to work on — in the middle of the threat of a tariff war, despite all of the rhetoric about how hard they're working and fast action they're taking and how they need this legislative session to take that action — is to filibuster Bill 3, which in a normal session, if this was mixed in with other more consequential legislation, would have had the minister and the critics speak, and we would have moved on.

Then it would have gone to committee stage. It would have had about an hour's worth of questions, if that, and it would be passed. We're now pushing two hours just on the filibuster, and my understanding is the government intends to drag this out through the end of the day because they have nothing else to work on, quite literally.

We don't have the legislation that has been promised 2½ months ago by the Minister of Energy around the Energy Regulator to speed up the environmental assessment process around wind farms, which is now tied in somehow to the tariff war and how we're going to accelerate projects.

In fact, those nine projects are half of the projects this government is talking about speeding up and accelerating. It's not even on the schedule for this week, so unless the minister will have it appear by Thursday, we won't be working on that this week, yet the government repeatedly tells us how fast they are moving on things.

I just want to make sure that the public at home understands that when you don't hear the opposition speaking to Bill 3, and why we didn't speak with any number of members on Bill 2, it's because these are housekeeping bills. I'm frankly surprised the miscellaneous stats bill hasn't come forward, where it's literally a series of punctuation and grammar and cleaning up of language on a wide variety of pieces of legislation, which also happens on a regular basis, regardless of who is in government.

So is it important, this stuff in Bill 3 around parks? Absolutely. Is it important around recognizing Indigenous names around B.C. parks? Absolutely. It has nothing to do with wildfires that the Minister of Forests just talked about for 20 of his 30 minutes.

If Bill 3 was that consequential, surely the minister would have talked for the full 30 minutes about every clause in Bill 3. But it's only a few clauses long. It's only a couple of pages long, and it's GIS mapping modernization. It happens every single year. The members in this place that have been here for a while know that, so let's not make this out to be any more than it is.

I look forward to the government actually finally bringing forward something substantive. I hope the Minister of Energy brings forward something as substantive as the Energy Regulator with enough time so that we can properly debate it and not have the government actually force closure on it until we know the full ramifications of it. I say that because when he was the Minister of Health, Bill 36 got rammed through that way, a very substantive piece of legislation.

[4:50 p.m.]

In that session…. You know how that session started? Not with Bill 36. You can probably tell by the numbering when it came up in the session. You could probably tell where that came up. We started with some filibustering. We started with long debates about not very consequential legislation. And then we ran out of time on the stuff that actually has long-lasting, serious implications for a wide swath of the public.

That's the track record of this government in a legislative session. That is what we're seeing unfold again. The Premier likes to bill himself as a man of action. We're three months post cabinet being sworn in, 2½ months post the promise around legislation coming forward for the Energy Regulator. The Premier has talked repeatedly about how this session is going to focus on tariffs and the legislation

needed to counter those tariffs, and we see nothing and nothing on the horizon.

So we'll sit here and do our part as opposition until the bells ring at six o'clock, when we're going to have a standing vote that was already unanimous today about tariffs and taking action. But we won't actually debate any legislation that has any actual effect about tariffs in this place because the government doesn't have any of it ready, and they're not bringing it forward.

The good news for the government, though, is that the six o'clock bells ringing is a convenient way to burn an extra half an hour off the clock so it's one less person they have to put up to speak to Bill 3. That's what happens when the government has to filibuster its own housekeeping bills.

Thank you for this time on Bill 3.

Deputy Speaker: Member.

I would just remind members that at second reading, it's an opportunity to debate the bill's general principles and objectives. Being Bill 3, Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2025, the members should ensure they remain relevant in their debate.

Peter Milobar: Thank you. I will certainly do that, Madam Chair.

I'm still trying to figure out how to tie in wildfires to Bill 3 when it has absolutely nothing to do with wildfires, so I am still processing what the Minister of Forests did for 20 of his 30 minutes around Bill 3. But I was wrapping up my comments on Bill 3 anyways, Madam Chair, so I do appreciate the guidance.

I would hope that at least, then, if the government is insisting on filibustering their own bill — they do have 40-plus members — surely they don't have to have such a short bench of people speaking for half an hour about things that actually aren't related to the bill either. They could just put up a few more speakers and have them speak for a little less time. At least we'd get a little variety in what will eventually turn into comedy hour here at the Legislature for the last hour and a bit.

Thank you for the time.

Jessie Sunner: This is my first chance to speak to a bill and also my first time in the House, so I didn't know all that history, but thank you for that.

Anyway, I rise today to speak in favour of the legislative amendments to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act, which add approximately 143 hectares to three existing parks and rename two parks to their Indigenous names. As the MLA for Surrey-Newton, I come from the City of Parks, so obviously, I had to speak today.

Parks and protected areas play a crucial role in preserving biodiversity, safeguarding culturally sensitive spaces and strengthening the bond between people and nature. These areas provide a refuge for unique species and ecosystems that might otherwise be threatened by development, pollution or climate change. They also hold deep cultural and historical significance, particularly in recognizing the Indigenous peoples who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial.

At the same time, parks offer a sanctuary for people to escape the stresses of city life or this Legislature, reconnect with nature and find a sense of peace.

I wanted to speak today because some of my best childhood memories are from times that I've spent in provincial parks. These were the days, the field trips, that we always looked forward to. I can still think back to 20 years ago when we'd be packing our lunches, putting on our hiking shoes and setting off for an adventure beyond the classroom.

[4:55 p.m.]

I remember in high school waking up at the crack of dawn to leave for school, get on a school bus full of students and drive all the way to Joffre Lakes Provincial Park, which, for those of you that don't know, is between Squamish and Whistler, or it's in Whistler. From Surrey, we needed to get out before the traffic of the morning in order to start a ten-kilometre-long hike.

That was really fun at the time, but if today you asked me to do that same hike, I'd get tired just thinking about it, so I wouldn't be doing that today. At the time, it took us all day long to do that ten-kilometre hike, and it was really the highlight for us. It was a highlight of that entire grade 10 year for me.

As we walked and hiked, we learned about local wildlife. We learned about the names of different plants and forest flora. Even to this day, I can point out a deer fern to you wherever you're walking, because that stuck with me from these days. I remember seeing the breathtaking views, at the end of the long hike, of the beautiful lake. These are the things that made these trips so unforgettable and memorable for me.

I would highly recommend that anyone that hasn't done the Joffre Lakes hike do so, if you have better stamina than I currently do.

These trips to provincial parks were a hands-on way to connect with nature and appreciate the beauty that no textbook could ever teach us. Even now, when I speak to high school students in my own riding and I hear their excitement as they endeavour to go to provincial parks, whether it be Joffre Lakes or elsewhere, they are so excited to leave their schools and get out into the parks.

They tell me that the best school days they have are these days when they can actually leave the school, leave the city behind for a while, and explore the forests, the rivers and the lakes that make our province so special and unique.

This shared love for these experiences reminds us all why it's so important to protect and preserve these spaces,

and it's why I'm so glad that we're able to do so through this bill, not just as someone that can enjoy them today but for future generations to come, so that they can also experience that same sense of wonder and awe that we all have been fortunate enough to.

For my family, our local provincial parks were not just a destination for outdoor recreation; they were also places where so many of our memories were made over the years. Growing up as a child of immigrants, going to parks was a central part of my childhood. This was one of the easiest and most affordable ways for my family to get out of the house, enjoy the fresh air and spend time with family without worrying about costs and how expensive other activities or outings could be.

My parents, like so many others who immigrated to this country to make a better life for their children, worked hard to provide for us, but that sometimes meant that there wasn't a lot of extra money for expensive outings and activities, as I mentioned. But we always made sure to get out to a park, whether a provincial or a local park, every single weekend and make memories together.

Whether you look at our local parks — personally, the one that we'd always go to is Bear Creek Park in Surrey — or our provincial parks like Cultus Lake Park, these are the places where we spent so many of our summer days, in the park with our extended family, our aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, coming together. Having a picnic from home, everyone bringing something different, laying out a picnic cloth, and just getting out there and eating local food and also our own traditional foods, in the parks, while the children got to run around the playgrounds.

They got to hike while the parents got a moment to sit back and take a break from their long days. These moments, simple as they were, shaped my appreciation for public spaces and parks and how they made life easier for working families like my own. I'll forever be grateful for these moments and memories and continue to build new ones for myself and my new family.

Now that I'm married and have my own little family of my husband, Darcy, and I and our adorable dog, Simba, we are creating our own family traditions in these provincial parks. Our favourite family tradition is, actually, going camping at Golden Ears Park.

I will say that prior to meeting my husband, I was not much of a camper. But he wore me down and showed me how wonderful it can be. For the last number of years, every single year we go camping at Golden Ears. We love to spend time hiking the local trails, spotting wildlife — albeit not too close; there are sometimes bears in the area — and paddleboarding on the lake until the sun goes down.

We spend our evenings gathered around the campfire, catching up on life and making our infamous banana boats, which are bananas cut out with marshmallows and chocolate and put in aluminum over the fire.

[5:00 p.m.]

We sit there, over the evening, just looking at the beauty that is around us. These weekends in the wilderness aren't just about escaping the city; they're about reconnecting with nature, with one another and with ourselves. No matter how busy life gets, we know that every summer, we will have that time together, surrounded by nature's beauty.

One of the most valuable parts of these trips is how they allow us to reset from the fast-paced demands of everyday life. Our everyday life means constant noise, screens and schedules, but while camping, everything slows down.

Breathing in the fresh air, listening to the rustling leaves and feeling the stillness of the quiet morning by the lake has an almost magical ability to melt away stress, which we could all use in this job. The simple act of walking through the forest, away from the pressures of work and responsibilities, is a powerful reminder that sometimes, the best way to recharge is to step outside and immerse yourself in the great outdoors.

I can't wait to do that again this summer. I've already made reservations, and I'll note that our reservation system is open and booking into June right now. So if you haven't made your reservations, make sure to do so, because they are coveted, and they go quick.

Beyond the personal benefits of our provincial parks, our parks also hold deep cultural and historical importance. Many parks and protected areas in Canada have Indigenous names, reflecting the original peoples who have lived on and cared for these lands long before they became designated parklands.

As the daughter of immigrants, this recognition is deeply impactful and meaningful to me. My family came to this country seeking opportunity, and we have built a life here, but it is essential that we acknowledge that these lands have a history far older than our own presence. Seeing Indigenous names restored to parks is a small but powerful way to honour that history, respect Indigenous stewardship and remind us all that reconciliation is an ongoing process. Learning the meaning behind these names and the stories tied to the land enriches our understanding and deepens our connection to the places we love.

All of our favourite provincial parks are more than just places for recreation. They're where we've celebrated milestones, found moments of peace and learned to respect the environment. Watching the sunset over the lake or hearing the wildlife at dawn reminds us of how precious these protected spaces are.

Parks also provide an essential space for education. Whether it's a school fieldtrip, as I mentioned, or a family camping weekend or even a solo walk on a trail, they teach us about the importance of sustainability, biodiversity and respecting the land. They are places where we learn not only about the environment but about ourselves, our need for fresh air, our need for movement, stillness and connection.

It also encourages mindfulness. Myself, I've even been given doctor's orders before to just get out into nature and touch grass. So I know how important it can be to just reset yourselves being in nature. We're so lucky to live in such a beautiful province where we have the ability to go to provincial parks anytime that we want.

When I think about the future, I hope that the next generation continues to experience the same joys that I did. Whether it's their first time seeing a deer on the trail, their first hike to a breathtaking viewpoint, or the first time they truly feel at peace in nature, parks remind us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, and they teach us about the interconnectedness of life, the importance of conservation and the rich cultural histories that shape this land.

For my family, our provincial parks aren't just a getaway. They're sanctuaries, classrooms and a connection to something deeper. They're places that have given us so much, and it's our responsibility to steward them for generations to come.

That being said, I am so honoured to speak in favour of this bill and expand our existing parks.

Deputy Speaker: Recognizing the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Spencer Chandra Herbert: Thank you, hon. Speaker. I haven't had the opportunity yet to congratulate you on your role, hon. Speaker. It's a role I really enjoyed. I'm going to offer my full support, as I'm sure we all are in this role. We'll all be on our best behaviour, and I am sure I speak for everybody when I say that. Maybe not.

[5:05 p.m.]

I will try my best in my own stead. So feel free to remind me to speak to the bill. A trick I used to use was if someone else wasn't speaking to the bill, I'd hold up the bill as a reminder. So maybe use that for me if I need it.

Anyways, I am honoured to be able to speak in support of the legislation. I thank our new Minister of Environment and Parks for bringing it forward. It's a bit of a tradition in this House. Every so often, we have to make adjustments to park boundaries. We have to add more land, we have to sometimes minus land from our parks, and we have to discuss about how we better protect these parks.

The Ministry of Tourism, obviously, relies very, very dearly on our park system to grow our tourism industry. Anyone who works in tourism knows that our park system — our wild places, our environment — is one of the main reasons people come here. They want to come here to supernatural British Columbia. It's on the tagline on many ads, many commercials, many publications through the life of this great province. I think we can go a long way back in history to see the role parks and wild places have played in this place to have people want to come and visit and get to understand it.

It's more than that. I think this bill also recognizes that parks are there, but that they're not parks without people. They're not parks without history, without heritage. Indeed, we are trying to right wrongs that have gone back some years, in terms of recognizing that Indigenous folks — Indigenous nations, Indigenous people — have been living, working, using our park spaces since time immemorial.

Indeed, some of our parks have very important village sites, very important sacred sites, very important histories and heritages. Sometimes we can learn about them; sometimes they are the belongings of the nations who live in that area. I thank the nations who are willing to share and able to share some of that with us so that we can understand these places as well.

That sometimes starts with the naming of a place. So, as has become a bit of a tradition in this place, we are working at making sure Indigenous place names are on these parks as well, because that speaks to the true history of this province.

I think of a favourite park of mine, Garibaldi Provincial Park. Garibaldi never saw that park, never came within thousands and thousands of kilometres of that park. He was much revered by a local mountaineering hiking club, and thus, that's how it got the name Garibaldi. Well, that wasn't originally the name for the local nations.

I think of the Twin Sisters that those of us in Vancouver see very often, but many refer to them as the Lions. Well, of course, they were the Twin Sisters long before anyone ever referred to them as the Lions. It speaks to an important heritage and important history moment for the Sḵwx̱ wú7mesh and nations to the north around finding peace and finding togetherness between their two nations, and it stands as a mark for us all to think about peace and how we build peace.

I know that's the same, in terms of other importance for these parks, in terms of their naming, and I will get there as I get there. But I really just can't underscore enough how important our park system is for our tourism system — for growing tourism in our province; for growing community health, obviously, as other members have mentioned; for allowing us to breathe; for allowing us to decompress from the day-to-day life that we work with.

This bill, through changes to park boundaries, through expansions, through renaming, is improving the park system. I want to thank the minister for doing that and for looking across the whole park system to find ways to improve it, with not just renaming but also finding ways to have cultural interpretation within the parks, to tell the stories in the parks, to identify the locations and to identify the plants, the flora, the fauna.

In this Ministry of Tourism, of course, we have a lot of effort around culture — culture, of course, including museums and including heritage and the heritage branch and taking from the outdoor, not just in our museums but helping people see what our province is about when they're

in the parks as well. They are living museums. They are living heritage sites. They have that to offer us and to our tourism and to our tourists.

[5:10 p.m.]

Many businesses in my ministry work with the park system every day. They work, whether or not it's needing permits for access to parks, whether or not it's using the parks as a place that they bring visitors to…. They take them on tours. You don't have to go too far in any direction in this great province to see tour groups, mountaineers, snowmobile clubs and others accessing our parks.

Mountaineers, the rock climbers — I'm working on that one. My fingers aren't strong enough, but I'm working on the rock climbing. I'm sure I'll get better at it. This ministry has given me more than a few rocks and mountains to climb, and I thank members for that.

I think to speak to the specifics around some of the actual changes in the parks, we start with Naikoon Park up in Haida Gwaii. I had the opportunity to visit that park, and also the opportunity to get to understand its connection to culture and its connection to the Haida and its connection to the well-being of Haida Gwaii and, indeed, of the local economy and the local community.

I think anyone who's had the opportunity to be there will see. My jaw dropped when I visited the park, too, when the mist finally cleared. I think folks who visited Haida Gwaii will know that sometimes that doesn't happen for a long time. Sometimes you'll go weeks on end, as I was told, and not see the sun in that same way. But I lucked out that day, and to have that mist clear, and to see, I believe, Rose Spit and out that way — I don't know the traditional name so apologies, but something I should learn — was really breathtaking.

By supporting that, by looking to further protect wildlife habitat in Naikoon Park, we're improving both environmental connections. We're also improving abilities of economic connections, spiritual connections, cultural connections as 104 hectares of land will be added back into Naikoon Park. I understand it's surrounded, currently, by much of the park, and again, it will make improvements.

Now, something I think a lot of folks don't know is that sometimes when parks are created, there are certain reasons why small parcels are taken out of the park or not included in the park. I was up hiking Cape Scott Provincial Park. I looked on the map, and there were little squares that were not part of the park. I didn't understand why, so I started digging around asking some questions.

Some of them go back to the 1900s when one club had a small clubhouse there, which hasn't been in operation for 75 years. Well, it's still registered in this club's name, so it's private property. The club doesn't exist anymore, but the park service has yet to get around to updating that map to reflect that that's no longer needed as a private use, and it can come into the park.

Well, that's some of what we're doing here today as well. Old uses, whether it be rangers' cabins or other things that are no longer needed and protected in a different way than a class A park, are now brought back into class A parks.

Wells Gray Park, the addition, through a purchase of 33 hectares to protect the wetland and forest…. Again, important work. When you get up to Clearwater and get out and talk to tourism businesses in that area, there is such pride for that park. That park, in the tourism industry in the area, is incredibly important.

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit, I really urge you to do it. The waterfalls alone will leave you stunned, but there's so much more to it. It's a big park. It's got both the environmental values, whether or not there are mountain caribou and the other creatures that make that place home, and it's also just so vital for getting out on the canoes, getting out and seeing that country.

I know the folks in the region have real pride for it. They've told the story. They've interpreted. They made the arguments about why they need to find more ways to tell that story, and adding some more land in there to help them with that, all to the good. I think it makes a lot of sense to me.

Cinnemousun Narrows near Sicamous — houseboat capital of Canada, I believe, has been the title for many years. It's certainly very good for the tourism industry in that region. Great business. Great jobs. A former member from the area, Greg Kyllo, used to talk a lot about the support for houseboats in the area and how that's an important part of the tourism region out there in Sicamous and the area.

I know folks who actually left the West End, who lived in my constituency, and moved to the area, in part because of the parks but largely because of the tourism generated because of the parks. They've set up small businesses in the area, running a restaurant, running a campsite. They're living the best life. They do miss the West End and the hustle bustle, but for them, being able to access both the parks and the tourism and economic benefits is all the best.

So certainly, adding three hectares of land and adjacent lakeshore, that will improve their business as well. It will have some clarity for them about where they can go and what they can do in the different areas closer to Sicamous.

[5:15 p.m.]

Now, one of the amendments in this legislation, which is important to my ministry…. I'll speak a little bit further about this one because I've had some questions, people asking me about it, not quite clear about where Kilby Park is. Kilby Park is listed. We're making some changes through this legislation to bring Kilby Park over to the heritage branch, which is housed within my ministry.

The branch has managed the park and the adjacent Kilby Historic Site since 2003 but has had different management regimes, different structures, different bureau-

cracy, different legislation, requirements, regulations. Some say red tape; others say protections. Anyways, there's been a bit of this and that since 2003 on Kilby Historic Site and Kilby Park.

We're looking to bring the parks section over to the heritage site in addition to…. Of course, we've already had the historic site over to us. The reason is twofold.

One I'll share first off, before I forget, because I'm getting better. I want to make sure to give my appreciations. I want to thank the Kilby Heritage Society that has been managing this on our behalf. We have many heritage sites in this province in many constituencies across the province.

This one was actually purchased by the B.C. government in 1972. The B.C. NDP — in their first year of forming government, I believe — purchased it, as well as a number of our heritage sites at the time back then. I wasn't alive, so I'm learning that heritage now, that history now. They purchased it because it was a working general store, a working hotel, a working community centre for Harrison Mills since 1902. It had indeed continued operating all the way up to 1977 as a general store for the area.

To be clear on where the area is: if you know Harrison Hot Springs, if you know Chilliwack, and if you know Harrison River, you'll be getting closer to where Kilby is actually located.

I should correct myself. I said it was a general store in 1902. It's 1906. Don't rely on the memory with all these numbers because you'll get befuddled. So I'll rely on the paper, which is to say 1906 was when the Kilby General Store began in Harrison Mills, in the district of Kent, British Columbia.

It's really worth viewing. I got out there to Kilby Heritage Centre, Kilby Heritage Society, a couple of years back. I visited the campground, visited the area that we're talking about in this legislation. It's well worth your time. It's really a museum of rural life. It's a museum of what turn of the century, turn of the 1900s, looked like in the Fraser Valley. It's really one of the only reminders, aside from the small village in Kent, of the once thriving community of Harrison Mills.

It's got a beauty and a small town feel without the town, because, of course Harrison Mills started to shrink over time as the railway went past, as the lumber industry in that area changed and shifted how it did its business. But they continued on with the store. Now there's a café. Many friendly farm animals, they want you to know. I can attest to that. There were, I believe, goats, chickens, ducks, cows — all the things you would expect to see at a farm — and then an incredible general store.

So if you visit Kilby General Store, if you visit the campground that we're talking about, you'll see both things to delight the family and also to learn. I think there's been work that the association, which I want to thank, and I'll thank them by name.

Clare O'Halloran-Chalupa — she's the president of the board; Gordon Robertson; Mel Waardenburg; Lynn Scullion; David Hay; Trish Van Vliet; Sabine Abbasi; Kaleigh Pickering. Those are board members of the society who we are working with and who will take over further ability to better manage the campsites on behalf of all British Columbians through our heritage branch.

What's really neat about this is that the campsite actually helps support the ongoing heritage work, both restoration and maintenance of heritage structures. The campsite also helps provide space that you can, well, sleep after a day of visiting the museum and site, because there's a lot to see in the region. There's a lot to see at the museum itself.

As I was saying, the Kilby General Store operated until 1977. So when you go into that store, they kept much of it the same — the cash registers, the materials, the goods — so that it looks like it looked in 1906, with a few more modern references.

[5:20 p.m.]

Of course, if you want to buy things at the gift store, they do accept credit cards. They do accept modern technology. But really, when you walk in there, it's a walk back in time.

There's, of course, the museum, where you actually will…. Similar to some other heritage museums and heritage sites that we support through our ministry…. I think of Yale. I think, of course, of Barkerville, Fort Steele. We just recently had a reupping of a new agreement with a new provider, a very good provider who's going to do great work there at Fort Steele.

But I digress. I think we get…. The costumed interpreters really help tell the story. They bring you back to that period, in a way, to understand what life was like, at least through the diaries of Thomas and Eliza Kilby and their son, Acton. Of course, his wife, as well, Jessie, who ran it until 1972 and then turned it into a museum. They had that pride of place because they could draw on their parents' and their parents-in-law's history to tell that story, to talk about what life was like on the lake there, what life was like in what's now the campsite.

Also, importantly, our ministry has been working with the society to improve how local First Nations are able to have their story told, because you can't tell a history without Indigenous people. Unfortunately, in our province, too often, over time, that was attempted. It was told through not their voices or their words but through another lens, through the lens of the settler. I think it's important that we see all sides to these stories, so I'm looking forward to further work they're doing.

I know they're also looking at how they repatriate some of the cultural objects, the cultural artifacts they have to make sure they get to the local nations so that they can tell those stories themselves, either at the museum, at the

campsite or, further, at their own cultural facilities in their own communities.

The Kilby site also, of course, has a post office. It served as a post office until 1968. They talk about the role of communication and: "How do we communicate in our communities?"

Folks may wonder why I'm spending time on Kilby and the heritage branch. The truth is we don't talk a lot about heritage and the important role that we as legislators have in preserving heritage, helping it be interpreted, helping people understand where we've come from so we can understand where we're going.

I think this site is working to do that, as many of our heritage sites have really stepped up to try and both help us understand our past and also understand how that impacts our future. I thank them for it, because you can't understand where you're going if you don't understand where you've been.

If you don't know where you are on the map, you won't know where to go, and I think heritage is a way of creating a mental map for us, a bit of a way for us to understand. Just as we talk about our own personal heritages and how they impact us, we have to look at how, geographically, those ripples might have impacted communities around them, and this, indeed, is what Kilby looks to do.

It was one of the first tourism attractors in the Fraser Valley, I've got to say. The train came through, so people would get off. They would either get off there, or they would travel by boat. But of course, you need a place to stay.

I think hotel accommodations were few and far between, but they actually set up what they called the Manchester House Hotel there at that location. You can go up the creaky stairs, step by step — I think it's three or four storeys tall — from the general store, the post office, making your way up to see what a hotel looked like at the time.

It's different, not the same level of accommodations you might expect in our incredible B.C. hotels we have now. There was running water. I think it was in the pantry. There was no running water anywhere else, but that was a luxury for the time.

Of course, you hung your clothes up to dry above the stove. Now, I know some places…. We want to do that now when we get out to rural parts of this province. People want to have that experience again. I think of some of the lodges and cabins and those kinds of experiences that people are setting up or have been running in many communities for many years, where you get that real feeling of the wood stove and using it to cook, above it.

They get that feeling at Kilby. Indeed, of course, electricity didn't arrive until 1950, so you get that sense through the oil lamps and that kind of thing there.

And the good local produce. Buy B.C. Support your egg producers. Well, there are lots of egg producers at Kilby — running around the place, anyways.

[5:25 p.m.]

So that's Kilby. I think it's…. I didn't know this, but the Sts'ailes and the Sq'èwlets…. There's weaving at the site. This has been brought in since I've been there, so there's more of a history around that and around the connections of local trade with the general store there.

I think that's a history that again…. As I mentioned earlier, we have to understand how our economies worked then so we can understand how to improve and take them on further today, because there are a lot of those connections that we need to build even further.

My ministry is certainly working to do that, working with an incredible partner, Indigenous Tourism B.C., to support our heritage facilities, to support our parks, to support our recreational sites, to support our local businesses to thrive. So just a shout-out to Indigenous Tourism B.C. and the incredible work they do with my ministry to support Destination B.C., again, to tell the real story of this land.

That's something many people want to see when they come here. They want to know who was here. They want to know who is here. They want to know the living history of this place. It's not…. Sometimes it's put in a box, and you look at it in a museum, and you don't understand that that actually is a living history. That's a living culture. We need to support that, and I thank them for doing that.

Of course, what's more living than an orchard or heritage gardens? Again, things that you can get at Kilby. For the kids, whether it's the teeter-totter, the tree fort, the sandbox…. I know there were certainly many young ones there enjoying themselves when I visited.

Then there are also the gardens and the heritage gardens, looking at…. Certainly, we know that sometimes what we grew long ago is maybe what we should grow again, because it worked in the region, and it worked in people's backyards.

You travel through many parts of this province, and you can see…. I think of my friends in Kamloops and how they can show where the large farms were in the area because of the heirloom plants, because of the apple trees, the plum trees and those kinds of things. That's the same at Kilby.

I'm excited that they get the opportunity to now fully manage the campground, to set some of the rules and to set some of the priorities there as a heritage society. I think it will only improve the place. I think it will tell that heritage and history in a much fuller way and also allow them to sustain their operations in a better way.

Heritage sites are not cheap to run. Some of that stuff is irreplaceable. It's not like you can go to the Canadian Tire and buy some more 1900s cooking implements or things like that, stoves, etc. You have to preserve what you have. I'm glad that this will help them do that.

Of course, through all our heritage sites, we look for ways to work with B.C. Parks to make sure that we're

improving for both of us. I think this ongoing relationship with B.C. Parks and our heritage branch, but indeed the whole tourism ministry, will continue to lead to many benefits for our communities. I know I hear all the time from people who work in tourism about how we need to make sure that bond is strong and to strengthen it. If they succeed, we succeed. If we succeed, they succeed.

There is certainly Water, Land and Resource Stewardship as well. That ministry is another one that, of course, also impacts these conversations and these questions and helps us achieve our success.

I am an ambitious guy by nature. I am keen to see growth in our tourism industry. I'm keen to see that growth because I know they're good jobs. I'm keen to see more people access our parks. This legislation will help us improve that, give more space for people to enjoy — and not just people, of course, but the critters that also rely on these green spaces for their homes.

Now, I think…. Let me find that here. I had a few more notes that I was going to add in.

To support Kilby and to support our heritage sites, of course, you can only rely on donations from the public, and you can only rely on fees for camping or the gift shop for so much. Of course, on our B.C. Parks licence plate program to support the parks.

On the heritage side, we also do things like…. We have supported our heritage sites through $4.38 million to maintain irreplaceable assets, project funding of $1.3 million to support heritage values. That was in '23-24.

Of course, we've looked at major investments in unique heritage infrastructure for places like Kilby through the community economic recovery infrastructure program.

[5:30 p.m.]

In 2021, $30 million through the B.C. 150 Time Immemorial program as well.

Then of course, through our Arts Council, so supporting museums, whether they be house museums — my community got Roedde House Museum — heritage site museums or general stores, as we talked about in Kilby.

We needed to find a way through the Arts Council to provide more support so they could actually interpret this heritage material and tell the community story in a new way, in a more inclusive way. We've increased funding for museums and Indigenous cultural centres by 22 percent through our ministry to reflect that need and to reflect why that is our priority, as a government, to allow our stories to be told. Because, yeah, if you don't know your history, you're going to be doomed to repeat it, and maybe in an even worse way than you lived through it to begin with.

One thing I noted that the minister spoke about in her introduction remarks was about seeing actual maps of the location. I just want to say thank you to the ministry for that. It was a frustration of mine, to no end, when I was the critic on Environment, because these kinds of pieces of legislation would be brought forward.

I believe, at the time, it was Minister Mary Polak. She'd bring forward the legislation with a whole bunch of description of how this boundary got shifted here. This piece was taken out. We added another piece here. Unless you had the geography in your head, you had no clue of: was this a good thing? Was this a bad thing? Should we be concerned? Is there some other motive at work here? You just didn't necessarily know.

Then you'd call up locals. You'd call the neighbourhood and say: "Well, do you support this?"

"Well, we don't know. We haven't seen it either. If we could see the map, then we'd be able to know whether or not we should be concerned or not."

At the time, I guess I made enough of a stink about it that there was an agreement. It used to say: "Go to the ministry office." You'd be able to pull out these giant maps, and maybe you could look at them if you were given enough time to be able to spend the time to see it. I know we've made improvements now so that any member who wants to see, or the public, can actually get a sense of what the map looks like and get a better vision into it. So I'm glad that the ministry made that change at the time, because it just leads to better informed debate.

We can understand and do our duty as legislators better for it, and it sometimes brings up important questions. "Well, if you do this, what is that going to impact for that right-of-way or this right-of-way?" It may catch unintended consequences when we make these changes.

Now, I think the addition…. Really, I had meant to mention this in the question around Wells Gray Park. It was really that when you look at these maps, you assume that everything that would have been done had already been done. The park would be finished, but that's rarely the case. In fact, sometimes there's land that should have been. They were thinking about putting it in the park, but for whatever reason, it didn't pull in. In this case, you add a wetland and a forest, and that's 33 acres of land, right on the border there, close to the roadway.

Again, when you're close to developed land, when you're close to land that's not in a park, sometimes creating a bigger buffer for the park is really important. So I'm glad the ministry and through the B.C. Parks Foundation…. I'm not sure if it came through the Parks Foundation or if it was just a ministry purchase. Either way, it is the right thing to do. I think, certainly, we always need our parks to be there for us, and the creatures do too.

That being said, parks are great for tourism. They're great for our economy. They are great for our health. I'm fully in support of this legislation, and I thank you for allowing me a bit of time to go into why heritage is just as important in our parks and why those two things go together with tourism so well. I'll be voting yes for this legislation.

Hon. Bowinn Ma: It is my pleasure to rise to speak in favour of Bill 3, Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2025, brought forward by the Minister of Environment and Parks.

It has been such a pleasure to listen to the statements by my colleagues. I've learned so much about our provincial parks and about a lot of details that are not necessarily articulated in the press release of a bill as well.

[5:35 p.m.]

Perhaps I should start by explaining what the bill does, particularly for the substantial number of people who are tuning into this debate live from the comfort of their own homes and, of course, for the *Hansard* record.

I also want to acknowledge the important work of Hansard and all of their efforts in making sure that these debates are made available publicly and broadcast live, both on the internet and on cable television.

Bill 3, the Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2025, does a number of things.

First, it renames two parks. It renames the Enderby Cliffs near Salmon Arm to Tplaqín — I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly — which means "cliff" in Interior Salish. So that's the Enderby Cliffs Park near Salmon Arm.

Maquinna Marine Park near Tofino will henceforth be renamed Nismaakqin. I'm also looking at the Minister of Environment and Parks over here to ensure that I am getting those new names close to the accurate pronunciation. That means "our land that we care for" in nuučaaʔuɬ. Those are beautiful names.

Bill 3 also adds 143 hectares to three parks, the first being Naikoon Park in Haida Gwaii. It adds 104 hectares of land that is already surrounded by the existing park. That land is going to be able to provide further protection of wildlife habitat.

The second addition to provincial parks made possible by Bill 3 is 33 hectares of land that will be added to Wells Gray Park, and that is near Clearwater. Those additional 33 hectares will help to protect wetland and forest that are surrounded by the existing park on three sides.

I am not familiar with this third park, so I am not familiar with the pronunciation, Cinnemousun Narrows, which is near Sicamous.

Thank you to the minister for helping me with my pronunciations.

Three hectares of land and three hectares of adjacent lakeshore will be added to that park through Bill 3 as well.

I really appreciated the comments from the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture because he actually brought my attention to the additional changes that are made possible by Bill 3. As part of the amendments, Kilby Park, near Harrison Mills, will be formally transferred to the province's heritage branch, which has managed the park and the adjacent Kilby Historic Site since 2003 anyway. I did not understand the significance of this change until I had heard it thoroughly canvassed by the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

The amendments also remove one hectare from Naikoon Park, which is the aforementioned park in Haida Gwaii. That allows for the expansion of a neighbouring cemetery, and it allows for administrative updates to several protected area boundary descriptions as well.

Those are the changes that are brought about by Bill 3. Recognizing, though, that provincial parks have a significant history that leads us to this day — to the point where, year over year, or maybe every session, we get a similar type of bill that either adds or subtracts or makes adjustments to provincial parks — it really brought my attention to what the history of provincial parks is. It's actually quite an interesting history.

The very first provincial park was established…. I want to make sure I get this correct. It was actually officially legislated in 1911, but its story really began on July 29, 1910, when a group of people of the B.C. government, which was led by Chief Commissioner of Lands…. At the time, his name was hon. Price Ellison.

This group of people went on an expedition and reached the summit of Crown Mountain. The purpose of this expedition was to explore that surrounding region and look at setting aside land to establish the very first provincial park.

[5:40 p.m.]

The view from Crown Mountain actually sealed for Price Ellison that this land would be the ideal location to start that first park. So he submitted his report — he was a minister at the time — on the expedition to the provincial cabinet. On March 1, 1911, Strathcona Park was officially legislated.

This first park protected 250,000 hectares of wilderness. It was mountainous terrain, deeply forested valleys, home to a whole variety of wildlife, of flora and fauna. It involved a temperate rainforest. People described it as having rugged hillsides and valley floors from tidewater's edge to the alpine tundra zone of thousands of feet. Strathcona Provincial Park remains today one of the richest ecosystems in the world and was B.C.'s very first provincial park.

That legislation was called, at the time, Strathcona Park Act, and it placed the park under the control and management of the Minister of Lands. The act protected those lands and made it subject to regulations that are set by the by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is a fancy way of saying the provincial government cabinet.

I was looking up this history on the B.C. Parks website, and it was quite interesting. It wrote that while the original act of 1911 seems clearly intended to protect the park from mining, logging and similar industrial development, both mining claims and timber holdings had been granted prior to the establishment of the park, and existing rights and interests were exempted from the act. In 1918, the act

was amended to open the park to the "location, acquisition and occupation of mineral claims under the Mineral Act." So I guess the establishment of parks can be nuanced.

More parks have been added ever since. For example, in 1913, the Mount Robson Park Act established the Mount Robson Provincial Park. By 1930, 13 provincial parks were set aside, and more than 50 additional areas were reserved for what they described as the pleasure and recreation of the public.

At the time, the legal responsibility for parks fell to the Attorney General's ministry, and parks were created by individual statutes that could be assigned to various administrations. So every single provincial park, I suppose, had its own separate statute.

Then the Land Service had responsibility for parks like Strathcona and Mount Robson, but some of the other parks had advisory boards that were appointed. This style of management continued, essentially, up to the beginning of the Second World War, in 1939.

Throughout this entire period, most of the visits by people to these large wilderness parks were actually by more affluent people in society, because the primary way to get to these parks was by rail and access inside the parks by horses and foot and accommodation provided by private lodges or cabins. So visits to public parks and provincial parks, for quite a few years in the beginning of their establishment, was actually an activity that was dominated by more wealthy and well-to-do people.

It was actually the Great Depression that started in 1929 that really forced governments not just in B.C. but all across Canada and all through the world to cope with the increased number of unemployed people. Provincial parks became a way that that government actually created jobs.

Forest work camps were established throughout B.C. on diverse road and trail projects. They were established in land set aside as parks, where the demand for roads, trails and visitor facilities was evident. Through this work, the Forest Service actually became the most capable agency at operating these camps for a while.

[5:45 p.m.]

Some of these camps even continued during the war, accommodating alternative service workers, which were politely referred to, I suppose, as conscientious objectors at the time.

Now, by the time the Second World War broke out, the Forest Service was firmly identified with provincial parks and, as a result, the concept of a system of provincial parks — rather than these piecemeal designations, where you had one act assigned to each provincial park — had evolved.

This history continues, and in 1965, a revised Park Act was passed by the Legislature. It provided a more detailed classification of provincial parks. I believe that the Park Act is basically a more modern-day version of this…. Pardon me. Now the Protected Areas of B.C. Amendment Act is a more modern-day version of that Park Act, which is the bill we're referring to today, which is amended by Bill 3.

The protection work has expanded since. Today B.C. has over 1,000 provincial parks, recreation areas, conservancies, ecological reserves. Together, all of these protected areas cover more than 14 million hectares, or about 14.7 percent of the land base.

Every year the province continues to acquire land through the B.C. Parks land acquisition program. They are able to use this program to expand and adjust and add to these protected areas, the next iteration of which is being made possible by Bill 3.

[The Speaker in the chair.]

When we talk about the history of provincial parks, it enables me to reflect on how much effort and how much work and passion have gone into the work of protecting land here in British Columbia. We have heard today from my colleagues what provincial parks mean to them and their families and their communities. We've heard personal stories. We've heard about the importance from an ecological and environmental perspective.

We heard the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture speak extensively to the value of these provincial parks to our tourism and our economy. We welcome millions of visitors to British Columbia every year that are drawn to B.C. to visit B.C. and spend their money here in B.C. because of our beautiful provincial parks.

We have heard about the importance of heritage in the context of parks, but none of these protected areas came about by accident. There were champions all along the way. Throughout the years, we've had decades of successive governments that have either chosen or chosen not to prioritize provincial parks.

I also reflect on the individual members of our community and organizations within our communities whose passion leads them to advocating for increased investments in parks, land additions to parks. They watch closely not only the protection of the areas but the condition of the parks that they love and hold dear.

I think about Brent Hillier, who is a constituent of mine North Vancouver–Lonsdale, who regularly contacts me with his concerns about improving public access to parks. He's regularly monitoring the investments that are being made in parks and wanting to ensure that these investments are contributing to the health of these parks for generations to come. He is contacting me regularly about a lot of his favourite parks: Manning Park, Seymour Park, access to Garibaldi Park.

I also think about Steve Jones, another constituent of mine in my riding of North Vancouver–Lonsdale, who is a passionate back-country enthusiast and advocate for access to the back country.

[5:50 p.m.]

He regularly reminds me that it's not enough for us to welcome people from all over the world to visit our parks here in B.C. We also have to do the work and make the investments to ensure that our park conditions can handle the visitation.

Here in British Columbia, we are incredibly blessed to have access to provincial parks, but those benefits that we glean from the existence of these parks are…. We can't take them for granted. This is work that has to be done intentionally and with deliberate emphasis, year over year, decade after decade. Once we lose these parks….

I don't mean the areas around the map that can be protected by statute. I mean that I regularly hear from community members that visit these parks about the deteriorating trails as a result of increased access to those trails and the importance of us ensuring that we are doing the work to maintain the condition of those trails and access to them and that we protect these parks against environmental degradation.

I mean, when I look at the parks that are impacted by this particular bill….

Oh gosh, I really hope to be able to visit Haida Gwaii one day. I have heard amazing things about the beautiful lands up there and the amazing people who reside there and have been there and stewarded that land, and have title over that land, for thousands of years — generations.

Cinnemousun Narrows near Sicamous. I really hope that it continues to be a thriving, beautiful place in British Columbia that I will one day be able to visit.

The Wells Gray Park near Clearwater. Now, that is a park that I am familiar with. It is a park that my family has started to make an annual tradition to visit, at least once a year. When we bring my daughter, who is now 15 months old…. She has only been up there once, but we've been there. My spouse and I have been up to Wells Gray Park every year for several years prior to her being born. I hope to be able to bring her up there every year when we go to visit her grandmother, who lives in Darfield and runs a hobby farm there.

Wells Gray Park is really, truly magnificent, for anybody who hasn't been there before. I have to say, the member for Kamloops Centre…. His riding boundaries were redrawn, but previously he also represented Kamloops–North Thompson. I can understand why losing that area of his riding might make him a little bit grumpy. I would be grumpy about it as well, because it is really, truly a magnificent part of the province.

It is known as Canada's waterfall park. There are 39 waterfalls that the public can access. I have only visited a few of them — multiple times, but just a few of them. Helmcken Falls is a famous one. Dawson Falls and Spahats Falls. Really incredible scenery. It just reminds you of why so many British Columbians choose to make British Columbia their home.

I was looking up some of the facts of Wells Gray Park. There is a wonderful not-for-profit organization called Information Wells Gray. They give excellent examples or reasons to visit Wells Gray Park. They describe Wells Gray Park as "5,000 square kilometres of pure Canadian wilderness." It has the world's largest non-motorized lake, which is Murtle Lake. It has white, sandy beaches and high, dramatic peaks. You can also walk through the most extensive and luscious wildflower meadows. You can raft the best combination of wilderness and whitewater rafting in B.C.

[5:55 p.m.]

They guarantee that. I don't know if the guarantee is…. I'm sure that there are other park enthusiasts who would love to debate with them whether or not this is the best whitewater rafting, but they certainly think so.

You can canoe some of the purest and clearest waters in the world on Clearwater and Azure lakes. There are over 200 kilometres of hiking trails, some of which are a few minutes long and some of which can take several days — and, of course, lots of fishing.

The addition of 33 hectares to further protect the wetland and forest that is surrounded by Wells Gray Park already makes a lot of sense to me.

I have to say that I drive an electric vehicle. Its range is about 200 kilometres in winter. I have only had the privilege of visiting Wells Gray Park in the fall and winter. After hearing the remarks of my colleague the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, it is probably a good thing. She was talking about all the mosquitoes over at Wells Gray Park. I have not had to encounter or fight off mosquitoes because I tend to visit in the fall and the winter.

The reason why I bring up my electric vehicle in this case is just a caution to those who are visiting Wells Gray Park. If you drive an electric vehicle with a range that is about the range of mine during the winter, which is about 200 kilometres, it's not quite enough to get you safely to the waterfalls and back again to charge. So I highly recommend, in those contexts, doing what we do, which is that we pile our family into my daughter's grandmother's truck, and then we all head out there.

The Speaker: Would the member like to adjourn the debate?

Hon. Bowinn Ma: Yes, absolutely.

Seeing the time, would we…? Am I going to be able to say this right? Noting the time, I would like to adjourn the debate.

Hon. Bowinn Ma moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Private Members' Motions

MOTION 7 — RESPONSE TO
U.S. TARIFFS PROPOSAL
(continued)

The Speaker: Members, earlier today, during private members' time, a division was requested on Motion 7 moved by the member for Coquitlam-Maillardville. Pursuant to Standing Order 25, the deferred division will take place now.

[6:00 p.m.-6:05 p.m.]

Members, the question is "That this House condemns President Donald Trump's proposed tariffs as wrong and unjustified measures aimed at threatening Canadian sovereignty and endorses the nationally-coordinated 'Team Canada' plan to respond with proportionate retaliatory action if necessary, including strategically targeting industries and regions such as products from Republican states, to maximize pressure to deter President Trump from implementing or continuing tariffs."

"That this House condemns President Donald Trump's proposed tariffs as wrong and unjustified measures aimed at threatening Canadian sovereignty and endorses the nationally coordinated 'Team Canada' plan to respond…."

That's the same question I think I'm reading.

Okay. You heard the motion. I'm filibustering myself.

First of all, I would like to remind all those members participating remotely to have your videos on. Please, everybody.

You're doing it? Good. Okay.

[6:10 p.m.]

Motion approved on the following division:

YEAS — 86

Lore	G. Anderson	Blatherwick
Elmore	Sunner	Toporowski
B. Anderson	Neill	Osborne
Brar	Davidson	Kahlon
Parmar	Gibson	Beare
Chandra Herbert	Wickens	Kang
Morissette	Sandhu	Krieger
Chant	Lajeunesse	Choi
Rotchford	Higginson	Popham
Dix	Sharma	Farnworth
Eby	Bailey	Begg
Greene	Whiteside	Boyle
Ma	Yung	Malcolmson
Chow	Glumac	Arora
Shah	Phillip	Dhir
Routledge	Wat	Kooner
Halford	Hartwell	L. Neufeld
Van Popta	Dew	Gasper
K. Neufeld	Block	Valeriote
Botterell	Day	Sturko
Kindy	Milobar	Warbus
Rustad	Banman	Rattée
Davis	McInnis	Bird
Luck	Stamer	Tepper
Mok	Wilson	Clare
Paton	Boultbee	Chan
Toor	Hepner	Giddens
Williams	Loewen	Dhaliwal
Doerkson		McCall

NAYS — 5

Brodie	Armstrong	Maahs
Kealy		Chapman

Hon. Mike Farnworth moved adjournment of House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

HANSARD SERVICES

Director: D'Arcy McPherson
Administrative Coordinator: Shawna Turner
Financial Officer: Cheleen Lam

REPORTING SERVICES

Manager: Marionne Cronin

EDITORIAL

Team Leaders: Treava Kellington, Paula Lee, Sarah Mitenko, Glenn Wigmore
Editorial Teams: Janet Brazier, Jithin Chandrabose, Jalen Codrington, Richard Davies, Cameron Duder, Thistle Dunsmuir, Janet Eastwood, Jane Grainger, Betsy Gray, Iris Gray, Simon Haisell, Lori-Ann Hill, Bill Hrick, Alexandrea Hursey, Alison Jacques, Allison Lewis, Claire Matthews, Anastasia Organ, Erik Pedersen, Danielle Seymour, Robyn Swanson, Heather Warren, Erin Weldon, Kim Westad

GALLEY

Team Leader: Barb Horricks
Galley Team: Quinn MacDonald

RESEARCH

Team Leader: Mike Beninger
Research Team: Hengshen Liu, Katherine Stewart

PUBLISHING SYSTEMS

Manager: Dan Kerr

INDEXING

Team Leader: Kim Christie
Indexing Team: Shannon Ash, Brooke Isherwood

SOFTWARE AND SYSTEMS

Publishing Systems Architect and Team Leader: Michael Joyce
Software and Systems Team: Alex Baer, Graham Caverhill, Pamela Holmes

BROADCASTING SERVICES

Manager: Andrew Henry

AUDIO

Audio Operations Supervisor: Simon de Laat
Console Operators: Amanda Heffelfinger, Dwight Schmidt, Danielle Suter

BROADCAST OPERATIONS

Senior Broadcast Operations Technician: Steve Gullickson
Broadcast Operations Technician: Ian Battle, Ryan Spedding, Steve Weisgerber

ENGINEERING

Senior Broadcast Technologist: Robert Froese
Broadcast Technologists: Ismael Ribeiro, Dave Gamble

INFRASTRUCTURE

Broadcast Infrastructure Architect and Team Leader: Roberto Arroyave
Broadcasting Systems and Integration Specialist: David Smith

Copyright © 2025 Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

Published by Hansard Services under the authority
of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

The *Official Report of Debates* (Hansard) and webcasts
of chamber proceedings are available at www.leg.bc.ca.

For inquiries contact Hansard Services
612 Government Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4 | 250-387-3681 | hansardservices@leg.bc.ca