



Fifth Session, 40th Parliament

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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS  
(HANSARD)

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SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON

**FINANCE AND  
GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**Surrey**

**Thursday, September 22, 2016**

**Issue No. 102**

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**SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

Surrey

Thursday, September 22, 2016

*Chair:* Wm. Scott Hamilton (Delta North BC Liberal)

*Deputy Chair:* Carole James (Victoria–Beacon Hill NDP)

*Members:* Dan Ashton (Penticton BC Liberal)  
Robin Austin (Skeena NDP)  
Eric Foster (Vernon-Monashee BC Liberal)  
Simon Gibson (Abbotsford-Mission BC Liberal)  
George Heyman (Vancouver-Fairview NDP)  
Jennifer Rice (North Coast NDP)  
Jackie Tegart (Fraser-Nicola BC Liberal)  
John Yap (Richmond-Steveston BC Liberal)

*Clerk:* Susan Sourial



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MINUTES

# SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES



Thursday, September 22, 2016  
9:00 a.m.

Tynehead Room, Sheraton Vancouver Guildford Hotel  
15269 - 104 Avenue, Surrey, B.C.

**Present:** Wm. Scott Hamilton, MLA (Chair); Carole James, MLA (Deputy Chair); Dan Ashton, MLA; Robin Austin, MLA; Simon Gibson, MLA; Jennifer Rice, MLA; John Yap, MLA

**Unavoidably Absent:** Eric Foster, MLA; George Heyman, MLA; Jackie Tegart, MLA

1. The Chair called the Committee to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. Opening remarks by Wm. Scott Hamilton, MLA, Chair.
3. The following witnesses appeared before the Committee and answered questions:
  - 1) Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association Elizabeth Model
  - 2) Surrey Students Now Cindy Dalglish
  - 3) University of the Fraser Valley Faculty and Staff Association Sean Parkinson
  - 4) British Columbia Federation of Students Simka Marshall  
Michael Olson
  - 5) Scott Olson
4. The Committee recessed from 10:01 a.m. to 10:11 a.m.
  - 6) Douglas Students' Union Meredith Graham  
Monique Paulino  
Tracy Ho
5. The Committee recessed from 10:27 a.m. to 10:32 a.m.
  - 7) Surrey Board of Trade Anita Huberman
  - 8) Mining Association of British Columbia Bryan Cox
  - 9) Karin Litzcke
  - 10) Kwantlen Faculty Association Gillian Dearle
  - 11) BC Gaming Industry Association Shiera Stuart  
Chuck Keeling  
Ernest Yee  
Alex McGowan
  - 12) Kwantlen Student Association
6. The Committee recessed from 11:55 a.m. to 1:01 p.m.
  - 13) Dr. Mychael Gleeson
  - 14) Federation of Community Social Services of BC Rick FitzZaland
  - 15) Langley Teachers' Association Gail Chaddock-Costello
  - 16) Motion Picture Production Industry Association of British Columbia Peter Leitch  
Phil Klapwyk  
Richard Campbell
  - 17) British Columbia Cycling Coalition

- 18) Canadian Cancer Society, BC and Yukon
- 19) Simon Fraser Student Society
- 20) BC Non-Profit Housing Association
- 21) Simon Fraser University
- 22) BC Food Processors Association
- 23) BC Wildlife Federation – Lower Mainland
- 24) PacificSport Fraser Valley
- 25) HUB Cycling
- 26) Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
- 27) Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Office

Jenny Byford  
Dr. Sandra Krueckl  
Christine Dyson  
Arr Farah  
Kishone Roy  
Andrew Petter  
Joanne Curry  
Rick Gagner  
James Donaldson  
Troy Halliday  
Jared Kope  
Jayne Chow-Olsen  
Erin O'Melinn  
Sharon Gregson  
Alex Hemingway  
Iglrika Ivanova

7. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 4:52 p.m.

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**Wm. Scott Hamilton, MLA**  
**Chair**

**Susan Sourial**  
**Clerk Assistant**  
**Committees and Interparliamentary Relations**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

The committee met at 9 a.m.

[S. Hamilton in the chair.]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Good morning, everyone. My name is Scott Hamilton. I'm the MLA for Delta North and the Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services.

We're an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly, with a mandate to hold public consultations on the next provincial budget. The consultations are based on the budget consultation paper that was recently released by the Ministry of Finance. The committee must issue a report by November 15, 2016, with its recommendations for the 2017 provincial budget.

The committee is holding a number of public hearings in communities across the province, and British Columbians can participate via teleconference, video conference or Skype as well. There are numerous ways to submit your ideas to the committee, and British Columbians can complete an on-line survey or send written, audio or video submissions through our website, which can be found at [www.leg.bc.ca/cmt/finance](http://www.leg.bc.ca/cmt/finance).

We invite all British Columbians to contribute to this important process, and for those of you that are here today in attendance, we thank you for your time and the fact that you want to participate. All public input will be carefully considered by the committee as it prepares its final report for the Legislative Assembly. Just a reminder that the deadline for submissions is midnight on Friday, October 14, 2016.

Today's meeting will consist of presentations from registered witnesses. Each presenter will have ten minutes to speak, followed by five minutes for questions from the committee. If time permits, we'll also have an open-mike period at the end of the meeting. Five minutes are allotted for each presenter, and if you wish to speak, please register with Stephanie at the information table.

Today's meeting is being recorded and transcribed by Hansard Services, and a complete transcript of the proceedings will be posted to the committee's website. All of the meetings are also broadcast as live audio via our website.

Now I'd like to ask the members of the committee to begin by introducing themselves.

**J. Yap:** Good morning. I'm John Yap, MLA for Richmond-Steveston.

**S. Gibson:** Hi. Simon Gibson, Abbotsford-Mission.

**D. Ashton:** Good morning. Dan Ashton. I'm from Penticton.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Good morning. Carole James, Victoria-Beacon Hill.

**R. Austin:** Good morning. Robin Austin, MLA for Skeena.

**J. Rice:** Good morning. Jennifer Rice, MLA for North Coast.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you. Also assisting the committee today are Susan Sourial, to my left, and Stephanie Raymond, from the Parliamentary Committees Office. Michael Baer and Amanda Heffelfinger from Hansard Services are also here recording the proceedings today.

We can jump straight into our presentations, our submissions. First of all, I'll ask Elizabeth Model, Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association, to come on up. Good morning.

**E. Model:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Surrey.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you so much.

**E. Model:** You brought the sunshine with you, too.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Did that on purpose. It came straight from Delta. Sent it right over.

Anyway, as I mentioned, ten minutes. I'll try to give you a little bit of a warning as time is waning.

**E. Model:** Oh, it won't be ten minutes.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Yeah, people say that, but you'd be surprised. Time goes fast. Anyhow, welcome, and please proceed.

### Presentations

**E. Model:** Okay. Thank you so much. I want to thank you as a committee for doing this on your time. I know it's a real province show, so thank you for doing that — really appreciate it — to hear the community and the province's input.

As I said, my name is Elizabeth Model. I'm the CEO for the Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association, and I am making this submission on behalf of the businesses in our area. What it is for is for the support of expansion for Simon Fraser University, which I'll refer to as SFU — the Surrey campus, specifically. It's with regard to the funding request, and I will go through my presentation, and then questions are open afterwards, as I understand it.

Surrey's the third-fastest-growing city in Canada, and the Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association, which I'll refer to as the BIA, operates within Surrey city centre. We have approximately 1,400 businesses and

property owners within a 60-block radius. Property taxes paid to the city are approximately \$12 million.

[0905]

Our area comprises King George Boulevard, as the spine, from 96 Avenue, which also includes part of Surrey Memorial Hospital and the businesses surrounding that, up to 112 in the north.

Our mission is to facilitate business improvement, community economic development, business revitalization and enhancement of our downtown of the city of Surrey. Our goal is to assist in building a vibrant, safe and livable downtown. It's the second-largest metropolitan centre in Metro Vancouver, and within the next ten years, Surrey will be the largest city in British Columbia. Our city centre population is approximately 33,600 as of the last census — not the long form, the short form. It's projected to more than double to over 70,000 by 2041. Our downtown is growing, evolving. We, the business community, are really excited to be part of this fast pace and incredible change in our city centre.

We're also proud, as the DSBIA, to have SFU, which is a world-class campus, in our Surrey city centre. Once again, it's ranked as Canada's No. 1 comprehensive university in 2015 by *Maclean's* magazine and No. 2 in Canada in both international student diversity and for research input. QS 2015 is the source of that.

SFU demonstrates leadership in the development of our Surrey city centre. It was the initiator and a founding member of what is now known as our innovation boulevard. Through collaboration with many players, including the city, hospitals, Fraser Health, educational institutions and business, it has developed a vibrant network that supports economic development, entrepreneurship, new technology and numerous other offshoots in developing solutions for our health care systems with in British Columbia.

It's in that context that we submit the following request to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services: "The Downtown Surrey BIA thanks and has our support of the previous year's committee's recommendation to the B.C. government to recommit to the memorandum of understanding that was signed with SFU and the province, back in 2006, to double the size of SFU from its current 2,500 FTEs, which is full-time-equivalent students, to 5,000 FTEs."

The success of the campus in offering programs of high labour market demand and having a role in economic development and the social development of Surrey has been demonstrated over this past decade. The demographic case for the proposed expansion south of the Fraser is well documented. There is an urgent requirement for the expansion in a region that is home to over 19 percent of British Columbia's population and B.C.'s largest school district. Simon Fraser University has surpassed all its enrolment targets, and the entrance grades required for admittance are continuing to rise.

Having said that, in addition to meeting our future labour market requirements, the BIA recognizes that the growth of Surrey's campus acts as a catalyst for economic development and is an excellent investment for our downtown. SFU's establishment in 2002 has helped define our Surrey city centre and has fuelled new growth in jobs, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship and business.

Further expansion in engineering, health programs and research will draw other research and community partners to our area. It will support local industries, new companies, by providing access to student entrepreneurs, graduates and faculty with expertise in areas of high labour market demand. The city and, in fact, the entire region will benefit from the spinoff companies. It has been well documented.

Actually, *Business in Vancouver*, August 30 through September 1, published a very well-written and -documented front cover feature on "University of Economic Development," stating the known facts that Metro Vancouver seats of higher learning have become key community innovation and business hubs.

SFU has paved the way for redevelopment of the new City Centre Library and the new city hall. It has attracted some top developers in the Lower Mainland to transform, rebuild and redevelop our city centre. Overall, this creates a win. It's a win for business. It's a win for education, which in turn benefits all of the communities south of the Fraser and, in fact, Metro Vancouver.

[0910]

In conclusion, the Downtown Surrey BIA supports and endorses the Surrey SFU campus expansion and request for funding from SFU. Thank you to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for your time and consideration in our request.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much, Ms. Model. I will go to questions of the committee.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your presentation. I think, as you pointed out, we've heard very strong cases in previous years, as well, to live up to the MOU. I think it's an exciting opportunity.

How many students do you expect, in the expansion, that you'd be able to accommodate at the Surrey centre?

**E. Model:** Well, we're requesting 5,000 full-time-equivalents to honour the MOU that was signed back in 2006.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any further questions?

**S. Gibson:** I know when I worked in Surrey a lot of years ago, that was always the lament. There was no downtown. You know, probably, the history. It was all with these centres, but there was never the downtown.

I just want congratulate Surrey and you for your work, because if you don't have a downtown in a community, you really don't have a heart and you don't have a destination. I think that's what you're building — what you're sharing today.

I went to SFU. I'm an SFU grad. My question is: can you do a complete degree in Surrey? Or do you have to go back and forth to the Burnaby campus? For example, you mentioned engineering. Can you do your entire engineering degree here on this campus?

**E. Model:** No, it's not possible.

As a business improvement association, over the last ten years that we've been in existence, we've actually had over 70 SFU students. We funded them to work with us for summer employment. It's amazing the feedback of these young people, of how they have to go downtown or they have to go up to the mountain to complete their courses. It's just not possible.

**S. Gibson:** That would be one of your aspirations then — to be able to do their complete degree completion here in your area.

**E. Model:** Absolutely. After all, SFU Surrey city campus is almost servicing a million people south of the Fraser right now, if you look at our growth.

**R. Austin:** Following on Simon's question, one of the reasons why I imagine students have to go to the different campuses, especially if they're doing something like sciences or engineering, is because they're on labs. Is the project that you're planning a sort of full-service satellite campus, with some form of labs, depending on which courses they're going to put into the Surrey campus? Or is it simply going to be mostly classrooms and research?

**E. Model:** No. There's going to be a combination of the new engineering program that they're looking to set up. As I understand it, from a business organization.... I'm not right in the meat of.... I'm looking at the big picture here. But that's a very, very good question, Robin.

I know that SFU has on the books their labs, etc. — the whole package.

**J. Yap:** Thanks for lending your voice to supporting SFU Surrey.

There are usually two components to an expansion: the upgrading program funding and also capital, which would be the premises. Do you have a sense if there's sufficient existing premises or if there would need to be investment in building as well?

**E. Model:** There will be investment in building. I know that SFU has been working with the city for specific land procurement. They do have land availability.

**J. Yap:** Oh, they do have land to expand on.

**E. Model:** Yes, they do. Also, they've been working with the federal government with some of the funding that has been promised in infrastructure. I don't know where that's at now, because I'm not privy to that. But I do know that behind the scenes, they have been working on that.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. Seeing no more questions, thank you very much for taking the time to present. We appreciate it.

It's always good to learn about these things. Every city is different. Surrey has evolved out of a farming community. There was really no one, distinct, downtown centre. Everything was just a wagon ride away, right?

**E. Model:** Not now.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Not anymore, and it's nice to see that exponential growth in such a small area. I remember that area when it was all bush.

**E. Model:** A lot of people do, unfortunately. I think it comes with our tenancy in life.

[0915]

Thank you very much to all of you.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

Next we have Surrey Students Now — Cindy Dalglish.

Ms. Dalglish, welcome. You were here a little earlier, so you probably know it's ten minutes for the presentation. I'll give you a little bit of notice just as your time is winding down, if you use that. Then we'll go to the committee. The floor is yours.

**C. Dalglish:** Thank you to the committee for having me today. I appreciate your time.

As you mentioned, I'm Cindy Dalglish, representing Surrey Students Now. We're a grassroots organization comprised of parents who recognize the importance of advocacy for public education. As I read the report on the Budget 2016 consultations, it is clear to me that this committee has heard much of the same messaging I'm about to share today.

This committee recommended that government ensure sufficient and timely capital funding to provide for facility improvements, seismic upgrades and also to facilitate the building of new schools in areas that are struggling to cope with increasing student numbers.

Surrey is growing at such a rapid pace that any capital funding announcement having been made in recent history is but a drop in the ocean. There is a disconnect between what the city allows, in growth and density, and the school infrastructure provided by the province.

For example, we have 273 portables, which house approximately 7,000 students. I have heard the province state that this is less portables than when a different political party was in power. However, those stats are skewed. Back when there were more portables, there were less students per classroom.

Surrey has been in a cycle of thousands of children in portables for far too long. We currently add approximately 1,000 new people per month to the city — and more, when you consider the number of refugees coming here. Portables are meant to be short-term structures for when schools are under seismic upgrades or when another school is actually under construction, not long-term solutions.

The current portable inventory and the students in them create their own district and would rank as the 24th largest school district in B.C. I find this entirely unacceptable.

It is unclear as to the communication channels the city and the province have with one another. We have a huge development boom here in Surrey, but not the school infrastructure to meet the demands. We believe the province is aware and quite possibly signs off on the neighbourhood concept plans. If the city changes these plans based on the realized needs, then the province needs to work in conjunction with those amendments and continue to provide the capital funding necessary to meet the increased need.

How we understand it is that the city considers these changes and communicates them to the district. The district communicates these needs to the province and is largely ignored in this process. It's apparent that there is no policy in place regarding changes to the neighbourhood concept plans and communication channels with the province.

Please continue to recommend — actually, insist — that Surrey receive adequate capital funding now. At the demand of the province, the city was told to open their doors and develop at an unprecedented pace to help the economy. It's time the province does their part.

To worsen the inadequate funding for capital, the province charges districts when a need arises for portables. Between the actual, physical portable to moving it, placing it, wiring it and the carbon tax associated, this funding for portables is taken out of the operational budget. This lessens by millions of dollars per year — approximately \$4½ million here in Surrey — the amount of funding that was to be used for resources for the students. We have less teachers, less education assistants, less learning support teachers, less library books.

We should not take away from student resources because the province is inadequately funding school capital infrastructure. Please recommend funding for portables come from a different bucket of money.

The province currently looks at education as their four-year-term expense rather than the long-term investment

that it actually is. Education is the one single investment that permeates across everything in society. School is the one place that students of varying backgrounds and home life should be able to come for stability and receive the attachment and security one needs to be successful. As education is chronically underfunded, we are seeing a negative draw on our resources.

When we pack our schools beyond their capacities and do not adequately fund resources and supports, children will fall through the cracks. Research supports that there is an increase in untoward behaviour later on. This is cyclical and not only fails the child as they grow but also puts a larger economic burden on society through increased need for welfare and an increased level of homelessness, criminal activity and incarceration.

[0920]

We can stop this cycle in its tracks by funding education as an investment instead of an expense. When education is adequately invested in, we see higher graduation rates, which turn into economic and social prosperity for society. We just have to be willing to wait that long.

This committee also recommended and ascertains that additional funding is necessary to ensure the provision of quality public education and to properly meet the increased costs that schools are currently facing.

It is infuriating to hear this government speak of a surplus and a rainy-day fund when our education system is in crisis. While we expect fiscal responsibility, it is felt that the purse strings are being tied too tight when it comes to investing in our children. Funding education is not about whether or not we have the funding. It is the choice and priorities made by this government.

It is also maddening to see this government spend money to announce maintenance spending and re-announce previously announced projects. Maintenance at schools should be done as a routine procedure and not by small buckets of funding that districts have to apply for. Maintaining our schools is part of the original investment and needs to be accounted for at that juncture.

With a current crisis in education in this province, we feel it imperative that there be a call for the Select Standing Committee on Education to receive a terms of reference. This committee has not met since 2007. Issues that need to be addressed include class composition and size, school size, education supports, Choice programming, maintenance scheduling and more. There are so many areas that need investigation and recommendations made regarding education and public policy. When the province continues to keep this committee dormant, it shows that the province does not care about education.

Choice programming within the school system is necessary for various students to meet their learning styles and educational needs. This will, in turn, help grow various sectors within society and is of economic benefit to all.

When we first started down this advocacy path, we were educated on how the province does not recognize Choice

programming when it comes to counting the number of students for capital expenditures. As a result, districts are forced to use Choice programs as movable pieces when capacity issues arise. This simply makes no sense, as these children fill a seat somewhere within the district.

When parents make the choice offered, parents and children need to have the program remain stable. An example of misinformation that we keep hearing is that we have a shortage of French immersion teachers. However, that's simply not the case. What we have is a large number of French immersion teachers unwilling to stay within an unstable program, and they choose to teach English classes instead.

We need to count the Choice program students when recognizing if a catchment area is full or has additional resource needs and help the district ensure educational stability in Choice programming.

School site acquisition charges are taxes passed along to developers to help fund the necessary school capital in growing areas. The amount for the school site acquisition has not been updated since 2007. As we are all aware, real estate prices have increased significantly. We request that this charge also be updated, in accordance with the increase in real estate.

The per-student funding formula clearly does not work. We know that there are fixed costs associated with operating a school. The funding formula currently doesn't account for that, let alone account for increases to those fixed costs of heating, plumbing, maintenance, Internet, phone and electricity.

While we don't pretend to know all the ins and outs — partly because no one will respond to our inquiries about such things — we know that we need adequate, sustainable and stable funding for hard costs and variable costs within those operating funds.

In summary, we ask the select standing committee to recommend and follow through on the following: to commit to significantly reducing the number of portables through building more school buildings in the Surrey school district; to commit to coming up with a different process and communication channel with the city and/or district; to ensure school infrastructures are in place for growth; to put forth a motion to the Legislative Assembly to give a terms of reference for the Select Standing Committee on Education; to no longer charge districts for portables out of their operating budgets but to recognize these as capital expenses; to put forth a motion or a policy that invests in education over the long term rather than year to year or short terms; to put forth a motion to have the school site acquisition charges updated to meet today's real estate prices; and finally, to change the way the province counts students that are in a Choice program for the purposes of capital costs.

At the end of the day, we need far more funding in this district. Equally important, we need better policies, processes and communication channels that meet the needs

of all students in the public education system. We simply cannot afford to not invest in our children.

[0925]

Year over year, this committee has heard similar presentations and has made the appropriate recommendations, for which we're grateful, but we seek clarity on why your recommendations continue to be ignored.

I thank you for your time.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. Questions, please.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you, Cindy, for your advocacy, but also thank you for a very thorough presentation. I think you've covered the gamut of the issues.

**C. Dalglish:** I know. I was like: "Do I go with a couple of main points? No, I'm going for it all."

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** I think it was great to have it all combined.

I think the issue that stands out is the capital costs for portables. When a district is growing, you have to have space for those students. You don't have an option, yet the money comes out of the operating budget.

A piece that I haven't heard before is the acquisition development costs for developers. That's an interesting piece, so I appreciate you raising it. It's one that we'll add to the list.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any other questions?

**S. Gibson:** What is your comment or your view on catchment areas — either the enforcement of catchment areas or the abandonment? I'd like your comment on that.

**C. Dalglish:** That's a really tough question. I think what happens is.... If you don't have catchment areas, then you have people who could come from here getting priority over somebody that lives right across the street from the school, because it'll be a first-come, first-served type of thing. I think catchments are necessary, but I think Choice programming needs to be included in those catchments.

**S. Gibson:** Yeah. I'm from Abbotsford, and catchment areas have been largely abandoned by the district, which allows the board administration to allocate students across boundaries so it makes better use of facilities. As you know, all districts need more facilities — and government is sensitive to that, of course — but without the catchment areas, students can kind of be moved around to schools that may be underpopulated in it. So it makes the facilities more efficient. I don't know whether you'd like to comment on that.

**C. Dalglish:** Sure. I would say that that's a little bit.... It's different in the sense that we don't have a lot of schools here that are under capacity. We probably only have two. One is East Kensington, and it is a tiny, little rural school in the farmlands. It's a really old school — lead in their water, arsenic in the water. There are challenges there. People don't want to go to that school, and if they're forced to go there, that'll create its own issues.

We also have a division between.... We want education to be the great equalizer, but at the end of the day, it's not. South Surrey versus north Surrey — South Surrey is where you've got a lot of money; north Surrey is where you've got a lot of lower income. So if some of the lower incomes are trying to come into the South Surrey area, I see potential conflict there. Vice versa if people feel forced to come north.

We have families with two working parents. How do they navigate getting their kids everywhere? They need to be able to go to their neighbourhood schools.

So if we did go to that idea where people can go across catchments, it would have to be first right of refusal to in-catchment students. That would be off the top of my head.

**S. Gibson:** Right, yeah. Okay, thank you.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any further questions?

Seeing none, thank you very much for taking the time. We always appreciate the opportunity to talk about schools.

Next we have Sean Parkinson, University of the Fraser Valley Faculty and Staff Association.

Mr. Parkinson, welcome. Good morning. As you're settling in, I'll remind you that you have ten minutes for the presentation. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes to go so you can conclude your thoughts. Then we can go to the committee for questions. The floor is yours.

**S. Parkinson:** Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the committee about priorities for the 2017 provincial budget. I am Sean Parkinson, and I'm speaking on behalf of the University of the Fraser Valley Faculty and Staff Association.

Before I speak about these priorities and interests, I'll tell you a little bit about our organization. The University of the Fraser Valley Faculty and Staff Association represents over 500 faculty and 400 staff — a combined bargaining unit that's unique in B.C.'s post-secondary sector.

UFV was first founded as Fraser Valley College in 1974. It was eventually granted university college status and then became a university in 2008. We now serve over 15,000 students, with major campuses in Abbotsford and at the Canada Education Park in Chilliwack, and with six other locations in the Fraser Valley, at Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Hope and Mission.

This region of the Lower Mainland is diverse, growing fast and has extensive needs in the area of post-secondary education — needs that our institution works to meet every day. The demands on our institutional capacity are significant, and it's becoming increasingly difficult to maintain our programs when funding doesn't keep pace.

As a special-purpose, teaching-intensive university, a critical objective of our institution is to provide students with a comprehensive range of post-secondary education opportunities. Comprehensive means a full range of programs — offerings that lead to degrees, diplomas, certificates and apprenticeships. It also means providing avenues for adult learners to re-engage in post-secondary learning by completing their adult graduation Dogwood diploma or simply getting the necessary prerequisites for various post-secondary programs in B.C.

As educators, members of our association are deeply concerned about shifting the financial burden onto students. What we're seeing in our classroom, advising offices and support services is that as tuition — and in particular, fees — and the accompanying student debt rises, so does the level of stress and anxiety among our students. The more students have to worry about whether they can afford their tuition, their rent and their food, the more difficult it is for them to concentrate on their studies. Consequently, it's taking longer for students to complete their programs.

These shifts of the financial burden raise serious concerns about accessibility to our public post-secondary system. Affordable access to public institutions has significant implications for students but also for the growth and success of our province. At the time we became a university, student tuition and fees comprised 28 percent of the operating budget. Now it's risen to 40 percent. Over the same time period, the government's share has fallen from 52 percent to 44 percent.

We have heard the argument for demanding that students bear an ever-increasing proportion because of the private benefits of a university degree. I'm sure you've heard of the public benefits of university education — arguments that use multipliers such as each extra dollar invested in university education would generate, on average, X dollars in economic activity some time in the future, or university graduates typically pay more in taxes in their lifetime, which are many times greater than that initial subsidy to education.

Rather than restate these arguments, I hope we can agree that university has benefits for both the individual and to society. Instead, I wish to talk about changes in what I think university means to our society and the economy.

For centuries, universities functioned as the intellectual pursuit for a small elite. It was only in the second half of the 20th century that a bachelor's degree became something more practical — to help earn a good, middle-class living. But back then a high school diploma still

served as a baseline level of education for entry into the labour market.

In the recent past, Ministers of Advanced Education have written that 78 percent of new job openings will require post-secondary and have talked about targeted funding for high-demand jobs, as outlined in the 2014 *Skills for Jobs Blueprint*. The case for post-secondary is an economic one. People who attend post-secondary have better employment prospects, and a province with more employable people is more competitive.

This evolution in the past several decades of the role and perception of post-secondary can be interpreted as an expansion in the number of years of schooling seen as required for a young person to be educated. Post-secondary is the new baseline level of education. In this regard, it's what high school was two generations ago. This evolution is a global phenomenon and occurring throughout developed countries.

If post-secondary is the new baseline, why do students pay at all? The base level of education for labour market participation has historically been publicly provided. We used to provide only elementary education in our public schools. Later, high school was added. Now it's time to talk about including post-secondary or undergraduate education to the base of public service. I hope you will think about post-secondary as the new baseline.

[0935]

At a time when post-secondary has become more required, it's also become less affordable. Think back to when you were in university and what you paid. The increased burden on students and the reliance on loan-based financial assistance as costs have gone up have pushed student debt to historic levels. Student debt in B.C. averages \$35,000 after completing a four-year degree. These large levels of debt impact the life decisions that students make for years to come.

Although I would argue that an undergraduate degree is the new baseline and that it should be tuition-free, no principle exists for determining the optimal student/government funding split. I would think any government would probably find it too expensive to reduce the student component of funding to zero, but political parties should commit to stopping the continual downward drift in public funding and have a serious conversation with the electorate about who should pay.

As educators, our greatest concern is our students and how we can help them to grow and thrive in their classes and beyond. We believe strongly in the value of public education and, as such, are deeply concerned about what appears to be a growing trend of declining accessibility and affordability of our public institutions.

I'm asking for some specific priorities to be addressed:

(1) The reinstatement of tuition-free adult basic education, ESL and adult special education programs at our post-secondary institutions. Making it harder for those who need it most to access even basic education doesn't

make any economic sense. These are part of the old baseline of education that has always been public.

(2) Improved funding support for students, both in terms of a revitalized student grant program and through the introduction of interest-free student loans to help ensure students can complete programs and degrees in timely ways without the burden of a heavy debt load.

(3) Consider making the first year of post-secondary tuition-free.

(4) Finally, a funding formula, a better response to cost pressures faced by our post-secondary institutions. Specifically, we once again recommend a comprehensive review of funding to address regional inequities and core funding needs for the entire system.

Thank you, and I'll take any questions if you have them.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you, Mr. Parkinson. I appreciate it.

**J. Yap:** Thank you for your presentation and your recommendations. Have you thought about the costs of your recommendations, crunched some numbers, just to give us an idea of the scope? I understand the principles that you're promoting, but there's also the cost side. Have you any thoughts on the numbers?

**S. Parkinson:** No, but if... Off the top of my head, it looks like tuition fees at University of the Fraser Valley are expected to be \$48.3 million. In one of the recommendations, I said to consider making first year tuition-free. Ballpark, that could be on the order of \$12 million at our institution.

**D. Ashton:** At one institution.

**S. Parkinson:** At one institution, right.

**D. Ashton:** How many institutions are in the province?

**S. Parkinson:** I understand it's an expensive proposition. I know that... In fact, I've heard from the committee in the past that while there are significant private benefits to education, it's a good investment. It is a good investment. So is health care; so is access to roads. Many of the public goods would also be good private investments. I think it's a much bigger conversation than what the immediate impact is. It requires a conversation and maybe a different way of thinking about what should be in that base of public service.

**R. Austin:** Sean, thanks for your presentation. I really like the efficacy of your arguments.

Just as an aside, I went to university in Scotland as a young man, and at that time in the U.K., all university was free — and still is in many European countries. So even though those of us who live in the Canadian con-

text talk about it as though it's a dream, it's a reality in a lot of other countries.

Just so you know, the ask that you have around ABE, ESL and adult extension classes is an ask that has come to this committee from just about everybody who has come to speak around post-secondary education. They are basic rights, an ability for anybody to get themselves out and improve their life. I think we'll have a really good deliberation around that.

[0940]

I like your idea of the notion of thinking about having first-year-free tuition, only because I think it will get the conversation going around British Columbia about what we want to pay for and what it is worth paying for. Because the balance now....

I went back to school at 39 at the local community college, down to UNBC. The tuition fees were dramatically smaller then, so the government proportion of its payment to post-secondary was very high. That balance has gone down quite a lot in the last few years.

I take your point. I think even asking for these things gets the conversation going. At the end of the day, even though there is a huge private benefit — I think all of us here went to university — all of us have to acknowledge we've paid that back many times over in our taxation over our lifetime. So the private benefit is paid for automatically by the private citizen who's benefiting. The question is: what does society want to get out of it?

I thank you for your presentation.

**D. Ashton:** Sir, thank you. Interesting proposal you've put forward, and I really appreciate it. I want to echo what Robin has said. You give us food for thought.

The way I look at things in the world is that it's a three-legged stool. I have no problem whatsoever discussing that, but I would like something coming forward from the universities or from the colleges saying: "This is an idea. Let's take a look at this."

But are there opportunities internally in the universities or the colleges where they would bear some of the costs of that? That means everybody in the system, sir. I'm just being frank. I think it's very good, what you've brought forward, and it gives us a good opportunity to have a chat around it. But the way I look at things, everybody contributes.

**S. Parkinson:** Maybe I could put some information together for the committee if you're interested. I'm happy to hear that you're willing to have a discussion about it.

**D. Ashton:** Absolutely.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Seeing no further questions, thank you for taking the time. We appreciate it.

**S. Parkinson:** Thank you for the opportunity.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Enjoy what appears is going to be a beautiful day.

Next we have the British Columbia Federation of Students.

Simka Marshall and Michael Olson, welcome. Good morning. I'm not sure if you heard my earlier dissertations. Ten minutes for your presentation. I'll try to give you a little wave when time's getting short, and then we can go to the committee for questions. If you're ready, the floor is yours.

**S. Marshall:** Good morning, members of the committee. My name is Simka Marshall, and I am the chairperson of the B.C. Federation of Students. I'm joined by my colleague, our internal coordinator, Michael Olson. Before beginning, I would like to acknowledge that today's hearing is on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish peoples.

The British Columbia Federation of Students, or BCFS, is British Columbia's provincial student organization. We have a college and university urban and rural membership of nearly 200,000 students at 14 post-secondary institutions in B.C. Our mandate is to advocate for a high-quality, publicly funded and accessible post-secondary education system in British Columbia.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide comment for the preparation for next year's budget. In our written submission, we will identify a number of priorities students believe are key in moving forward our post-secondary system and economy.

These are: an increase in funding to our colleges and universities, a government-sponsored reduction of tuition fees, the improvement of student financial aid through grants and the elimination of interest on student loans, the restoration of recent cuts and the return to tuition-free status for adult basic education programs, and the reinstatement of funding for English-as-a-second-language programs to 2013 capacity. Today's presentation will focus on two areas from that list of recommendations: student financial assistance and adult basic education.

B.C.'s students and their families continue to struggle with ever-increasing levels of student debt as the cost of pursuing a post-secondary education remains far greater than the resources students and their families have at their disposal. Graduate outcomes surveys conducted by the Ministry of Advanced Education demonstrate that as few as 25 percent of baccalaureate graduates are able to rely on personal savings to fund their post-secondary education, either fully or partially.

This means that more than 75 percent of graduates rely on a third party to help them pursue a college or university education — through their family, friends, employment, bank loans and government student loans. In fact, according to the most recent baccalaureate outcomes survey available on the ministry's website, 43 percent of

graduates report using government student loans or bank loans to fund or partially fund their education.

[0945]

The government's B.C. student outcomes surveys are useful in tracking funding sources of students who have graduated. However, these surveys do not capture those students who have been forced to end their studies before completing them.

There is a direct link between debt and completion rates. University of British Columbia researcher Lori McElroy found that students with little or no debt were more than twice as likely to finish their degree than students with high levels of debt. According to McElroy, the completion rate for students who carried less than \$1,000 of debt was 71 percent, while the completion rate for those carrying more than \$10,000 of debt was only 34 percent.

The establishment of an upfront, needs-based grants program would not only improve access to post-secondary education but would also lead to an increase in completion rates. The federal government has recently increased funding to the Canada student grant program, which was a welcome boost of financial assistance for students across the country. However, because B.C. does not have a comprehensive system of student grants, students in this province receive the least amount of non-repayable financial assistance in the country.

While student loans help students who could not otherwise afford the high cost of education get through the door, they do so with an added expense to B.C. families as a result of the interest applied to loans. In B.C., this disparity is particularly acute because, currently, at prime plus 2.5 percent to 5 percent, interest charged on B.C. student loans is the highest in the country. This means that a student who can afford to pay up front pays only the cost, but a low-income student who needs to access student loans will pay thousands of dollars in interest.

The BCFS has been pleased to see this committee recommend the establishment of a student grant program in the past three successive years and several times prior to that. The committee has also recommended the review and reduction of interest charged on student loans in previous years.

For this year's budget, the British Columbia Federation of Students is again recommending that the province commit to the elimination of interest charged on student loans and introduce an upfront, needs-based grants program to supplement the existing forms of student financial assistance. Such a move would make a significant difference in student access and affordability and would provide new opportunities to low- and middle-income families.

The second issue we would like to highlight in our presentation is adult basic education, and it sounds like you folks have heard from a lot of groups about ABE so far. Adult basic education, or ABE, is an important

component of the post-secondary education system. ABE courses provided through colleges and universities in British Columbia instruct adult learners in high school competency, provide credit toward completing a Dogwood certificate and prepare students for a return to education after a time away.

ABE courses allow those students who have not completed high school to complete their high school diploma in a setting focused on adult learners, rather than needing to return to a high school environment. ABE also enables those adults who have completed high school to gain admission to British Columbia's colleges or universities through earning credit in prerequisite courses required for entry to specific programs or by upgrading skills in particular curriculum areas after a period of absence from formal education.

Adult basic education represents some of the more marginalized members of society. For example, 20 percent of ABE students are parents, and 18 percent are aboriginal peoples. By comparison, only 10 percent of those in the K-to-12 system are aboriginal, and according to the 2013 baccalaureate graduate survey, only 3 percent of university graduates are aboriginal.

In recognition of the fact that many adults who require high school education aren't in any position to pay for these courses, the government of British Columbia eliminated all tuition fees for adult basic education in 1998, and then again, in 2007, after fees had been reintroduced. However, in the 2014 budget, the government announced a \$6.9 million funding cut from adult education programs at colleges and universities, plus another \$9 million from the K-to-12 system. This cut was coupled with the reversal of the free tuition fee policy that had been in place for nearly a decade.

Last year was the first full academic year of tuition fees being charged on ABE courses at most post-secondary institutions. Not surprisingly, in the same academic year, enrolment in these programs dropped drastically from 33 percent at Northwest Community College in Terrace to 63 percent at Vancouver Island University's Powell River campus....

There is a cap on the per-semester cost for these programs. However, there is no cap on the per-course cost. This has resulted in a huge disparity in costs of ABE classes across the province. For example, at North Island College, the cost is \$220 per course, while at Selkirk College, the cost is \$544 per course.

[0950]

The adult upgrading grant, or AUG, was introduced to reduce the impact of the tuition fees, yet it has clearly failed to achieve its mandate.

The most likely reason that the AUG is not curbing the downward enrolment rates is the income threshold that is used to determine applicants to be in need. For a single-person family, a student can earn no more than \$11.40 per hour working full-time in order to be eligible

for the grant. For an individual trying to support a family, \$12.50 is the maximum hourly wage they can make in order to take advantage of the AUG.

The B.C. Federation of Students recommends that the province provide sustained, long-term funding to those institutions that offer adult basic education and reinstate the tuition fee-free mandate on ABE courses. Targeted per-student funding which covers the full cost of delivery of these programs will ensure that institutions can offer courses at no charge to all students and will ensure that adult basic education programs do not have to compete with other curriculum areas for funding.

Such a system would mean that those who start out from a low-income background are not shut out of the post-secondary system but have the opportunity to reach their full potential and then contribute that full potential back to their community and British Columbia's economy.

In closing, we would like to express our appreciation for the past support shown to several key recommendations made by our federation and its member local students unions. We hope that the committee will once again recognize the financial hardship and personal debt that students and their families are being forced to bear and support our recommendations for the 2017 budget. By helping people access post-secondary education, the government is ensuring the future of a productive society and workforce that will help our economy continue to grow and prosper.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much, Ms. Marshall. I appreciate that. I'm going to go the committee right away with questions. I'm sure there are some. You're right. Very common theme, especially with cuts to ABE. We've heard it, and it doesn't hurt to keep hearing it.

Any questions? As I've said before, don't take a lack of questions as indifference. We're not. We've actually asked a lot of questions on this subject over the last few days that we've travelling, because it has come up. We're thoroughly vetted. Maybe I should put it that way.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** I just wanted to echo and say thank you for the presentation. I think there's a very good effort to make sure that the committee understands the pressure.

I just want to speak about the ABE in particular. You mentioned a couple of different facilities, or institutions, that have seen drops. Is that pretty common across the province? For the stats that you get, are you seeing it more in particular areas? I would imagine a lot of rural communities.... There aren't other choices for communities to be able to go. So I just wondered if there was a regional difference at all.

**S. Marshall:** We're seeing it pretty commonly across the province. We're still trying to get numbers from the institutions for the past year, but.... Yeah. We're seeing it at Camosun. The College of New Caledonia has seen a 54 percent drop. So it's happening all across the province.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** As always, thank you for taking the time to come out. We do appreciate the input, and we hear you. Take care.

Next we have Mr. Scott Olson, Fraser Valley Real Estate Board.

Mr. Olson, good morning. Thank you for joining us. Ten minutes for your presentation. I'll get your attention with a couple of minutes to go so you can conclude your thoughts, and we then can, of course, go to the committee after that for questions. If you're ready, the floor is yours.

**S. Olson:** Thank you very much. I won't actually take the full ten minutes, so hopefully that gives us a little more time for Q and A.

My name is Scott Olson. I've been a licenced realtor for 32 years. I'm here today in my professional capacity as a realtor within the province of B.C.

The Fraser Valley Real Estate Board, in cooperation with BCREA has, for many years, advocated to bring attention to real estate-oriented issues that benefit the public. In the recent past, the boards have advocated for the elimination or reduction of the property transfer tax, for issues relating to the management of water, to issues relating to identification and remediation of illegal drug operations and much more.

[0955]

All of these initiatives and the research behind them were funded by realtors and represent many years of volunteer work and hundreds of thousands of dollars. This volume of work has been given freely to government. We hoped that you would find value in the results and recognize, in our profession, the desire to give back to the society of which we are a part.

The singular most important possession that a realtor owns is his reputation. The vast majority of realtors within the province operate to a very high standard of ethics and professionalism.

We have worked very hard to create what we had believed was a position of credibility within the provincial government and across party lines. Our only request has been that government consult with the profession on issues relating to real estate within the province. We thought that we had earned the respect of government. We were given a very clear message from the Premier this was not the case.

We were shocked by the lack of consultation prior to the announcement that the Real Estate Council was being stripped of self-regulation, saying: "The real estate sector has had ten years to get it right on self-regulation, and they haven't." We were disappointed by the Premier's

comments, because they were unfair. In fact, for nine of the past ten years, the government has continually told the council they were doing a great job.

It's important to understand the Real Estate Council has a mandate to enforce the Real Estate Act, and they must act within its confines. They have no authority to make changes to the act. Years ago the Real Estate Council asked government to open the act and increase fines. There was no response from government. They didn't even say no. There was just no response.

The Real Estate Council has government-appointed seats at the board table, and they're often unfilled by government. Imagine the frustration at hearing this announcement that the Real Estate Council has got it wrong.

Then the second hammer fell — the 15 percent foreign investor tax — again, with no consultation with our profession. The issues now materializing could have been avoided if there had been consultation with the professionals who do this work every day — realtors. Given the time, energy and resources that we have invested to create what we believed to be a strong working relationship with MLAs, it's disappointing how quickly this was cast aside.

As of today, we are still very concerned by the announcements made by government and believe they must be modified to prevent further harm to the public.

The implementation of the new tax should have been for contracts finalized after the legislation came into effect and not on legally binding contracts already signed and expected to complete after August 2. It is unfair to buyers and sellers who, in good faith, entered into legally binding contracts under the guidelines of existing legislation — only to have the rug pulled out from under them, without warning or recourse.

The new tax should apply to non-Canadians not living or working here. Skilled and professional workers come to our region from all over the world at our invitation. We do not want to unfairly penalize people living, working and contributing to the betterment of our communities.

There are some recommendations from the independent review that need refining in order to ensure the public is properly protected. Realtors would like to be consulted prior to further changes.

To conclude, why we lost your trust I do not know. You haven't told us. I do know that government's recent actions have caused us to lose our trust in you. I believe that it is in the best interests of everyone concerned — not least of all, the public — that we have a solid respectful relationship of trust restored between the government and my profession.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to present.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you, Mr. Olson. I appreciate that.

I will go to the committee for questions, if there are any. No?

It's the first presentation we've had from.... Is it the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board that you're representing, or are you here on your own?

**S. Olson:** I'm here on my own. I'm a past president of the real estate board, so I'm aware of the issues, but I'm not here representing a particular organization. I am here representing realtors at large.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. I understand. I guess I could say personally that I have heard from a lot of realtors over the issue. I've had many, many discussions. I think when the legislation was passed, my phone rang just about as often as many of the phones of the other members at this table, I'm sure. We've been intricately involved in our communities with the real estate association for some time now. As a matter of fact, a good friend of mine is, I guess, the incoming president now of the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board. So, yeah, we've heard much. There's no doubt about it.

Are there no questions?

Thank you, Mr. Olson, for taking the time to come and present your thoughts. Try to enjoy what's going to be, I'm sure, a beautiful day.

**S. Olson:** Thank you very much.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** We'll take a brief recess, please.

The committee recessed from 10:01 a.m. to 10:11 a.m.

[S. Hamilton in the chair.]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** We now have, from the Douglas Students Union, Meredith Graham, Tracy Ho and Monique Paulino.

Ladies, good morning. Welcome. Ten minutes for your presentation. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes left so that you can conclude your thoughts, and then we'll go to the committee for questions after that.

If you're ready, the floor is all yours.

**M. Graham:** Good morning, committee members. My name is Meredith Graham, and I am the David Lam coordinator with the Douglas Students Union.

**M. Paulino:** My name is Monique Paulino, and I'm the college relations coordinator at the Douglas Students Union. Over at the end there is Tracy Ho. She's the college relations and membership outreach coordinator of the Douglas Students Union.

We are honoured to have the opportunity to address this committee and give feedback on the priorities for next year's provincial budget.

The Douglas Students Union is a membership organization of more than 12,000 students at Douglas College

in New Westminster and Coquitlam. We are Local 6 of British Columbia Federation of Students, representing over 200,000 students in B.C. Together we provide services to students while advocating for an accessible, high-quality system of post-secondary education. One of our main goals is to advocate for a high-quality, publicly funded and accessible post-secondary system in British Columbia.

Students and their families struggle with ever-increasing levels of student debts as the cost of going to post-secondary institutions is far greater than the resources that students are able to obtain. Gone completely are the days where a student can work full-time over the summer to make enough to maintain tuition and costs of living through the academic year.

As identified earlier today by Simka Marshall of the B.C. Federation of Students, our collectively identified priorities for moving our post-secondary education system forward must include the improvement of student financial aid through grants, the elimination of interest on student loans and increased funding to our public colleges and universities.

These issues were identified in previous reports of this committee in 2014, 2015 and 2016, with recommendations to increase operating grants to post-secondary institutions and to review the interest charge on B.C. student loans. In 2015, the committee went further and called for the reduction of interest charged on student loans.

We are supportive of these recommendations and encourage this year's committee to include this commitment in their report.

**M. Graham:** On Dec. 4, 2015, the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education made an unexpected announcement that the provincial government will cut \$6.9 million in funding to ABE programs in post-secondary institutions and an additional \$9 million from the K-to-12 system, cutting access to adult basic education from the people who need it the most.

Adult basic education provides courses in colleges and universities: basic literacy skills, credits for completion of high school education and preparation for post-secondary education. Seventy percent identified that they'd continue into post-secondary education after completing the ABE programs.

Adult basic education allows adult learners who have not completed high school to learn, be supported and succeed in an adult educational environment, and it supports adults who have completed high school to get into colleges and universities by upgrading specific curriculum and skills areas after a period of time away from formal education. These students benefit with a direct pathway into the post-secondary education system.

Adult basic education programs at Douglas College have been slowly cut, year after year, with the introduc-

tion of tuition fees of up to \$3,200 per year. Enrolment, therefore, has dropped significantly.

[1015]

Members in the communities of New Westminster and Coquitlam need the access to this education to better their lives for themselves and their families. There are many families and adult learners in the communities, many of whom have lost their jobs or face a reduction in hours and need to get skills upgrading to gain employment in a very competitive marketplace. The investment into ABE will have significant return in higher contributions in income tax and more disposable income that will be spent in the community, once again reinvesting in the local B.C. economy.

ABE learners are some of the most marginalized people in society and do not typically have the funds to finance basic adult education. Of adult basic education students, 58 percent are women, 18 percent are indigenous peoples and 55 percent are employed while simultaneously studying.

This government recognized the importance and need of tuition-free ABE in 1998 by eliminating fees, and then again in 2007, after fees had been reintroduced, which opened doors to many students who previously were blocked from accessing the education they need. Accessible adult basic education changes and saves lives.

Last year's committee recognized that ABE is necessary not only for the individual learners and their families but also for the overall knowledge and skills of B.C. residents and the overall economy by recommending to restore full and sustained funding to adult basic education programs. We urge the committee to make the same recommendation to the 2017 B.C. budget once again so that access to education can be provided to those who need it the most.

**M. Paulino:** In 2010, the provincial government, in partnership with TransLink, students unions and public post-secondary institutions, began the U-Pass B.C. program that offered a universal transit pass to students in ten Metro Vancouver public post-secondary institutions. This allowed access to public transportation across all three zones of travel and made post-secondary institutions much more accessible.

Six years later, the U-Pass is considered an essential service by post-secondary students, as it increases affordability for students in a time when tuition fees, housing, costs of living and student debt increases steadily year after year.

The New Westminster campus is serviced heavily by SkyTrain and buses, and the Coquitlam campus will soon be serviced by the new Evergreen line. This has and will reduce the frequency and number of vehicles driven around in the Lower Mainland and to campus.

The increase of student ridership correlates directly to reduced congestion and helps to meet environmental sustainability goals. Students rely on the U-Pass to effect-

ively budget for the costs of their education. A student who uses the U-Pass for 12 months saves over \$1,500 while accessing three zones of travel, and students that use the U-Pass in only one zone of travel save over \$600 in comparison to equivalent access on regular monthly passes. Students who are already in precarious financial situations rely heavily on the U-Pass to not only access their education but also to travel to work, supporting the provincial economy.

In July 2015, government advised that funding had been made available to extend support to the U-Pass B.C. program for an additional two years. Subsequently, a contract was signed to ensure that the U-Pass program will continue until April 2018, but no commitments have been made beyond this date.

The U-Pass B.C. program provides a critical service to post-secondary students in Metro Vancouver, and it is vital that the provincial government commits to the long term of this program by ensuring that funding for the U-Pass B.C. program goes beyond April 2018 and ending cyclical contract expiry by developing a long-term, standardized and affordable U-Pass B.C. program indexed to inflation.

**M. Graham:** Please bear with me as I read from my computer. Technological difficulties this morning.

As I introduced myself earlier, I gave only my name and my title within the students union. There are many hats I wear in this life, but what I want to breathe into the room right now is that I'm a young person with lived experience in the government care system. In short, I am a foster kid. A recent report done by the Vancouver Foundation detailed that young people from care typically face higher rates of mental illness and subsequent engagement with the mental health system, engagement with various forms of financial government support, engagement with the criminal justice system, increased rates of homelessness, premature death. They often do not graduate high school and, therefore, do not go on to study to receive a diploma, degree, or a certificate in the trades.

[1020]

We have an opportunity to walk alongside young people and help rewrite their stories. The petition posed by the Vancouver Foundation has three main asks: (1) consistent financial support with basic living costs like housing, transit and food while young people attend school, learn skills and find work; (2) long-term relationships with caring, supportive adults to offer advice and references so they always have somewhere to turn; and (3) a chance to connect and contribute to their communities in creative, cultural and volunteer activities so they feel as though they belong.

Statistics released on Monday from the Vancouver Foundation's economic analysis titled *Opportunities in Transition* cite that education is the most important single

factor and indicator measurement of success. One statistic I'll share is in regards to post-secondary attainment: "Youth aging out of care undertake post-secondary studies at roughly half the rate of the general population and are even less likely to enrol in a university program, with university graduation rates one-sixth or less than that of the general population."

One major barrier to enrolment, not surprisingly, as Monique demonstrated earlier, is the inability to access funds to pay for such an expensive education system here in British Columbia. In order to mitigate the situation, 13 institutions currently offer a tuition waiver program for young people in and from care.

However, as it is institution-specific, the institution has the ability to create their own rules around expectations and admissions. This creates an unequal playing field for young people to engage in those systemic institutions. Further, it does not encourage other institutions to join this endeavour, as the financial burden rests on the single institution rather than on the government and the community as a whole.

We are calling on the minister to expand the tuition waiver program to be a universal, provincewide program that benefits all young people from care and that will reduce the rates of the statistics that I mentioned earlier.

In closing, we would like to acknowledge that the committee and government have to balance the priorities and needs of all citizens across the province and that not everyone's needs will be met through the budget. We would like to thank the committee for supporting key recommendations of student unions in the past and hope that the committee will again recognize the importance of investment into our public post-secondary system so that it is accessible to all British Columbians, their families and communities.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. Very good presentation and thought-provoking. I appreciate that.

**J. Rice:** Thank you for your presentation. Very well presented.

My question is for Meredith. Just listening to the tuition waiver for kids transitioning out of care.... It's fairly new. This is the first time that I've actually heard about the inequities that are happening. I'm just wondering if you could speak a little bit more to that and just elaborate on some of the challenges people would be facing.

**M. Graham:** Of course. I appreciate your question. Thank you.

It is a relatively new endeavour with exciting results. There has been higher enrolment in places where that is offered, and people are utilizing those programs. What happens, though, for instance, is.... You can have institutions like VIU, UBC, SFU, and they all have different

requirements to be accessible into the program. For instance, you have to have three years as a continuing custody order, which means that you are a permanent ward of the government. It doesn't recognize any other designations within the government.

For instance, you can be on what's called a voluntary care agreement, which says that your caregivers are unable to care for you properly. They relinquish guardianship, in a way, to the government, but it's only quasi control. It's very interesting. Those people under the VCA don't qualify for the perceived benefits of young people in continuing custody orders once they age out of care.

There are a lot of inequities that way. Then there are stipulations in regards to how many years you have to have been in care, how many programs you're actually accessible for and able to qualify for. They close off some programs, which is very interesting to me.

I can definitely send some more information on the broad spectrum. For instance, VIU has an incredibly open policy. They were actually the spearheading school who started this program. They're the ones we look to.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** That's fantastic. I hope that's something we can capture when we start talking about this during our deliberations. I didn't realize that. It didn't realize those inequities were in place.

[1025]

**R. Austin:** Following on that... Actually, I didn't realize all the details that you're mentioning here. I just know that Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond has really, really pushed this. I assumed that it wasn't just kids on CCOs but that all kids, in general, when they come out of care, could go on to this. So it's really good that you brought this up.

I'm a former foster parent, so I think it's just fantastic that this is being offered to you. In addition, though, what we hear very often from universities and from students is that it's one thing to have your tuition paid and your costs paid; it's another thing to go to school and not have supports in place. I think the critical thing isn't simply just being able to enter a program and have your tuition and your books paid for; it's also the inability for a lot of post-secondary institutions to provide the kinds of student services to help support people.

We all know kids who are aging out, many of whom do not have an extended relationship with their former foster parents. Therefore, they don't have a mom and dad to give them that kind of support. So I hope that as we deliberate... We've heard this from other institutions — that it's also needed to have proper student services in place. Otherwise, you might have free tuition, but you're still going to fail because you don't have the support. I'm hoping that we can do something in that regard.

**M. Graham:** Definitely. May I respond quickly to that?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Yes, you may.

**M. Graham:** I think that raises a very interesting point and something that has been addressed as a gap. One thing that I think the Vancouver Foundation's petition complements well is that they are asking for those long-term supportive relationships so that those young people who are able to step into college and university still have someone walking alongside them and that check-in point and that support.

It's kind of... It's both — and I think, also, beefing up the care within the institution or the services available. Thank you for raising that.

**D. Ashton:** I just want to say thank you, Meredith, Monique, Tracy — taking vast notes over there. Thank you very much for coming forward — you and your peers sitting in the back. It's good to hear from you, and it's good to hear the continual reinforcement of the direction you think the government should take. Once again, thank you for coming forward.

**M. Graham:** Thanks for having us.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much for taking the time. We do appreciate it.

I guess the committee will stand in recess again until we have our next presenter show up.

The committee recessed from 10:27 a.m. to 10:32 a.m.

[S. Hamilton in the chair.]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay, I will call the committee back to order and acknowledge the arrival of Anita Huberman.

Good morning.

**A. Huberman:** Good morning. How are you?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I'm very well. How are you doing?

**A. Huberman:** Good, thanks.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** All right. From the Surrey Board of Trade — always a pleasure.

Ten minutes for your presentation. I'll give you a little wave when time's drawing to a close, and we can go to the committee for questions. It's all yours.

**A. Huberman:** Thank you for this opportunity to allow the Surrey Board of Trade to comment on B.C. Budget 2017.

Some recommendations for you. There are many, but I just wanted to highlight four that are important not only to the Surrey Board of Trade's finance and taxation

committee but also to our community. As you know, the Surrey Board of Trade is a not-for-profit business organization. Our mandate is to support business and to bring business into the city.

The first is around the Medical Services Plan, the MSP. We are asking the provincial government to replace the MSP with a progressive and equitable approach to health care funding; abolish the current MSP premium system and implement a line item to the provincial income tax; and finally, on that same subject, provide in advance at least one year's notice to indicate that the MSP tax would be replaced with a combination of a payroll tax and an income tax surcharge, as is done in Ontario. The backgrounder to our policy paper is in each of your packages.

The second topic, very important, is child care. As many of you know, a third of our population is under the age of 19. There have been many investments by government to date on child care. I'm really happy to see that. But in Surrey, we're still playing catch-up.

We are asking you, as part of your deliberation on the B.C. budget and in alignment with the families-first agenda that was originally communicated, to increase investment in secure, comprehensive child care facilities and spaces that are accessible and affordable for British Columbian workers and to reallocate funding in high-growth communities, where it is needed.

[1035]

The third subject is, again, around reallocating funding in high-growth communities. Where it is needed in the province of British Columbia is around schools. I'm very pleased to see that government is investing some money in trades training at Kwantlen Polytechnic University as well as Simon Fraser University. There's more to be done. Again, Surrey is playing catch-up in this space also.

Now, the Surrey Board of Trade is part of a Surrey schools coalition. I think you are aware that many of our students go to schools in portables. What we're asking the provincial government... There's a backgrounder there. There is a short-term and a long-term ask.

Our short-term ask is an immediate \$175 million. That deals with the current overcrowding in our Surrey schools. Our long-term ask is a new funding formula for high-growth areas such as Surrey, British Columbia, to ensure that other cities do not face this in the future. The province has certainly changed, in light of when that funding formula was initially implemented, and I think there's an opportunity for innovation, not only with government but in collaboration with government.

The fourth item that I wanted to address is affordable rental housing and a fluid labour market. One of the things that the Surrey Board of Trade is really concerned about — but also sees as an opportunity for collaboration — is around having the market housing, rental housing, available for workers and making sure that they're in a secure home so they can focus on productivity in the workplace.

Again, I've heard government, to date, make some investments around affordable housing. But again, it needs to be a comprehensive strategy — something else to deliberate in your B.C. budget. So we're asking the B.C. government to work with the federal government to develop tax and other incentives for purpose-built market rental housing units for low- to mid-range income levels, using innovative designs and locating near transit hubs. And I speak of Surrey's light rail transit hub that is coming, and that is an opportunity, certainly.

The second request on that topic is to work to combine other social program supports to help support those in the lower-income ranges to access market rentals, such as expanding the SAFER program to other vulnerable populations.

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes my presentation. Any questions?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I will go to the committee.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you, Anita, and thank you to your board of trade for, as always, a thorough presentation and touching on all the issues that impact the community. I think the strength of your presentation and the discussions that I've always had with the board of trade is that you do look at a comprehensive approach across social programs, across the economic situation.

I think your comments around child care and around K to 12 and the link that they have — with the economy, for example, of Surrey and of the province — are really important. So thank you for a very thorough presentation.

I just wondered, on the MSP, if you had discussions with your members about different models and different options. People have talked about the tax system, a payroll tax, other models that are across the country. Did you have a discussion around choosing this model?

**A. Huberman:** We did, and in fact, we did survey and engage our members, but the significant discussion took part with my finance and tax committee. We explored other examples that were happening across the province, bottom-line expenses, and some of the preamble on possible models and solutions is in your package. The Ontario model appealed to us, but again, it has to be a made-in-B.C. solution.

**J. Yap:** Thanks, Anita, for your presentation. The need for more housing and affordable housing is on a lot of people's minds, and there have been some announcements recently.

[1040]

One of the major issues is the supply side — the need for municipalities to have a process of approving projects to allow developers to build and perhaps be more amenable to increase density. What are the thoughts from your

organization, from Surrey Board of Trade, on finding a way for local government to approve these projects in a more efficient way?

**A. Huberman:** Certainly, that is a challenge. In October of last year, Surrey amended their official community plan to allow for higher density with an affordable housing component. In December, there is going to be some type of affordable housing strategy, just for Surrey itself, that will be rolled out. Metro Vancouver has that already in place.

I think, in terms of approval processes, there are some red-tape issues that we're facing and that we're working in collaboration, again, with the city on. There is room for improvement, definitely, on that front. We're working with the city on that and also with our development community, John.

**J. Yap:** Right. So the board of trade is at the table, advocating and working with the city and the development community.

**A. Huberman:** Yes. I sit on the city of Surrey's development committee. We dialogue in an ongoing way with our developers on the challenges they're facing, specifically, and liaise them with specific city staff to try to expedite these proposals.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any more questions?

Seeing none, Anita, always a pleasure. Thank you very much for appearing and presenting your views. It's timely, obviously. There are a lot of things being discussed out there right now around MSP and education. The list is ongoing. It's endless sometimes.

**A. Huberman:** Yes, you have a big job ahead of you. Thank you very much.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** We're just getting started. This is just week one. Thanks, Anita. Cheers.

Now we have Mr. Bryan Cox, the Mining Association of British Columbia.

Mr. Cox, good morning. Welcome. Ten minutes for the presentation. When time starts to get close, I'll give you a little wave, and you can conclude your thoughts. Then, of course, we'll go to the committee for their questions. When you're ready, the floor is yours.

**B. Cox:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. I very much appreciate the opportunity to be here on behalf of the Mining Association of B.C.

Again, I'm Bryan Cox. I'm the vice-president of corporate affairs for the Mining Association. As always, we will be submitting a written submission to the Finance Committee. Today I really wanted to come and take an opportunity to talk a little bit about where the indus-

try is at this moment in time and some of the high-level thoughts we have around Budget '17 moving forward.

First of all, the Mining Association of B.C. is the voice of mining in B.C. We've been that since 1901. We've been around a little while and have seen lots of cycles in the commodity markets and the growth of this province. In fact, as we all know, mining has been around since before we were a province. A foundational industry to this province.

We advocate for members, the operating mines in British Columbia and those proponents who have advanced projects. We're dealing with companies who are in the environmental assessment process, all the way through to mine reclamation. So a very broad and diverse membership of around 45 members, all the way from members like Teck to smaller junior companies, which allows us to advocate very broadly for the industry itself. We do that through a variety of means — obviously, interactions with government, interactions with the public, interactions through other business associations. We're very proud of our industry in British Columbia.

As most of you know... In fact, looking around at the membership here, all of you are from mining communities, whether you have operations or not. We're an industry that touches every region of this province. If you don't have an operation, you have suppliers in your communities. In fact, in Surrey, where we are right now, it's a huge hub of mining suppliers that provide services and products to our operations. Something we really encourage you to keep in mind as you make policy decisions is that mining truly does touch every region.

Recent statistics about mining. Obviously, as you know, the commodity cycles have not been positive. Our most recent statistics, as of 2015, show that mining revenues are down about 7 percent. Capital is down a whole bunch more, around 40 percent.

[1045]

Our payments to governments have remained stable — about half a billion dollars in mineral tax revenue. That doesn't take into effect the income taxes and other ancillary taxes that we pay as an industry and community contributions more broadly. So a very important foundational industry that's maintaining its contributions to government in that regard, although we are in tough times.

That's mostly because we mine metallurgical coal and copper. Those are our two main commodities in British Columbia. As I'm sure you all know, those have been very troubled over the last while, copper especially. Looking today, it's around \$2.18. Three years ago it was around \$4 a pound. We've seen a significant drop in pricing.

Metallurgical coal has seen the same, although we are seeing some encouraging views on the horizon. Prices have gone up. It'll be interesting to see if that sustains itself over the longer term, but they are going up. We've seen some exciting developments up in the northeast, where

three mines have been sold to a new operator and are looking to reopen — at least one of those mines in the short term in the northeast — which would be wonderful for those communities in the northeast of British Columbia.

As we move forward... We do have ten mines, currently, that are closed in British Columbia. They're on care and maintenance. That's about 2,000 direct jobs. That doesn't take into account the supplier jobs that are spun off from that, which are about 2 to 1, all of our studies show.

Cost pressures are key for us. That's really what we are looking at for Budget '17. We've appreciated, in the past, the recognition of our submissions by the Finance Committee. We've appreciated the fact that additional resources have been directed to the Ministry of Energy and Mines. We know that it's a small ministry as far as budget goes.

We are an industry that touches multiple ministries. We touch the Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations; Ministry of Energy and Mines. I could go on and on and on. What we really are advocating for at a high level is to ensure that there are adequate resources within government, appropriated to all of those ministries, to help support mining.

As I mentioned earlier, we cover the full gamut from environmental assessment through to permitting. It's something that... We're constantly in the review process in mining. We're unique in British Columbia. You go through an environmental assessment. A lot of people think you're done at that point. You're not. You go into mine permitting, and you do that through the Ministry of Energy and Mines and the Ministry of Environment through discharge. Then, as you want to make amendments to those permits, you need to go back to government. Mining's an industry that's constantly in conversation with government, and we need to ensure there are adequate resources there.

When it comes to costs that are applied to the industry, we are a global industry. We need to look at it that way. We're a price-taking industry. We sell our products at a fixed price. It doesn't matter if you produce it in Chile, in Australia or in British Columbia. Any costs that are additional in a jurisdiction affect the operations. When you're looking at things like the carbon tax and others...

We're very pleased to see that there has been a commitment to create a mechanism to protect trade-exposed industries. It's very, very important for our industry, so we encourage resources within Budget 2017 be devoted towards looking at how we develop that mechanism. It's very important for our industry as we look to compete with other jurisdictions like Chile and Australia, which are our direct competitors and have different cost structures. We're looking forward to seeing contributions to that in Budget 2017.

We also advocate and encourage the removal of the PST on electricity. It's something that's been talked about

by multiple stakeholders. The climate leadership team itself advocated for it. It's something we've been talking about for a long time. Power is the No. 2 cost, on average, at our operations in the mining industry. It's a huge cost. So anything we can do to mitigate that.

As we know, mining operations can defer some of their costs right now. That was absolutely necessary to keep our operations open. That is a commercial transaction that was done. All of those deferrals will be paid back with commercial interest. It's been very helpful for our operations, to keep those open, especially on the copper side.

To sum up, we really advocate to government to view this industry as a global industry. When looking at making investments in Budget 2017, we need to ensure that there's cost certainty for operators and proponents but also certainty on the regulatory side so that there's a clear path to a decision for proponents and operators as they move forward in the process.

[1050]

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to any questions. Again, we will be sending a written submission to support this presentation.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Terrific. Thank you very much, Mr. Cox. I appreciate it.

**J. Yap:** Thank you, Bryan, for your presentation.

You mentioned that ten mines in the province are in maintenance or shutdown — 2,000 employees. What would be the status of the employees? Does your association track? Have some gone on to other employment? What's the general situation?

**B. Cox:** Yeah, that's something we're currently tracking. We're actually working on a labour market information report to do exactly that, to try and figure out where employees have gone, and if they've gone other places, how we get them back.

Again, as we're training employees, how do we make sure those skills are transferable? And how do we ensure that we create an industry that's sustainable? Knowing that we have a commodity cycle-driven industry, how do we ensure that we retain as many of our employees as we can? We're currently undergoing that work and, hopefully, will have that later in the fall, actually, John.

**J. Yap:** Yes. I'm mindful that it affects primarily rural communities. At the same time, the overall employment rate has actually edged up in B.C., so I'm wondering if some of these folks have found employment, transferred their skills to other areas that might be needing people.

**B. Cox:** Yeah, we're very interested in learning that, especially with the recent news up in the northeast of B.C. Hopefully, things go as they look to be going. We're going to need some employees up there very quickly — and,

frankly, hundreds of them. So we need to get a sense of how that's going to work, because we hope that they're still there to come back and work in our industry.

**S. Gibson:** Notwithstanding the current malaise, which you've described well — the metallurgical and in copper — I think there's a bit of optimism I find, too, as I talk to people in the mining community. Maybe you could articulate that a little bit. You know, gold is looming out there, and of course everybody gets excited about gold. Maybe just share a little bit about some of the exciting things that you see on the horizon for your industry.

**B. Cox:** I appreciate the opportunity to do that, because as we move forward in our economy, as we transition to a lower-carbon economy, mining becomes even more important. The copper that goes into electric cars to the steel-making coal required for wind turbines, solar panels and public infrastructure — all those products are mined right here in British Columbia. So we're an industry that's very necessary.

However, it's a commodity-driven industry. That has a lot to do with it. Gold has been up. We do have gold producers here. With metallurgical coal moving up quite significantly in the last while, there is some optimism. Copper is really where everyone's looking. We produce quite a bit of copper here in British Columbia, so everyone's really watching that commodity to see where it goes. Again, being such a global industry, it's driven by multiple factors.

What we need to do in British Columbia is ensure we have the regulatory system and all of the infrastructure in place to ensure that we're ready for this next upswing and to ensure that it's sustainable.

**S. Gibson:** Good. Thank you.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your presentation.

You mentioned the processes — the environmental reviews and the steps that are often taken. One of the challenges I hear from your association and from mining companies, as well as First Nations, are the issues of: what does consultation mean, and what does it look like?

I know there have been some.... I hear positive discussions going on around looking at supporting companies and supporting First Nations and being able to go through those consultations. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that.

**B. Cox:** Sure, happy to. Obviously we're very proud of our partnerships with First Nations in the province. We're one of the largest employers of First Nations in the province so it's wonderful partnerships that are formed at operations, and clarity regarding the relationships is incredibly important to us.

The work that the province has done around economic and community development agreements around sharing some of the resource revenues has been helpful. Also for us, it's around having the conversations with First Nations on what consultation means.

We've just gone through a regulatory process, actually, on the code review changes that, for the first time ever, directly involved First Nations representatives. That was a really powerful process. You had industry, labour and First Nations sitting around a table and actually developing and consulting with government on changes to the regulatory structure. I think that really provided an amazing opportunity to build dialogue between First Nations and industry, and we're building on that.

[1055]

Also, the B.C. Business Council and the Assembly of First Nations in B.C. just recently signed a memorandum of understanding, which we're very supportive of, around discussing how to get to economic reconciliation and setting some steps to get to that point. So we're very, very encouraged by that work and supportive of that.

There are multiple conversations. Of course, clarity around consultation from government is obviously incredibly important. So there are multiple conversations occurring. We're in all of them, and we're very much looking forward to continuing them.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any further questions?

Seeing none, Mr. Cox, thank you very much. I appreciate you taking the time to present and share your views.

**B. Cox:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I appreciate it. Take care.

Next we have Karin Litzcke.

Welcome. Good morning. As I've mentioned to previous speakers, you have ten minutes for the presentation. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes left, and then we can go to the committee for questions. If you're ready, the floor is yours.

**K. Litzcke:** Thank you. Good morning. There's a book coming around, I think, that has, at the beginning, the text of my presentation. The tabs are all the footnotes that appear throughout. I don't know that I'll have time to discuss them, but hopefully, you can look through them later with the lens that I've provided.

The title of my presentation is "Why is There no Lawyer for the Kids and Parents? Legal Representation of Family Interests in Public School Law."

I'm here to put forward a proposal to create a new role. I believe it would be a new statutory office of the Legislature to represent the legal interests of children and parents relative to the public school system. As I envision it, such an office would have a duty to keep parents and

children informed as to what their legal rights, duties and freedoms are as events unfold in the schooling arena, and would have the duty to employ lawyers to act when those interests are under threat.

There are two kinds of stakeholders in the public school system: paid and unpaid. The paid stakeholders are inherently more powerful because they run the system to begin with, while we unpaid stakeholders can withhold neither our children nor our money. My assertion is that the power of paid stakeholder interests is so disparately advantaged that the task of defending unpaid stakeholder rights is now beyond the reach of any individual citizen affected.

The paid stakeholders are diverse, integrated into the system and interconnected. They include economic, social and labour interest groups. They have no direct legal duties to the public and cannot be held answerable for the costs or the outcomes of their work. All the legal liability for their work lies in the democratic governance structure, which paid stakeholders, however, hold answerable for how well it serves them, not how well it serves the public interest or sustains the rule of law.

When they are not suited with government action, paid stakeholders take government to court. In the courts, law is made by those who litigate. Since the courts are effectively out of reach of unpaid stakeholders, the framework of law that governs public schooling is developing in such a way that children's and parents' legal interests are invisible to the courts.

I can attest to that, because I have spent the last five years trying to have children's and parents' legal territory recognized by the courts in school law cases. In the ongoing labour dispute, which is en route to the Supreme Court of Canada, I made three self-represented applications for intervenor status to advance parent and child interests and one for leave to appeal, all of which were denied.

Prior to that, I made submissions to the B.C. Labour Relations Board during the 2011-2012 Teachers Federation strike to ask that the essential services order respect the boundaries of child and parent legal territory. There, too, I was unsuccessful.

My issue is not really that I was unsuccessful in these applications. That happens. The problem is that I was the only one in court for this constituency. With no legal knowledge and insufficient resources to hire a lawyer, I was all that the 500,000 children of this province and their parents or guardians, the individuals most concerned with school organization policy, had in court on their behalf. And because my energy did not extend to applying at the Supreme Court of Canada level, the case is before that court with no representation for children or parents or guardians.

Yet as materials preceding the 2002 enactment of Bill 28 made clear, including submissions to this very committee in the 2000 round of hearings, this legislation was passed as the relief measure for parents and children

from the oppressive constraints of the provincial collective agreement legislated into force in 1998 — legislation that, I submit, was itself illegal and that merited a public interest court challenge. Instead, the public sought a political solution.

[1100]

Similarly, before the Labour Relations Board, no matter how intrusive to children and parents the matters before the board are, our interests have no dedicated legal representation. There have been and continue to be issues, beyond counting, that substantively engage the legal jurisdiction of parents and children in which no one acts for us, and we do not have the capacity to act for ourselves.

In 2005, a labour arbitration concerned with the parent-teacher interview proceeded in court with no counsel for parents. Only the sole dissenting judge considered public rights.

In 2013, eight years later, a similar decision was bound by the 2005 matter, although two concurring judges noted that the courts needed to see more cases brought from other perspectives in order to establish the boundaries of teachers' freedom of speech.

In 2011, a party with special interests was able to pursue its claim in the name of selected parents and children.

In 2016, parents are stereotyped in teaching resources in what may well be a discriminatory manner, portrayed as racist bigots, something that most parents will never see and have not the remotest chance of ever challenging.

Indeed, the placement of children into classes was being secreted into the bargaining arena and arbitrated or litigated there without public representation as early as 1994. In seeking to shape the school system, paid stakeholders have the structural advantages of organization, including communications infrastructure, institutional memory, generational continuity and the capacity to command resources for public and political influence.

It should be clear by now that I'm not talking about parent voice or opinion nor about an advocate in the political sense but a legal force able to act — indeed, with a duty to act — for a group that is uniquely unable to defend its interests at present.

Unpaid stakeholders are not only disadvantaged relative to paid stakeholder groups but also actively opposed by them. There was a time when the ability of children and parents to assert their rights and freedoms was innate to the local school's model, even when mothers did not have the franchise. Answerability and responsiveness of decision-makers and teachers could be ensured through the many informal interactions that occurred in school communities.

Then attendance became mandatory, and then teachers collectivized. Then teacher training moved from the normal schools to universities. Then schools became larger. Then districts were consolidated. Then there was the advent of public sector collective bargaining. And then a large portion of decision-making was moved from the

local to the provincial level. Then the education consultancy arose. The marketing of materials, technology, testing and programs became a big business.

In short, it got complicated. At some point in this 150-year history, a line was crossed, and children and parents became legally disadvantaged to a point that is not defensible socially, politically or, I would submit, legally.

Is the nature of the institution still such that compulsory attendance is consistent with the charter? Who will explore, through litigation, where that boundary is?

The Office of the B.C. Representative for Children and Youth does not fulfil this function, but Ms. Turpel-Lafond has drawn attention to the gap in representation that children, particularly, have in the legal framework of schooling. However, her comments pitted labour victory specifically against educational outcomes, not family legal rights as a whole.

It is my considered submission — made with the qualifier that I am not a lawyer myself — that such a role may be constitutionally required, given that school enrolment is compulsory under the B.C. School Act. However beneficial we believe school programming to be, compulsory schooling is a regulatory, not service, function of government. As a compulsory framework, it is inherently constraining of civil liberties. Some conditions must be met for compulsory enrolment to remain a justifiable constraint under section 1 of the Charter. I submit that a dedicated legal office immune from political considerations is the only realistic option at present.

That concludes my prepared portion. You have that text in case me reading it was not that easy to listen to. I'm sorry. I was concerned about the time. I didn't exactly note my start time, but if you'd like me to zip through the exhibits, I could explain their relevance quickly.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** You've got a little more than a minute left. You're more than welcome to go into the question period time — just fewer questions will be asked as a result. I'll leave that up to you.

**K. Litzcke:** Okay. Should I ask first if anybody has questions that they'd rather start with?

[1105]

**R. Austin:** I'm just wondering. Your basic premise is that parents and children don't have a legal role in the education system. Why is it that the parent advisory body, BCCPAC, isn't here and you're not sort of standing with all of them? Like, why have not more parents joined you? Are you a single parent all by yourself and the other parents don't agree with you, or what's going on there?

**K. Litzcke:** That's a huge question. If one looks at... It's about power, really. The PAC structure is kind of interesting, and the history if it. There's a book called *Parents and Schools: The 150-Year Struggle for Control in American*

*Education*. It's an American book, but it's very interesting. The author talks about how parents are actually kind of a disruptive and demanding force for schools and that the role of the PAC system is more to sort and arrange them, I think his terminology is, and — I would also say — to groom and recruit than it is to represent parents.

Again, I made the distinction also between voice and opinion and legal rights. I think after 150 years of compulsory schooling, we really are not clear anymore on what our legal status is. Opinion is a diverse thing, and the BCCPAC will move as it will, depending on what influences work on it at any time, who's in the leadership role and so on and so forth.

What I'd like to do — and what I've been trying to do in court and what I would like somebody who actually has the expertise to do — is just to strip that away and look at what we all have in common. Never mind which part of the political infrastructure we are allied with or believe in — just strictly our legal interests and what the boundaries are.

The other interesting thing that's happened over a 150-year period is that not only has school law evolved, but family law has evolved too. In school law, labour law and family law sort of collide, and that boundary needs to be navigated and clarified.

**J. Yap:** Thanks for your presentation. Sort of following along Robin's question, you've developed... I mean, you say you're not a lawyer, but you've developed some, obviously, strong interests and have done a lot of research into this.

I was interested in one of your comments on line from about a year ago where you talked about the number of years of schooling. It's longer than it needs to be, and why does it have to be 13 years, K to 12? It could be compressed.

I've heard other opinions along those lines. You've obviously thought about that particular issue, and other issues. Have you compared notes with other like-minded people — you know, the idea of many voices expressing, sort of, similar themes?

**K. Litzcke:** Very much so. The Internet was just getting started when I first sent my children to school, and so I fairly quickly became connected with other parents. It's part of what shaped my thinking over the years.

One thing I will clarify about the duration issue is that I think it's not just about compressing it. It's about looking at what portion should actually be compulsory, and that can be a different number from what portion could be publically funded and available. That can be a different number still from how many years of education most children — or most people, because this stretches into adulthood for many people, me included — actually end up having.

[1110]

It's really about this compulsory issue. I think we forget that. It's one of the reasons I put section 2 of the School Act in as exhibit 15. I think we talk so much about the benefits of education, but it's not education that's compulsory; it's school and enrolment and attendance.

**J. Yap:** If I may, Chair. Earlier this week, at another hearing — it might have been in Vancouver; you may want to check it out — there was another witness who was all by herself. She had an interesting perspective on.... She's from West Vancouver, I recall. If you're interested, there's at least one other person who has testified before our committee with an interesting perspective on education and how it has evolved. You may want to reach out to her.

**K. Litzcke:** Thank you. I actually know her, and I'm aware of her presentation. Yeah, there are some really interesting and exciting ideas around school financing, around school law. I think it's really about the narrative that occurs, not only in public but also in government. It's partly, to me, about who controls that narrative.

What I've sort of tried to come to is the strictly legalistic view, because ultimately the Legislature is our law-making body. That's why I think it's a really important start point for the analysis in terms of what constraints are placed on people and what rights and supports there are for us.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I'm glad we went to questions, because that ends our time. Anyhow, thank you very much for taking the time out of your day to come and present.

**K. Litzcke:** Oh, my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** It's very much appreciated, and it's a unique perspective, a unique view we haven't heard before.

**K. Litzcke:** All right. I hope it's of assistance.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** It all is of assistance. Everything is. Thank you very much again.

Okay, next we have the Kwantlen Faculty Association — Gillian Dearle.

Ms. Dearle, good morning. Welcome. Very glad for you to be here. Ten minutes for your presentation. I'll try to give you a wave when time is getting short, and we can go to the committee for questions. The floor is yours.

**G. Dearle:** Sounds good. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with the committee about priorities for the 2017-2018 provincial budget.

My name is Gillian Dearle. I'm the vice-president, negotiations for the Kwantlen Faculty Association. The

Kwantlen Faculty Association represents almost 1,000 faculty who teach and work at four of Kwantlen Polytechnic University's campuses located south of the Fraser.

I'd like to begin by telling you a little bit about our institution. I do this every year. I'm sure you're familiar with it, but I will proceed. KPU was established by the B.C. government 35 years ago. It was originally a community college, which became a university college, and in 2008, it became a polytechnic university. Our enrolment base has grown steadily over those 35 years and now sits at almost 20,000 full- and part-time students.

One important feature of our institution is that it's the only open-access public post-secondary university in the South Fraser region west of Abbotsford. Given the growth in this region, the increase in the number of eligible students in our area has been and will continue to be significant.

As a special purpose teaching university, Kwantlen Polytechnic University provides students with a comprehensive range of post-secondary education options leading to degrees, diplomas, certificates and completed apprenticeships. Kwantlen also provides avenues for adult learners to re-engage in post-secondary learning by completing their adult graduation Dogwood diploma or simply by getting the necessary prerequisites for entry into different streams within the public post-secondary education system.

We know that public education is a public good, but in our province, we are seeing that public education is becoming unaffordable for the citizens of British Columbia. The largest single investment the B.C. government makes in post-secondary education, and that's the per-student operating grants, has declined by 20 percent since 2001 when adjusted for inflation.

The decline in funding means that colleges, institutes and universities are forced to seek other sources of funding to make up the shortfall. Most often, that other source is our students and their families. Tuition fees have increased by almost 400 percent since 2001.

Minister Wilkinson has stated that 78 percent of future jobs will require post-secondary education, yet attaining a post-secondary education has never been more difficult.

[1115]

Consider the following changes in tuition policy. Adult basic education offered at post-secondary institutions was tuition-free in 1998. In 2002, tuition fees were imposed, and then in 2008, tuition fees were abolished on adult basic education courses in both K to 12 and post-secondary after Campus 2020 recommendations. In December 2014, the provincial government announced that post-secondary institutions would be allowed to charge tuition fees for adult basic education courses.

While the adult upgrading grant provides some tuition relief, it is available to a limited population, and frankly, it creates another barrier that is difficult for vulnerable populations to navigate. Additionally, English-language pro-

grams for domestic students in B.C. were tuition-free until 2014 because they were funded through a \$22 million federal transfer payment. This transfer payment ceased, and the ministry chose not to continue the funding.

At Kwantlen Polytechnic University, about 23 percent of our graduates have, at some point in their academic history, taken an academic- and career-advancement course or adult basic education or an English-language course. Charging tuition for adult basic education and English-language studies will clearly prevent many citizens in our region from acquiring the language skills they need to obtain the post-secondary education that will allow them to be successful in B.C.'s economy.

While part of the funding problem is the decrease in the provincial operating grant, another funding-related issue is the government's prescriptive mandate in the skills-for-jobs blueprint. The blueprint seems to view post-secondary education simply as a job-training vehicle, while devaluing its critical role in developing engaged citizens. The blueprint mandates institutions to direct up to 25 percent of their already inadequate operating grants to programs that support the top 100 jobs identified by the ministry. This mandate, combined with the funding squeeze, means that institutions have reduced or even eliminated other programs such as university transfer, adult basic education and English-language studies.

In terms of government's funding formula, post-secondary institutions in B.C. are not quite equitably funded, or funded to meet the needs of their regions. As a specific example, for every 1,000 residents in this region, Kwantlen has been funded to serve only about ten students. B.C.'s other regional post-secondary institutions, on average, are funded to serve 20 students per 1,000 residents. And in areas of real need, like adult basic education and English-language training, KPU has long been funded to serve only a quarter of the number of students who need these programs, relative to the funding that the rest of B.C.'s other regional post-secondary institutions receive in their operating grants.

Finally, in making the case to increase funding for post-secondary institutions, it needs to be pointed out that doing so, improving the funding, will allow institutions to meet the expectations of their mandate letters. The provincial government's annual mandate letter to post-secondary institutions stipulates how the institution is to meet its statutory mandate.

In the 2016-17 mandate letter to Kwantlen Polytechnic University, the institution is directed to "provide adult basic education, career, technical, trade and academic programs leading to certificates, diplomas, baccalaureate and master's degrees, English as a second language and adult special education programs that meet the needs of its designated region." This same mandate letter states: "Government is committed to providing support to help students succeed while, at the same time, making sure

that funding is focused on front-line education. B.C. has taken great strides in making post-secondary education affordable and accessible for students of all backgrounds."

We disagree. The government has done just the opposite. The statement is reminiscent of George Orwell's 1984: "War is peace; love is hate." We can now add: "Cutting is spending; a barrier is access." In fact, the B.C. government has made post-secondary education less affordable, and the government has made it less accessible by allowing fees for adult basic education and English-language studies.

We suggest the following recommendations to address the funding shortfalls identified, as well as the discrepancy between what the Ministry of Advanced Education states it is committed to and what it funds.

[1120]

On behalf of the Kwantlen Faculty Association, I urge the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to please consider the following recommendations. First, to reinstate tuition-free English-as-a-second-language, adult basic education and adult special education programs at all our post-secondary institutions and to make an ongoing commitment to provide an envelope of funds designated specifically for developmental programs.

Second, to improve funding support for students, both in terms of a revitalized student grant program and through the introduction of interest-free student loans to ensure that students can complete programs and degrees in a timely way and without the burden of a heavy debt load.

Finally, to revise the funding formula so that it better responds to the cost pressures faced by B.C.'s post-secondary institutions. Specifically, we once again recommend a comprehensive, consultative review of funding to address regional inequities and core funding needs for B.C.'s public colleges, institutes and regional universities.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider these recommendations in your deliberations.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much — appreciate it.

I will go to the committee for questions.

**D. Ashton:** Thank you very much for your presentation. Just a favour to ask. Could you go back to the start of your presentation when you said that costs have appreciated this much — I think you said 400 percent — and the year span?

**G. Dearle:** No problem. There were two statements. One is that the operating grants have declined by 20 percent since 2001.

**D. Ashton:** Those costs, though.

**G. Dearle:** The second is that tuition fees have increased by almost 400 percent since 2001.

**D. Ashton:** Since 2001? Could you do me one favour? I'm asking this sincerely. Can you give me the costs associated with faculty costs, instruction costs, in that period of time?

**G. Dearle:** You know, I actually don't have that number on me. I do know — I have a number on me — that in that time, the costs have certainly not increased commensurate with that of the growth in administration or the shift in administrative salaries. But that's another matter.

**D. Ashton:** Well, it's not to me. So if you could give that to me.... In the future, if you could, when you come up — and we have seen you here before — I would like to see it. As I've said all the way along, it's a multi-hand approach to funding and costs, so I would like to see some of these other figures, if at all possible — just to pass them along.

**G. Dearle:** Certainly. And other figures to take into consideration are capital expenditures, administrative costs, a change in the way the university looks.... I think you'll find, depending on the numbers that we send on, the cost of instructors is certainly not where the greatest growth has occurred.

**D. Ashton:** Gillian, I'm not trying to single anybody out. I just want all the facts when that comes in — please. Thank you.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** And if you are to submit any more information to the committee, please make sure it's before October 14 at midnight. That's the cutoff for all submissions and additional information to come forward to us.

**G. Dearle:** Noted — thank you.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Just a thank-you for your presentation. As we've said, we've had others who've echoed the issues that you've raised and are continuing to bring them forward. Particularly, we're hearing from people about the regional disparities around the funding formula. I think that's something we heard consistently last year as well.

There are regional disparities, but there's also a complete lack of logic around some areas — why some universities and colleges get some funding, and some don't. I appreciate you raising that again, because I think it's an important piece for us to pay attention to. I'm sure some of it is historic. I'm sure some of it is grants that were layered on. But I think it points to the importance of reviewing the formula, so thank you for raising that again.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Of course, ABE and English lan-

guage training has been a fairly common theme this week, so a lot of those questions have been asked and answered.

**S. Gibson:** In my years of teaching university students, one of the ironies that I found — and I'd be interested in your comment — was that the students who were struggling the most financially, and had to work their heads off, actually often did better than the ones that were pampered, had a lot of extra money and were taken care of. It was their money, and they had to work hard. They'd work flat out and take all these courses.

[1125]

At the same time, some of my students that seemed to be doing really well financially, in a comfortable home situation where they were pampered, tended not to do quite so well. Now, this is anecdotal, I admit. There are no surveys involved. But I found that interesting. It almost seems ironic.

I look at my own life. As a student, I struggled financially and seem to have stumbled my way through a bit of education. So I'd be interested in your comments on that. You, I think.... I see you teach English, so you're a student of the human condition.

**G. Dearle:** Well, thank you for that opportunity to speak to that matter. In my experience teaching those students who have had to work extremely hard to fund their attendance at school, many of them have had to miss classes because of work shifts. Many of them have had to drop out. Many of them suffer extreme stress. So there's a dark side to that. It's the cost to delayed education.

I rarely see students take five courses a semester, a full course load — because of the cost. It's because they are working part-time or full-time and doing part-time studies on top of that and, of course, taking care of family. Or if they are a child in a family, many of them are working to pay for their post-secondary education. So it's taking them longer, and they pay a personal price for that.

I've unfortunately seen some students drop out, and some of them just suffer extreme stress and anxiety because of that situation. So there's another side to that picture. I wanted to share that with you.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** My own daughter was going to UBCO a couple of years ago, working full-time and paying a mortgage. She had one semester with four courses. Dad heard about it just about every day. It can be pretty stressful. There's no doubt about it. But nevertheless, I....

**A Voice:** Did she succeed?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Yes, she did. She made it. She got her degree.

Anyway, thank you very much for coming forward. If there are no other questions.... We do appreciate you taking the time and sharing your views.

**G. Dearle:** Thank you all very much.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. Do we have Ms. Stuart on the phone?

**S. Stuart:** Ms. Stuart is on the phone. Hello.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Ms. Stuart, how are you?

**S. Stuart:** I'm good. How are you?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I'm very well, thank you. We'll try not to cut you off.

Welcome, B.C. Gaming Industry Association — Ernest Yee, Chuck Keeling, and Shiera Stuart on the phone. Ten minutes for your presentation. I'll try to... I don't know. Shiera, you're not going to see me wave and give you two minutes before the end. But nevertheless....

**S. Stuart:** That's okay. I'm speaking first, so they can worry about it.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. I will again welcome you. At two minutes to go, we'll just conclude thoughts, and then we'll go to the committee for questions. The floor is yours.

**S. Stuart:** Perfect. Thank you.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Shiera Stuart, and I'm the director of government relations at Gateway Casinos and Entertainment as well as chairperson of the B.C. Gaming Industry Association. With me today, in person, are Chuck Keeling, vice-president of stakeholder relations and responsible gaming at Great Canadian Gaming Corp. and vice-chairperson of the B.C. Gaming Industry Association; and Ernest Yee, the executive director of our association.

This is the first talk that the B.C. Gaming Industry Association has presented to the Finance Committee, and we are honoured to have the opportunity. The B.C. Gaming Industry Association — BCGIA — was formed in 2015 to act as the unified voice of private sector gaming operators in the province. The aim of the association is to provide leadership for the B.C. gaming industry on behalf of private sector gaming operators while enhancing relations, education and advocacy through involvement with community stakeholders, government, media and the public.

British Columbia's private sector gaming operators play a significant role in the provincial economy and their local communities. BCGIA represents 14 of the 16 private sector gaming operators in B.C. Our members manage 40 gaming properties in the province and directly employ over 8,300 people, paying wages and benefits of \$267 million and property taxes of over \$10 million in 2014.

Gaming operators generated revenue of \$1.8 billion to the B.C. Lottery Corporation — BCLC — in 2014-15. BCLC delivered \$1.25 billion in net income to the provincial government, which helped to fund health care, education and other important programs and services in B.C. The gaming industry accounts for approximately 2.5 percent of the province's annual budget, generating more revenue for the provincial government than forestry, mining or liquor.

The provincial government shares gaming revenue with host local governments. Local governments that host gaming facilities, casinos and community gaming centres receive a 10 percent share of net gaming income, which is paid after commissions and BCLC operating expenses are deducted.

So \$96 million was dispersed amongst 31 host local governments in 2014-15 to fund programs and projects determined by these municipalities, such as the Greater Victoria Library, Calvin Kruk Centre for the Arts in Dawson Creek, the South Okanagan Events Centre in Penticton, Percy Perry Stadium in Coquitlam, the Anvil Centre in New Westminster and the Richmond Olympic Oval, just to name a few.

BCGIA members manage casinos, community gaming centres, bingo and horse racing, as well as non-gaming amenities, such as food and beverage facilities, show theatres, conference centres and hotels. Private sector gaming operators invested more than \$1.8 billion in B.C. from 2005 to 2014 and continue to invest in their properties to ensure they are best of class.

The gaming industry has created directly and indirectly over 37,000 jobs in the province. The gaming policy and enforcement branch, GPEB, of the provincial Ministry of Finance, regulates the industry to ensure a fair and safe environment and the provision of responsible gambling programs, while BCLC conducts and manages gambling and contracts private sector gaming operators to provide gaming services to British Columbia.

I will now pass it over to Ernest Yee.

**E. Yee:** BCGIA members are strongly committed to preventing money laundering at their properties. Gaming operators in B.C. adhere to an anti-money-laundering, AML, protocol set by BCLC in accordance with federal anti-money-laundering requirements.

FINTRAC, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, audits BCLC's AML program and the adherence of gaming operators to that program to ensure the implementation of effective AML procedures at gaming properties. GPEB may also review some aspects of the AML program.

B.C. casinos are legally required to follow the same rigorous anti-money-laundering protocol as banks. All cash transaction of \$10,000 or more and suspicious transactions of any amount are reported through to FINTRAC. Casinos must also complete a large cash disbursement

report for any payout of \$10,000 or more resulting from chip redemption, withdrawals from gaming accounts, payment of winnings and other similar transactions. Financial institutions are responsible for over 97 percent of large cash transactions in B.C. reported to FINTRAC. Casinos account for approximately 2 percent.

BCGIA members are also strongly committed to providing socially responsible gaming entertainment. Private sector gaming operators play an active role in the delivery of responsible gambling programs in partnership with BCLC and GPEB. Nearly three-quarters of adults in B.C. have participated in at least one gambling activity in the past 12 months. According to the *2014 British Columbia Problem Gambling Prevalence Study* released by the provincial government, nearly 97 percent of British Columbians who gamble do so safely.

For the majority of the population, gambling is an entertainment option, while effective programs and resources are available for the small percentage of people who have difficulties with their gambling behaviours. GameSense centres are interactive information kiosks located within casinos, which provide information on responsible play, odds of winning, gambling myths and facts, risk factors and where to find help for problem gambling. They are staffed by GameSense advisers, who are able to connect with patrons on the gaming floor. GameSense advisers are contracted through GPEB and managed by BCLC.

[1135]

All gaming operators in B.C. take part in the RG Check certification process. RG Check is an accreditation program created by the Responsible Gambling Council, RGC, and is based on RGC's responsible gambling index standards. These standards represent RGC's evaluation of efforts by gaming operators to reduce the risk of problem gambling among patrons.

The province also provides a problem gambling help line and free counselling and treatment for those who need assistance. The voluntary self-exclusion program is one of the most important tools for assisting the small percentage of individuals who are problem gamblers. This program allows an individual to voluntarily exclude himself or herself from all casino properties in the province for a set period of time and offers counselling support. BCGIA members strongly support the province's responsible gambling programs.

Now over to Chuck Keeling.

**C. Keeling:** Through the community gaming grant program, the provincial government distributed \$135 million of gaming revenue to over 5,000 charitable and community organizations in 2014-15. Community gaming grants are provided to non-profit organizations throughout B.C. to support arts and culture, sports for youth and people with a disability, public safety, human and social services, parent advisory councils and district parent advisory councils.

In addition to community gaming grants, private sector gaming operators donated over \$1.2 million directly to hundreds of charitable and community organizations across the province. They also provided the use of their facilities to community groups for events, and their employees volunteered countless hours to support local charities.

The B.C. model for the gaming industry is one of the most profitable for a provincial government in Canada. B.C.'s return is only surpassed by Alberta and only because Alberta has video lottery terminals, similar to slot machines, in restaurants, bars and lounges operating across that province. B.C. is able to realize such a big return, largely by paying private sector gaming operators, like us, some of the lowest operating commissions in North America.

The current commission model pays private sector operators about 30 percent of gaming revenue generated at a facility. There is also a reimbursement program to encourage capital investment in gaming properties. This commission model was established 20 years ago when there were far fewer gaming facilities in B.C.

The marketplace is now mature. It's very important for the provincial government, through their management of the marketplace, to allow private sector gaming operators the chance to generate an adequate return on investment so that they have an incentive to continue to invest and improve their facilities, which will create more jobs and generate more revenue for the province.

The members of the B.C. Gaming Industry Association are proud to support and be active members of the local communities where they live and work. They're also proud to provide socially responsible gaming entertainment and non-gaming amenities that provide good jobs and contribute to the B.C. economy.

The gaming industry has been operating successfully here in B.C. for 20 years and looks forward to the next 20 years of creating jobs and economic growth.

We'd be pleased to take any questions.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much.

**J. Yap:** Thanks, Chuck and Ernest and Shiera, for your presentation. I certainly appreciate the economic contribution of the sector — revenues to government.

You've touched on the responsible gaming side, and you mention that the self-exclusion program is the most important tool. Could you comment a little further? Do you track the number of people who have self-excluded themselves? How does that work?

**S. Stuart:** Chuck, do you want to take this question?

**C. Keeling:** Sure, no problem. It's a good question.

I think first, for context, the voluntary self-exclusion program is one component of a suite of programs. In

other words, the VSE program on its own isn't necessarily going to be, let me say, effective. Somebody who self-bars and registers through the VSE program.... It's incumbent upon that person to take it upon themselves to seek counselling, family support, etc. If they're able to do that, in the vast majority of cases, statistically proven, the VSE program works.

The BCLC manages that program. We register for those individuals on site, either with a GameSense adviser — who's an independent, third-party body whose sole purpose is to help in those situations — or with our staff at our various facilities who are trained to be able to undertake those challenging and awkward conversations.

In the province.... This is a BCLC number, so I'm not sure it's exact. It's about 8,000 individuals that are on the VSE program. The period of time that they can self-bar is from six months to three years.

[1140]

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your presentation, and thank you for the work to come together as an association. I know that's not always easy — to bring diverse groups together and to bring private industry together into an association. But for these kinds of conversations, I think it certainly is much more efficient and an opportunity to be able to talk to you as an association across individual businesses.

Just to follow up on the issue of problem gaming. One of the issues that I'm certainly hearing more about in my community, and I imagine other communities, is the issue of seniors and dementia, and some issues, some very high-profile cases, have come forward.

I just wondered whether the association is looking at how those kinds of conversations can occur with facilities, because I think a large portion of it is just awareness — awareness for staff, awareness for things to look out for. I know there are lots of associations — dementia associations, Alzheimer's, the seniors advocate — who would be opportunities to be able to provide that kind of education just to raise the awareness of the challenges that we're starting to see.

**S. Stuart:** Thanks, Carole. Great question. I'll take this one.

First of all, that really is a terrific question, and I think that your suggestion about working with some of the seniors groups like the dementia or Alzheimer's association is a good one and something that we at the association should look into, as we have not already.

What I can tell you is that all the various operators, the 14 operators, who are part of the BCGIA have their own programs that they do on site as well as programs that are put into place by BCLC, which includes the GameSense and the voluntary self-exclusion program that Chuck mentioned.

I certainly believe that we can do more, and you raise a very good point about working with seniors groups. If you'd like, I definitely can follow up on that and then follow up with you at a later time, because it's certainly something that the association can look at more in depth.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Great. Thank you. We've certainly found that.... From our MLA's office, we've done some community workshops with the Alzheimer's association around dementia awareness for people, because it's not something that everyone has experience with. I appreciate the willingness.

**S. Stuart:** I really appreciate the suggestion. Thank you.

**C. Keeling:** I will add that the B.C. Lottery Corporation is undertaking to develop a senior-specific program around responsible and problem gambling, as well as ethnic-specific programs.

**S. Gibson:** Your self-exclusion program is excellent, so I want to honour you guys for that. Very good.

My quick question.... The vast majority of your transactions are cash. What are the implications of that for security? My understanding is that most of the transactions are cash. I'm not sure of that, but I think so. Can you comment on that a little bit?

**S. Stuart:** Ernest or Chuck, do you want to take that one?

**C. Keeling:** No trouble.

It's an excellent question because this is an industry that for decades, regardless of jurisdiction, has been cash-dependent. Like many other industries, we are trying to move away from cash, for a whole number of reasons. Just in terms of good business practice, it's more efficient.

Obviously, as we touched upon, from the notion — and I think that's the important term — that someone can attempt to launder funds through a casino.... That is a different issue that I do want to come back to in a moment.

We are trying to move to a more efficient system, whereby our players do not have to be wholly dependent on bringing cash into the facilities. With that in mind, we recently — through the BCLC and through the gaming policy and enforcement branch as the regulatory body within the Ministry of Finance — have allowed wire transfers, as an example, from Canadian-based banks. We're hoping that we're able to do that with international wire transfers as well. So we are moving towards that.

In addition, customers can actually open up fund accounts within our facility. They can actually keep funds within our facility to play against. We don't issue credit. From a responsible gaming perspective, we don't do that.

[1145]

As it relates to the money-laundering issue, and Ernest cited this in his comments, we can't underscore this enough. The AML program, the anti-money-laundering regime that we are mandated and regulated to follow, is as robust as any bank down the street. So the notion that money launderers can run rampant through B.C. casinos.... By extension, you could employ the logic that they can do that through banks.

And as Ernest cited, the vast amount of reporting related to large cash transactions or suspicious transactions goes through financial institutions versus casinos. We are very confident that the anti-money-laundering program that we adhere to both federally and provincially is very effective.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Could we take this question on notice, Robin, please? We're completely burned out.

**R. Austin:** It's a very quick question, but yes, we can take it on notice, and you can get back to us. For the purposes of our deliberation, your main ask is to change the current commission model, which currently pays around 30 percent of gaming revenue. You'll also recognize that there are incentives or tax rebates, I guess, when you do some capital expenditures.

My question to you is: what number are you looking at in terms of the change from 30 percent? Can you be specific to that? Obviously, you don't have to answer this right now, but you maybe could send us some more information back and give the rationale.

I don't want to get into the details of each company, but your rationale is that you need to be able to make a better return on your investment. Obviously, those of us who represent all the communities around B.C. have seen a really great expansion over the last several years in gaming with the current proposal. So give us a little bit more detail as to why you think.... This 30 percent figure has worked very well. Why is it not going to work well for the future? That's all I'm asking.

**S. Stuart:** Thank you for the question. I think that you've made a good point in regards to timing for this answer. It would probably be more than the allotted time we have left.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** It'll probably represent a report unto itself, so if you would be kind enough to have that submitted before the 14th of October, because that's the deadline.

**S. Stuart:** I think that would be a great opportunity for us to put forward some of our suggestions and comments and address that question directly rather than trying to put it into a one-minute answer.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** And we'll deal with it as a supplement to this presentation. Thank you very much.

Thank you Mr. Keeling. Ms. Stuart, enjoy your game. Take care.

Okay. Next, we have a familiar face. Alex McGowan, Kwantlen Student Association. You're going to talk to us about something different this time, which is déjà vu. I think you know the gig. Ten minutes for the presentation, a little wave down with two left, and then we'll go to committee for questions. So if you're ready.

**A. McGowan:** Sounds good. Thank you very much. It's good to see you all again. Slightly different. Similar topic. Still post-secondary education. In my role, I am also the president and vice-president of external affairs at the Kwantlen Student Association, so today I'm going to be talking to you on behalf of the 20,000 students at KPU in this region here.

I do want to note again, just for the record, that we still believe that there is a need in this province for needs-based grants. Again, we are the only province in the country that doesn't support students who are going into post-secondary education at a lower point than everyone else. If we support levelling the playing field, then we should be willing to give people a leg up who are entering it lower down. That's why needs-based grants are extremely important. Every other jurisdiction has recognized that, and we'd like to push for that.

The fact that we charge such high interest rates on student loans is a really big problem. Students who are taking on loans.... They're taking on loans already because their parents may not be wealthy enough to pay for their education up front, and that means that they are paying more for their education overall simply because they had to start by taking on loans. That is a big issue.

I have many friends who currently have just graduated, are paying back their loans, and who are struggling to just pay the interest payments, which I think is not something we should be doing. We believe we should work towards the elimination of charging interest on student loans, which, of course, would be a small subsidy to support students who had to take on loans.

The main things that I want to talk to you about today.... Housing. Obviously, we've heard all about it. I do want to emphasize a couple of quick points about how that affects the KPU scenario.

[1150]

Since housing has not been allowed to be built.... In the last 13 years, the provincial government has been saying no. What that has meant is that KPU, which 13 years ago was Kwantlen College and has since become Kwantlen Polytechnic University, is offering many more full degrees.

It's offering a world-renowned design program with fashion and product design. It's got very well-renowned marketing and entrepreneurship programs. It's got many more full four-year programs. That means a lot more students are spending a lot more time on campus. The

university has recognized.... They've stated a number of times that they would like to build housing, including for trades students. There's a very large population of trades students at the Cloverdale campus.

What we're finding is many students are travelling from across the province to get a certificate in a six-to nine-week program. They're having to stay in hotels nearby because they can't rent in that short of a time period. But the university could build housing that would be able to support them and significantly bring down the cost of their getting that certificate and then going back to their often rural communities in B.C. to use that trade. That's a very Kwantlen-specific aspect of the need for housing.

The biggest thing I want to talk to you about today for KPU and for Kwantlen students is the fact that the Kwantlen region is severely underserved in terms of post-secondary seats. Kwantlen, aside from the relatively small outpost of SFU in north Surrey, is the only university that serves Richmond, Delta, White Rock, Surrey and the Langleys. That area, the South Fraser region, has over 20 percent of B.C.'s population but only 9 percent of the post-secondary seats.

What that means is that the standard way of measuring the number of post-secondary seats for a region is full-time-equivalency per 100 18- to 24-year-olds. The B.C. average is, I believe, 25 percent. The South Fraser region is at 9 percent. Kwantlen has enough seats to serve about 9 percent, including SFU Surrey. That's about 12.7 percent, which is way below the average.

What that means is that students who are graduating high school.... More and more students are graduating high school in this region, as families are being forced to move south of the Fraser, but they're not having a place to go to. We do know that there are many facts that support that proximity to a post-secondary institution makes students more likely to attend post-secondary.

One of the arguments given is that UBC and SFU are just across the river and nearby. I think it's very noteworthy, the example of Capilano, where it serves the North Shore, and they have 20 seats per 100 18- to 24-year-olds, even though those students could feasibly just cross the water and go to SFU and UBC as well. But we've recognized that it's important to have regional teaching universities that serve the communities.

Our ask there is that KPU be increased by 2,500 FTEs, in order to serve the region that it is in.

The last point that I would like to mention is, again, adult basic education. It's extremely important that we allow those.... What we've recognized in our society is that K-to-12 education is something that we can provide for free. It's something that not only is right to do, to give people that standard of education, but it also makes economic sense. It makes people savvier consumers, it makes people better employees, and it's something that we should be doing.

Also, with immigration rates higher than before, we're seeing a lot more people who need to get their English

language upgrading, and that's all part of adult basic education. We'd like to see the money being offered from the province so that institutions can provide that for free again.

[C. James in the chair.]

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you, Alex, and well within your time again. Well done.

I'll open it up to questions. Anyone have any questions?

**R. Austin:** I would just say, Alex, thanks again for your presentation. To say that there's a common theme running through everything we've heard since we started off — where did we start off? — in Vancouver the other day.... We've been through five communities now.

To say there's a common theme — you express it. I would say about a quarter of the entire presentations have spoken to the exact issues that you spoke about.

The lack of questions is not that we don't have any. It's just that we understand these issues now. I'm sure that our deliberations, once we have finished all of our consultations.... Hopefully, you'll see some positive outcomes. That's all. I'll just leave it at that. We definitely understand the issues.

Thanks very much for coming and presenting again.

**A. McGowan:** Thank you very much.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Any other questions? Thank you, Alex, for a two-time presentation. We really appreciate it.

The committee will stand adjourned until one o'clock.

The committee recessed from 11:55 a.m. to 1:01 p.m.

[S. Hamilton in the chair.]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Dr. Gleeson.

**M. Gleeson:** Hi, sweetie. How you doing?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I'm really well. How are you? Very good to see you again, as always.

**M. Gleeson:** Thank you, dear.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** You know the routine. Ten minutes. I'll give you a little wave with a couple of minutes left to go. You use the time however you want.

**M. Gleeson:** And I'll ignore it. We'll be fine. [Laughter.]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Always a pleasure. The floor is yours.

**M. Gleeson:** My name is Dr. Mychael Gleeson. I run Mychael Co. We are basically not-for-profit, and we actually make less than we would if we were all on welfare. Be that as it may, I have brought to you today my current and last case, because I retire in November, when all of my clients will probably move into my carport. Unfortunately, they know where I live.

Be that as it may, I was going to change his name, but I'll forget. So we'll call him Steven, and he knows that I'm talking about him today. Steven has been known to me for probably 40 years. He married some time ago. His marriage came apart. At that time, he was making \$60,000 a year, which was very good. He made a deal with the family maintenance enforcement program that he would pay \$818 a month child support. He was fine with that. He paid for four years.

In 2008, his house burned down. He lost everything he owned. He could no longer pay child support. So he went to FMEP and said: "I've lost everything." He's a woodworker. I need not be more specific than that. He has machines. He has solvents. He has trucks. He has whatever large machines he has. FMEP, the family maintenance enforcement program, decided that they would not change the amount of child support that Steven needed to pay. From 2008 to 2014, he was paying nothing.

As a result of that, he wasn't filing income tax, because he doesn't know how. He lost his MSP because he didn't have premiums paid. He had no chance for premium assistance, because he doesn't know how to do that. He doesn't have, and didn't have, a B.C. Services Card, a BCID or a birth certificate. All of his ID was lost in the fire. FMEP decided to tell me the fire didn't happen.

Being one of those people who's easily cowed, I went to the fire department, and I said: "On the 15th of September, 2008, there was a fire in Burnaby." They went into their magical box, and they said, "Yes. It was the home of Mr. Steven," whatever his last name is, and they gave me a printout. So I took that to FMEP, and FMEP said: "Doesn't matter. So sad. He could have got a job at Walmart."

[1305]

Thus, the gauntlet was thrown down, and in April 2014, Steven and I trundled off to court. These are the court orders that have resulted. This is the documentation and the evidence for the claims that I have made to support Steven's applications. In the real world, this would have cost him \$28,000.

One of the things that I do for fun is I have a little card on my desk. Bob Shantz, who is my hero and who is dead at the moment, used to say to me: "Well, what would you actually be billing if you were really doing this?" I said: "Really doing this means working in your office. What would you be paying me?" He goes: "Legal aid rates." Legal aid doesn't exist.

This would have cost Steven \$28,500, which he doesn't have. He lives in an appliance box in Queens Park. I know

this because I have to go and find him frequently when there's a court date. They say: "We'll email him." Okay. So that's 1800poundsand@yahoo, appliance box next to the dumpster, Queens Park Arena. Oh, that'll work.

We started the process. Medical Services Plan required all of his tax returns back to 2008. So there I am, late at night, with my photocopier, photocopying his assessments. They then say: "But you didn't ask for ongoing premium assistance." I just assumed. So back to the photocopier. Thank God *Perry Mason* is on from 11:30 to 12. That's when I get all my photocopying done.

I photocopy all of this. I make all the applications. I make the ongoing application. A letter back from Medical Services Plan. He doesn't have a B.C. Services Card.

Okay. We go to the Service B.C. folk and say: "We need his birth certificate." His mother's dead. I was the executor of the estate, so I know she's dead. The stepfather's dead. I was the executor of the estate. You know you're in trouble when you're the executor of the estate and the estate is \$400. You know you're doing something wrong in life. I went to university for 14 years to be the administrator of this estate.

We tried to get in touch with Steven's estranged father. What we found out was the nine bars that he usually frequents. My going to a bar is kind of... Wendy's, yes. A bar, no. I'm going into these bars. I'm looking for this guy. Very large people in black going: "What are you doing here?" I'm going: "I'm looking for Mr. So-and-so. I'm a friend of his son." "No, you're not." "Well, I thought I was."

We finally tracked down the father, who doesn't remember when this kid was born. So we're now applying for the birth certificate with very sketchy info. Because the gods were smiling on me, by mistake we got the birth certificate. There was so much white space on this form. There's no way I would have issued it.

Off we go. We're talking to FMEP. In the family maintenance enforcement program, there's a fabulous lawyer. I won't tell you his name — Adrian McKeown. He's fabulous. He has bent over backwards. He has done everything. He comes out of the courtroom, and he goes: "Hey, how about I give your guy's driver's licence back?" "What?" "We're going to remove the hold on Steven's driver's licence."

I tell Steven. My guy bursts into tears. This is embarrassing. It looks like we're doing the breakup thing, right? So I said: "No, no. Let's go to driver services." We get there, and she says: "Yes, you're in the computer. Yes, the lien is lifted. But you have \$1,500 in fines." That one was a problem. So I said: "Can we get the BCID?" He needs two pieces of ID in order to get BCID. His birth certificate is lovely, but we have nothing else.

[1310]

Short of adopting him, I'm thinking: "How am I going to get this guy some ID?" Then, because these angels do exist, a lady with the finger — this is the waggling, nice finger — says: "Come here." She says: "Let me do his ser-

vices card and his BCID on his expired driver's licence and the birth certificate." She shouldn't have done that, but she did that. So angels do exist.

Now we've got his BCID. We've got this blow of news about 1,500 bucks owing on his driver's licence. We then find out that he's going to have to start at the L stage. The L stage means he can't tow a trailer. If you work in his industry and you can't tow a trailer, you are unemployable. So I'm hearing all of this.

The next blow was to find out, after all of this, that FMEP would not allow him to have a bank account because, after all, he's squirreling millions of dollars away. Finally they said, "Yes, we'll give you a bank account," and the bank people say, "It's been dormant for almost ten years. You need \$400 to open it up again." I said: "Is it \$400 that he owes that bank?" "No, no. We just want a guarantee because he disappeared."

This stuff is not paid for by legal aid, because legal aid doesn't exist. Adrian McKeown, lawyer at family maintenance enforcement program, has done everything he can, above and beyond, to help this guy. We started this on April 9, 2014, and we have a date in March 2017, but I'm going to be in my carport or playing with my dog in the backyard. Who's going to take care of Steven? Legal aid doesn't exist.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** That's it?

**M. Gleeson:** That's it.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Right on ten minutes.

**M. Gleeson:** I work at this.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Oh my goodness. You must.

**M. Gleeson:** Any questions?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I'll go to the committee. Anyone have any questions?

We're talking.... Essentially, we're beating up on bureaucracy a little bit here.

**M. Gleeson:** No, we're saying we need more money. We need legal aid to have the funding.

Any lawyer in New Westminster, and I can think of a dozen, would say: "Hey. You've got the documentation. You can prove everything you've said. Here are the court orders. We're dealing with an amenable guy at FMEP"

I can think of a dozen lawyers, who, if I ring them up.... I have to use my non-call display, because they won't pick up if they know it's me phoning. I've been phoning from Michael's phone. They haven't twigged to that yet. Be that as it may, they would take Steven. But they're not going to do it with no out-of-pocket. Everything we do is out of pocket, and we can't.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your work. Thank you for the presentation. I think one of the challenges, and it echoes some of things you've said, that we hear is with the resources so tight, it's very limited. People can't look outside the box for the kinds of services they provide. I think everything you've described is outside the box yet critical to be able to resolve it.

I think if you're talking about 2014.... I think back to what could have happened over those two years. He could have been working. His family could have been getting family maintenance payments. The children could have been supported. All of the things that could have happened if there had been an ability to provide that support outside the box.

**M. Gleeson:** It's cyclical. As Steven — and I love him dearly — became more depressed, higher was the use of cocaine. Yes, he sells it. I know that. He doesn't admit it, but I know that. I know where to find him.

The drug abuse. Had he been working, had there been a mechanism.... I now have this love-hate relationship with Revenue Canada. I say, "I'll be taking care of this file," to which I'm sure somebody at Revenue Canada goes, "Oh my god. It's that lunatic again." That's fine, because we filed all of his stuff. We got it up to date. If we'd been able to talk to FMEP and even had 100 bucks a month, he would have done it. It would have been a step up.

If we could talk to DMV and say, "Okay, 1,500 bucks he owes, but grandfather him on the driver's licence so he can run the truck he needs to run to earn the money to pay the child support," we also wouldn't have pissed off his wife to the extent where he doesn't know his children.

[1315]

These things are so difficult. It becomes cyclical, and that cyclical relationship destroys human beings. The fact that Steven's still on this planet, the fact that I can still find him.... I'm very easy to elude because, unfortunately, two-thirds of New Westminster knows me — "She's coming for you." The fact that he's still alive is a blessing every day. When he phones me up to scream at me, I am so thrilled, because he's able to phone.

We need legal aid so that we can get these people back.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** One little point just to add. When you talk about the cyclical nature, I think the other thing.... I'm sure I'm not the only one; I'm sure others see it in their offices as well — people who, because of the cycles and because of the behaviour, have been banned from offices and aren't allowed to go in to get support. If there isn't anybody there for them, they never get out of that cycle. They stay stuck in that cycle, and it just becomes worse. So thank you for being there for them.

**J. Rice:** Thank you, Dr. Gleeson, for your presentation. I'm new to the committee, so this is the first time I've heard you present. I did laugh out loud because you

are quite comical, but I don't think the situation is funny whatsoever, and I just wanted to....

**M. Gleeson:** No. You know, Jennifer, if there wasn't just a little bit of humour in my office, there'd be, like, several dead people — because it's sad. It's sad.

I make out like a bandit on Mother's Day, and it's usually people writing stuff on Wendy's napkins and stuffing them in my mailbox, and I treasure those things, because the connection is made. And when I find out from somebody like Steven that I'm the only person in his life, that's frightening. His mother is dead, step-father is dead and father is estranged. It's sad.

There's such enormous sadness in all of this, and some of it — not all of it — could be alleviated by lawyers out there who have kindness and generosity and will do this stuff. But lawyers are tired of being hammered as well. I mean, every one of these applications has cost my company money. Although my dog loves dog chow, some days she wants hamburger.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Simon, please. We have to move along quickly.

**S. Gibson:** Thank you very much for your passion.

A quick query. Certainly, the example you shared is one of the more extreme ones — I get that — but it's very visual and very powerful. Can some of the regulations that these organizations operate under...? These public bodies — can their regulations be changed or moderated to avoid the involvement of lawyers? So we don't have to have lawyers versus lawyers but free up some of the processes so that people can apply and the regulations are not so rigorous. They'll still protect the interests of the taxpayer, but they're less rigorous. Can you comment on that?

**M. Gleeson:** Absolutely. In the old days — because I'm very old — we had unified family court. And we had judges like Jack Varcoe — who's dead at the moment. You'd go in, in front of Jack, and he would roll his eyes and he would look at me and he'd go: "Why aren't we in Maple Ridge?" Well, sir, because we're in Surrey. I'd be able to do my dog and pony show, and I would be able to make whatever assertion that I could prove. Jack would lean back, and he'd say: "That makes sense." But those days are gone now. You can't do it.

An interesting thing.... Steven is ADHD — aren't we all? — but Steven has some learning disabilities, and so the judge ordered that he attend a group called "parenting after separation." I'm just going: "Oh my god. This is not a good thing." So Steven goes there. He lasts twenty minutes. He phones me, and he goes, "I'm overloaded. My head's going to explode. I don't know what they're saying," because he can't process it.

So we appear in court next time and His Honour Judge Danny Steinberg — who's fabulous.... I said to Judge Steinberg: "Look, my guy can't do this. And parenting after separation wouldn't allow me to attend as his learning assistant so that I could take the notes and we could do it together." So Steinberg says: "Well, what does he need?" I said: "Someone to be a note taker. Someone to keep him calm. Someone to explain it to him." He goes: "Do these angels exist?" Yes. They're called teachers. That's what teachers do. So Steinberg finally said: "Well, yes. You have permission to go to parenting after separation with him, or after all, we'll just scrap it."

Having left the courthouse, I then run into a gaggle of people — and a gaggle is six or more — who say to me: "How did you get him off parenting after separation? We can't do that." For these people, it had been the glitch in the road. They were stuck in the process because they didn't get the certificate from parenting after separation.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you, Dr. Gleeson. I'm sorry. We're completely out of time. As always, I appreciate you coming, expressing your views.

**M. Gleeson:** Well, then someone should pay me for parking. You guys gave me cake. I'm happy.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Take another piece home with you.

Thank you very much. Appreciate your time.

**M. Gleeson:** Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Next, we have Federation of Community Social Services of B.C., Rick FitzZaland. Mr. FitzZaland, how are you?

**R. FitzZaland:** I'm good.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** All right. Welcome. As I've said before, ten minutes for the presentation. I'll try to get your attention just as you're losing the last couple of minutes, and we'll go to the committee for questions. The floor is yours.

**R. FitzZaland:** Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today. My name is Rick FitzZaland, and I'm the executive director of the Federation of Community Social Services of B.C.

The federation is a group of community-based social service organizations that influence decision-making and improve the well-being of communities. Our mission is to act as a catalyst for positive change to British Columbia's social policies and community programs. We represent more than 140 members, serving 250 communities across B.C., both on and off recognized First Nations land.

For many years, the federation has presented to this committee the need for increased investment in social services in B.C. Our concern over the fact that social services in B.C. are vastly underfunded is a matter of public record. It is our assessment, after years of tracking the provincial budget, that the economic prosperity of our province is being built on the backs of vulnerable children and people with disabilities.

At the end of these consultations, you will be making recommendations to the government on government priorities for spending. These choices will impact the lives and well-being of people the federation and our member agencies care deeply about — children and youth, vulnerable families, adults and seniors.

The spending priorities will impact services such as foster care, youth housing, parenting programs, employment support for people with disabilities and shelters for those fleeing abuse. It's important to know that the need for these services exist, and what's more, the need is not diminishing.

It is important to understand that social care and the systems we have developed to provide social care are complex. It isn't just that social care deals with challenging human issues, and it does; it is that the actual system, of necessity, is complex.

Sometimes the words "complicated" and "complex" are used interchangeably. It's important to understand that they are actually very different. A complicated issue is one that has a degree of predictability. Success relies less on relationships than it does on creating and following a sequence of actions that lead to success. On the other hand, a complex issue is one in which the future is unfamiliar and not predictable. Cause and effect are far apart. Success relies on collaborative relationships between people with different perspectives and agendas.

In the 1980s, as an example, B.C. began a process of closing down the institutions for people with disabilities. This was the right thing to do. It was a result of years of work on the part of self-advocates and their allies to fight for the civil rights of people with disabilities.

But today, the impacts of that move are still being addressed as our current systems work to support children and adults to live meaningfully in their communities. Today we are faced with the pressing issues of how to best support young people with disabilities to attend their local school and how to ensure that adults have the opportunity to work, have friends, date, marry, have safe housing.

As elected officials, you know well what it takes to juggle the opinions and needs of a vast and diverse constituency. You understand complexity.

[1325]

I'm speaking to you today about complexity because, as a participant and observer of our social care system, I see a worrying trend towards treating social care issues as though they were anything but complex. Phrases

like "finding the low-hanging fruit," "looking for simple solutions," "finding efficiency" seem to be included in marching orders for social care ministries. I'm speaking to you today in the hopes of influencing a change in this direction.

When social care ministries are told to fix things quickly or to respond to tragic circumstances to manage risk or prevent public outcry, this can lead to solutions that frequently don't work to address these complex issues and often make them worse.

As an example, there was a recent hiring of more social workers within MCFD. The hiring of more social workers addresses one pressing issue. The fact that there were not enough social workers employed at MCFD resulted in high caseloads. What it does not address is that the community programs where the social workers refer families are at their capacity and significantly underfunded.

We support hiring more MCFD social workers. They are needed. But hiring them without adequate community supports and services means that vulnerable families are still not getting the support they need. In 2012, the federation released a joint report with B.C.'s Ministry of Children and Family Development on what is known as residential services for children in care.

When a child cannot safely live with their parents, government has accepted an obligation and a duty to care for these children. Many families who find themselves in this situation may themselves have been raised in families that struggled to care for them. Many of these parents and children have experienced a great deal of trauma.

The 2012 report includes 32 recommendations to improve the system of care for young people needing support. The report was signed off by the federation and MCFD and then released. But MCFD was told to implement the recommendations within their current budget. Since that time, MCFD has attempted to do just that, caught between huge fiscal pressures to do more with less and with the perception to those outside the system that the change required is somehow simple and straightforward.

We know what is needed to serve young people in care better. It takes creativity and attention to the interconnectedness of various parts of the system. It takes working together, and it requires an opportunity to try some new ways of thinking. There are people already attempting to work this way, but they need the government's support. They require support to address the complex social issues with approaches that are collaborative, systemic and open to testing new ideas.

There's a danger in trying to make the social care system more efficient. The social care system should certainly be easier to understand and navigate, and available resources should be used to their best effect, but this is not what I mean. What I mean is that frequently the social care sector is asked to find efficiencies as a way of doing more with less.

The social care sector, like any steward of public funds, must be accountable for its spending. It must be responsible and thoughtful. But insisting on efficiencies can come at the expense of effectiveness.

We know this in public health. We immunize everyone in a target population, even though we know that not everyone in that target population is going to get sick from the disease that we're immunizing against. We do this because that's the effective way to do it, but it's not efficient.

Here is an example of what I mean. When a child is taken into care, they need somewhere to live. Sometimes this is a foster caregiver's home, and sometimes this is within a home that is operated by an organization and staffed by employees. Unless a young person is using a bed in that foster home or staffed home, that resource does not get paid for that bed. This is considered efficient because in this way the taxpayer is not paying for a bed that isn't being used.

However, it means that when the child comes into care, what happens is that there's a scramble to find a place for that child. It means that people who choose to work in supporting these young people frequently move on to other, more reliable opportunities.

It means also that young people get put wherever there is a space, regardless of whether it is a good fit for them. It means a system that always is in crisis, and frequently, what it means for young people is even more disruption and trauma in their lives, sometimes with tragic consequences.

[1330]

In order for the system to be effective, a certain amount of inefficiency must be expected and allowed. That means having program spaces at the ready.

The social care system was developed out of innovation, creativity and the hard work of citizens who care about their children, their families and their neighbours. The best of our social care system was created by challenging the status quo in order to make lives better. Government has a role to play in ensuring this system is accessible to all our citizens. Government working together with concerned and informed citizens to develop thoughtful solutions to complex challenges results in the most cost-effective use of public funds.

Thank you for your time.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you for your time, sir. I will go to the committee for questions. Do we have any?

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you, Rick, to you and to all of your members — your member associations — for the extraordinary work you do in the province each and every day.

I really want to say how much I appreciated you using the example of beds. I think it's exactly the example of... As you say, what looks like, on paper, efficiency in the

system — not paying for a bed that's not used — in fact means that kids get put in hotels, they get moved around and they don't have a place to go because nothing's available for them. So I think you very well described exactly the challenge of not providing the human side of the social services sector that needs to be there to provide the services.

That doesn't mean there shouldn't be efficiencies. I know that your organization has been involved in accreditation and other processes to make sure that the money is being well spent and that agencies are utilizing it well, but when we take the human factor out of it, which I believe has happened over the last number of years, then I think we face the kinds of tragedies you talked about. So thank you for raising it, and thank you for your work.

**R. FitzZaland:** Thank you, Carole. A bed isn't just a bed, right? Every bed isn't the same. You have to have the ability to meet increasingly complex needs that children are presenting, and the longer they wait to be able to get a bed, the more complex those needs become, and the more support that's required.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any further questions?

Seeing none, Mr. FitzZaland, thank you for your advocacy. Thank you for coming today and presenting your views to the committee. We very much appreciate it.

**R. FitzZaland:** Thank you for your time.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Take care. Have a good day.

Next we have Gail Chaddock-Costello — the Langley Teachers Association.

Good afternoon. Welcome. Just as you're settling in, I'll let you know we have ten minutes for the presentation. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes left to go so that you are able to conclude your thoughts, and then we can go to the committee for some questions, if there are any. If you're ready, the floor is yours.

**G. Chaddock-Costello:** On behalf of the Langley Teachers Association, I would like to thank you, first of all, for providing us with an opportunity to speak to our concerns regarding the continued underfunding of public education. I'd like to speak to class composition.

The school year has begun, and once again our Langley Teachers Association has been besieged with calls from teachers regarding their class composition. For those who may not be aware, class composition relates to the number of students in a class who have ministry designations relating to their particular special needs.

Prior to the stripping of our collective agreements in 2001, provisions were in place to ensure that a limited number of students with identifications were placed in any one class. These limits ensured adequate support for

all students, including classroom teachers. In Langley, the limit was three IEPs, which then generated supports including reductions in overall class size and targeted SEA — special education assistants — and resource teacher time.

Currently, I hear daily from teachers who enrolled as many as 14 students with individual education plans in one class. These challenging classes — elementary, middle and secondary — exist at all levels. Why does this matter? It matters because it sets up situations where it is impossible for one teacher to deliver their curriculum and make informed, appropriate accommodations for each and every area of their instruction that ensures a high-quality education for all students.

Let me be clear. Every teacher does their very best every day, but success with all students every day is an aspirational goal that isn't always achievable, even with the fabled class of perfect students.

[1335]

In our current situation, students with IEPs are frequently not provided SEA support due to what appears to be a systemic, provincewide change in the allocation of designated hours to the identified student. For example, were I to be designated as a student requiring 28 hours a week of assistance, and that assistance is shared throughout the school with other students in need who are not or who may never be designated, my individual level of support — and my classroom teacher's level of support — is reduced.

As a teacher, I understand the concept of sharing scarce resources. As the parent of a child whose level of assistance is impacted, I may not be so willing to reduce my MOE-designated support, designed to ensure my child reaches their individual level of education success.

This situation pits teacher against teacher, SEA against SEA, and parents against parents as everyone scrambles to fit together the intricate puzzles of support required to meet the individual needs of all students in all classes.

Let me make this personal for you. You are here with a mandate to listen, to learn, to synthesize information and to prepare a report. If it were also the responsibility of this panel to attend to the individual needs of each presenter who may face challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, attention deficit disorders, augmentative communication needs, physical or emotional or mental health concerns, or sudden physical outbursts perceived as violent, your job would become much more complex.

This is the daily experience of classroom teachers enrolling complex groups of students and striving still to ensure everyone achieves to their potential.

We were confronted with a problem early on in the year that served to highlight the problems that arise when the shortage of specialist teachers in relation to the number of designated students in any one school is markedly out of balance. There were far too many students requir-

ing the preparation of IEPs for the already overburdened resource teachers to accommodate. A request was made by administration for other teachers — who did not teach these students and who had no contact with these students — to create and sign off on IEPs.

The teachers contacted the union office. The union worked with the district, and an additional resource teacher was hired. In this case, a solution was quickly provided. But is that the case everywhere, in all schools, in all districts? As a parent of a child with special needs, it would be shocking to discover that the signature on your child's IEP was that of a teacher who had accepted legal responsibility to design your child's plan yet didn't teach, see or interact with that child.

Is public education underfunded? The answer is clearly yes.

What other factors may impact the daily lives of teachers? The shortage of TTOCs — teachers teaching on call... In Langley, CUPE staff are employed as special education assistants. We have had record shortages of teachers to replace absent classroom teachers and extreme shortages of SEAs who provide direct support, under teacher supervision, of those with acute health care needs and feeding and toileting needs as well as academic, behavioural, social and emotional needs.

I prepared a survey of teachers and presented on this topic to the board last spring. One example of this survey is: "Have you requested a TTOC during this school year — '15-16 — for any reason and not received one?" And 51 percent of the respondents, all teachers, said yes. When schools are already struggling with a lack of personnel resources, this situation is further impacted by the additional loss of replacement staff. How can the students not be negatively affected?

We add to that the implementation of the new curriculum. There have been numerous new curriculums over the years, and teachers welcome innovation, change, opportunities to grow and develop new skills and to utilize existing skills in new situations. However, implementing a new curriculum with limited time for learning, limited to non-existent resources for new courses and very mixed messages from the Ministry of Education, boards of education and school-based principals leads to unnecessary and avoidable stress on an already stressed system.

The information from the Hon. Mike Bernier states that curriculum implementation is an ongoing, long-term process, rather than an event. However, the experience of teachers in schools is vastly different. Some administrators are following the implementation outlined; some are not. This leads to variance between the schools within districts as well as huge variances from district to district.

Funding for additional in-service time that permits open dialogue between teachers, administrators, parents and trustees would greatly assist in the clarification of timelines, implementation expectations and the vari-

ances that will exist between teachers within schools as well as schools within the same district.

[1340]

New ministerial orders came out in late August. One of these orders relates to assessment, an area of concern for K-to-9 teachers who are at the implementation stage of the new curriculum as of September 2015. With two schedules available and a lack of clarity on which schedule districts are using prior to the beginning of the school year, coupled with the fact that the MyEd B.C. platform does not synch with the recommended recording of student assessment, we have additional stress due to the very late release of the information on assessment practices. Several schools in Langley will not even be trained on the “new system” — those who had not yet ever used MyEd B.C. — until early October. But that is only days, then, prior to their first interim report cards — not enough time, money or in-service to properly prepare professional teachers to deliver a professional report.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, in a paper entitled “What’s the Real Story Behind B.C.’s Education Funding Crisis?” makes this statement:

“Arguably, the best way to understand what we can afford to invest in public education is to look at B.C.’s overall economic pie to see how much of it we invest in the education system. When we do that, we see a significant drop in the share of our total economic resources dedicated to public education.

“K-to-12 funding has fallen steadily from 3.3 percent of our province’s gross domestic product in 2001 to a projected 2.5 percent in the 2016 budget, which is a 25 percent decline. If we look only at the actual operating grants the province sends to school boards and exclude other expenses...the drop is just as sharp...from 2.8 percent of GDP in 2001 to 1.9 percent in the 2016 budget.

“These numbers are not small potatoes. A 0.9 percent decline in the share of GDP dedicated to education funding represents about \$2 billion per year. Yes, that’s ‘billion’ with a ‘b’. This is the additional amount we could invest in public education — in preparing our children for the future — if we wanted to simply dedicate the same proportion of our economic pie to K-to-12 education today as we did 15 years ago. While that level of funding increase might be beyond what’s necessary, it tells us what’s in the realm of possibility.”

As stated in a CBC series on the public versus private debate broadcast from September 6 to 8, B.C. remains the province that invests the lowest percentage of our GDP into education. Evidence of financial shortages.... The CBC interviewer speaks to Leanne Browne from Vancouver Tech. I’ll shorten this by saying that she is the teacher who used to be able to afford class sets of squid to offer dissection practices in her lab. She has now resorted to scavenging on the seashores and dumpster diving to find free things to subsidize this touted highest funding ever.

The crisis in the funding of public education brought on by the decisions of 2001 has had profound ripple effects over the past 15 years. Parents of students with special needs have sacrificed to afford private schools. Why? Because these schools can afford to offer the smaller class sizes and focused student support that had been readily

available to all students in public education in B.C. prior to 2001. The current unequalized-society education system is directly linked to the systemic underfunding of public education that forces parents, out of necessity rather than choice, to financially burden themselves in order to meet the needs of their identified children.

Teachers, students, parents — we all want what we had in 2001 and what this province can still afford to provide to all students, regardless of their financial status.

Thank you for your time and attention.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much for the submission. I will go to the committee for questions.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you, Gail, for presenting and for echoing what others are echoing around the province. In this week’s-worth of hearings, we’ve had a number of presentations on the K-to-12 system and the pressure that they’re facing, both from teachers as well as from parents. Administrators, as well, have presented to us.

You raised a new piece, which is.... It’s not a new piece, in that we know about the computer system and the challenges of the technology. But the fact that people still haven’t been.... Not everyone has been trained in the system. I can’t imagine. I know the stress that teachers have at report card time to begin with, but to have an electronic system that’s not working is very frustrating.

[1345]

Then just the last piece I wanted to mention was the issue of the new curriculum. I said this at a presentation yesterday, but the curriculum has been developed together. The teachers are very supportive, as you have said. They’re excited about the new curriculum that comes forward. I would hate to see the curriculum lost because we didn’t provide the support that needs to be there for teachers to be in-service and ready to present.

One example would be the First Nations curriculum, the curriculum to address the issues from the truth and reconciliation. That’s going to take time. It’s going to take time to build the partnerships with First Nations, to be able to make sure the right people are brought in. So thank you for raising it and emphasizing it.

**J. Yap:** Thank you for presenting. Since 2001-2002, my understanding is that overall enrolment around the province has been steadily declining. I think the figure is 60,000 plus. What’s the situation in Langley? How is enrolment in your school district?

**G. Chaddock-Costello:** I’d like to say two things — and thanks for the question. The enrolment in Langley is increasing, hence the need for new schools in Langley; and the hiring of additional teachers.

To some extent, the rising enrolment has forced the hiring of new teachers. There needs to be a live, warm

body in front of every classroom. But at the same time, it has not increased the number of specialist teachers such as resource teachers, speech pathologists, those who provide services — occupational therapists, for instance — to children who are identified with special needs. We find that every year our population of students identified with special needs grows by approximately 10 percent, yet there isn't a commensurate 10 percent increase in funding attached to that.

In addition, although the funding may appear to have risen in relation to the number of students, there's been a huge percentage of downloaded costs to districts. The MSP premiums is one example. You have higher expenses with scarce resources and smaller dollars, so therefore, the economy of scale that would be suggested by declining enrolment just isn't really there.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any further questions?

Seeing none, thank you very much for presenting your views this afternoon. We do appreciate the time you take.

**G. Chaddock-Costello:** Thank you for having me.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I'm sure we'll be having thorough discussions as we continue our deliberations on this particular subject.

Next we have our friends from the Motion Picture Production Industry Association of British Columbia — Mr. Peter Leitch and Mr. Phil Klapwyk.

Gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome. You've done this before. You know how it works. Ten minutes. I'll give you the high sign when you've got a couple of minutes left, and then we'll go to the committee for questions. So if you're ready, the floor is all yours.

**P. Leitch:** Well, thank you very much for seeing Phil and myself. This is kind of a good-news story. Not too much bad news these days in the industry.

British Columbia is one of the leaders in screen-based production in the international marketplace. We've established ourselves over the last three decades as such, and right now the stars are all aligned with us. We've got competitive tax incentives. We've got a fantastic crew base here. We've got infrastructure which is now even broadening as a result of where the dollar is and the confidence of the industry, the confidence of our major customer from Los Angeles in British Columbia.

Our challenges right now are skills training, which we're working on. The crew base that works on behalf of Phil's union is certainly engaged in that process.

Maybe, Phil, you could talk a little bit about that.

**P. Klapwyk:** Sure. Well, the IATSE 891... We budget within our organization roughly \$500,000 per year to upgrade the skills and safety training for our membership. We work closely with Actsafe, which is the WorkSafe B.C.—

appointed body that regulates safety within the industry. We work with them to develop new courses. Recently we've instituted, on our own, with our membership as a requirement of membership to have basic safety training. So we're really focused on making the workplace a much more safe and productive environment.

**P. Leitch:** So now, by the numbers, we talk about 25,000 employees. There are, I think, probably significantly more than that this year engaged in the industry. With the incentives, they encourage us to hire British Columbians, which is fantastic, because we've got so much creative talent here.

One of the things we are doing, through Phil's organization and others, is reaching out to other parts of the province to make sure that they're aware of the nature of the jobs and the opportunities in the industry. We had meetings with Deputy Minister Dave Byng on that.

[1350]

There's a lot of in-house training that's going on. Besides the 24 educational institutions that are involved in the industry, you've got significant major companies up here, especially in the areas of animation and visual effects, as well as unions and guilds that provide in-house training programs and invest a lot in education.

That's one of the things that we're doing to address that issue of skills training. When you've got 50 or 60 productions going on in town, it is a challenge to get everybody up to speed that quickly, but we're certainly working on that and working closely with government on some of those initiatives.

The domestic industry is doing reasonably well, partly because they can get engaged not only in producing their own product but in the service work, in terms of servicing the Los Angeles productions. It's still a bit of a challenge, because I still think we lack some of the federal funding — in the programs that are federally funded — that places like Ontario have. Also, we lack the broadcasters that Ontario has.

Those are some of the challenges that we've got, but I think that we're working through that. We'll continue to work with our federal politicians to see if we can make changes to make sure that there's a good balance there.

As I say, lots of productions going on. I attended, this week, the opening of the Skydance Studios, which is, on behalf of Netflix, hosting a huge television series there. This is great for not only the Lower Mainland but, I think, the province. We're in the infrastructure business. We build... We have two major studios, but we're really happy to see the studio business spread further out through the Lower Mainland and, hopefully, up to the other jurisdictions in British Columbia.

When I was asked about it, I thought: "This is fantastic, because now we can have people that are living and working in Surrey and not having to drive like they had in the past." Also, in Kelowna, it's become a major ani-

mation hub. It is great to see that spreading out into the province also. The one thing that we do realize is there's a lot of, again, creative talent that's gone untapped.

Creative B.C. is the non-profit organization, funded by the B.C. government, that supports the tax credits and administers the tax credits. As well, they provide film services functions, like the B.C. film commissioner, which is a really important tool. Of course, they've got a broader mandate, which we've embraced. It encompasses more of the creative industries, including administering the music fund, and publishing, including magazines and books, and also the digital industry.

We've welcomed that broadening of their mandate. In terms of funding, they're just getting going now, but the value of that organization to the industry can't be overstated. They're doing really good work now. Again, they're building out their staff right now with Prem Gill at the helm. We're really excited about the future of that organization and the future of the creative industries here in B.C.

We've got an important partnership with government. I think earlier this year we experienced working with government to "right-size," let's call it, the tax credit. We recognize that there's only so much fiscal capacity to support the program, and the government recognizes the value of the program in terms of diversifying the economy and creating jobs in B.C.

The one important thing for us was that they engaged the industry, and we had an opportunity to sit down for, I guess it was, a period of about six months prior to the decision being made. Then the implementation process was such that people that had made a committed investment in the province.... We honoured that commitment and didn't change the tax credits. There's a grandfathering transition provision in that.

We're not going to see the results of that, mind you, because of the transition provisions. It's not implemented until October 1, probably about 12 months from now. But we've had a history of stability in the industry. Because we handled that well, I think we've still got the reputation as being a very stable, predictable climate. That's really important when 80 percent of our business is coming from L.A.

[1355]

Any future consultation would be really appreciated on any changes in terms of policy within the industry. We, again, see government as an important partner to us, so we really appreciate the support that you had and are continuing, to build out infrastructure and invest through the private sector in the industry. Again, Labour is investing heavily into training.

Things are going really well right now, and we really just wanted to give you that update.

**R. Austin:** Peter, as you mentioned, it's just nice to have a group come here with a really good-news story

about how well things are going, and I guess as long as we have a 75-cent dollar, that's also going to continue to help and bring a lot of production from Los Angeles.

I had just one question. You talked a lot about safety — teaching your members safety. For myself, I think that the only people who are in danger within your industry are those who are doing stunts, but correct me. Is it a dangerous industry beyond the people who are doing stunts? Is this something that's endemic? The way you talked, you made it sound like the forestry industry, where there's danger everywhere.

**P. Klapwyk:** Yes, actually, there pretty much is. Medium risk, I think, is what it's classified as within WorkSafe, but there's a certain amount of danger to everything we do. We're often working in remote locations far away from access to care and that sort of thing.

Productions generally have on-site medics that look after the crew, but generally, we are involved a lot of times in very difficult, strenuous and dangerous jobs.

**J. Yap:** Thank you for your presentation, and it's great that it's going so well for your industry. As a host community in my riding with.... Sometimes we joke that I'm the MLA for Richmond–Storybrooke, the community in *Once Upon a Time*.

You mentioned there might be up to 60 productions. Are these spread around the province, Peter?

**P. Leitch:** The reality is they're mostly concentrated in the Lower Mainland, but we certainly welcome.... With the distant tax credit, there are incentives, especially when it opened up to Victoria a few years ago. That made a big difference there.

I think that as the industry matures and with the way telecommunications is working these days, there are real opportunities to expand the industry out further. The reality is that.... One of our advantages is that we've got an international airport. You can fly the actors in and back home on the weekends, kind of thing.

Also, we've got the world of looks, as the film commission says, where you can go around to different locations or all around the province and get, really, the look you need. So I think that as we continue on and grow, people are becoming more and more aware of those nuggets of fantastic places to shoot — where we've got capabilities to go to these other places. We've got a crew base in a lot of centres outside of the Lower Mainland.

I think we're improving that, but certainly, the reality is that there's a concentration in the Lower Mainland.

**P. Klapwyk:** It is growing up in the Okanagan, though. However, we are just floating a project that might happen soon, which would be a training symposium centred in the Okanagan to develop local crew base and find people that have correlative skills that can be applied in the in-

dustry so that they can walk in at a higher level and use the professional skills in industries that are in decline, perhaps, and see if we can put them back to work.

**P. Leitch:** Speaking of Storybrooke, one of the initiatives that we're working on is film tourism. We think we can add an extra day or so to travellers when they come to British Columbia by marketing these locations. Other jurisdictions do it well. Disney is going to come up here and do a presentation at some point in time on film tourism, which I think will be of real interest to stakeholders, so we're looking forward to that.

**S. Gibson:** Since being elected, I've just been so impressed by the industry. I never realized how dynamic and exciting it was. So way to go. You guys are doing fantastic work. Danny Virtue I think you'll maybe know. His studio is in my riding. He filmed many westerns there.

Here's my lament. It's always been my lament. Peter's heard this. My wife and I will be watching a show, and I'll suddenly say to her: "Hey, that's Vancouver."

There was a show filmed — it was some kind of a detective show — and there was a little piece of Abbotsford, a gravel pit that I guess they came out and used.

[1400]

I'm so saddened by the fact that we do all this cool stuff and it's all in Portland or Seattle or San Francisco but we never get any credit for it. I'm sure that's a lament you have too.

**P. Leitch:** It is to a certain extent, but I think people are realizing that Vancouver and the Lower Mainland — British Columbia — are being showcased in these films. People are curious, and they look at the credits. They look where things are filmed. I think there are some advantages to it. I always like to think that whatever sells, whatever works for you guys, let's do it.

**S. Gibson:** You wait for the end, and there it is — Vancouver.

**P. Klapwyk:** There have been a few productions that have featured Vancouver as Vancouver — a couple of TV series. It's really exciting when you do see that.

**S. Gibson:** I agree.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your contributions to all of us in the province. I'll put in our plug for Vancouver Island. Now that we've got the distance credits, it's making a huge difference and has really increased the number of productions, certainly, that we've seen come to the Island, which is exciting.

I think you're a real success story because of the infrastructure that was put in place in a whole bunch of different places. I think you talked about it — the tax credits,

the well-trained workforce. I think all of those pieces were built, which really shows the strength of the industry. I hope we'll be past the days of provinces playing each other off on tax credits, but who knows?

I did want to ask.... You mentioned the federal supports or the federal credit. I just wondered if you could talk a little bit more about that, about why B.C. Is it size?

**P. Leitch:** The head offices are back east. It's the reality of where the decisions are made. Coffee for them is walking across the street. We might have to set up in Toronto or Ottawa or whatever to access that.

It's not really the labour-based credit, which is standard across the country. It's more like programs like Telefilm. We want to make sure that we get a fair share of the funding for that and other federal programs. We're working on that, but it is a bit of a challenge. Certainly, you want it to go to the talent, the people that are capable of creating projects that can be sold globally. But we think we've got the talent here.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much for taking the time. I remember, I think it was, two years ago or so in Whistler. I made the comment: "How's that Canadian dollar treating you?" It was floating in the low 90s at the time. Since then, things have really turned your way. Nevertheless, I appreciate you taking the time to present. Enjoy the rest of what looks to be a beautiful day out there.

Next we have the British Columbia Cycling Coalition — Mr. Richard Campbell. Mr. Campbell, welcome. You've got ten minutes to present. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes remaining so you can conclude your thoughts, and then we'll go to the committee for questions.

**R. Campbell:** Fantastic. I just had a great idea: bike tours to film sites — get together with the last speaker.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Fantastic. *Bates Motel* out in Aldergrove. How's that?

**R. Campbell:** That's right. I think there were actually some walking tours during a conference — Pro Walk-Pro Bike, which was just in town last week — if people wanted to see the film sites and experience the city.

Thank you, Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to present this afternoon. What I will do is focus a lot on what's happened in the last year, especially some of the good news we've had about cycling in the province.

We've long known that a lot of people in the province do cycle. About 70 percent cycle at least once a year, and 52 do a month, at least back in 2013, when we did the survey. We also know that a lot more people say they want to cycle, with about 65 percent saying, "Hey, if we

have good, protected bike facilities, where we don't have to battle with traffic," they will cycle more.

Now, what we've seen in the last year — especially from Vancouver, but all around the province — is that people are actually doing it. Again, a lot of people think: "Oh, Vancouver's always been good for cycling." But 25 years ago, less than 2 percent of people cycled to work. Now we're seeing 10 percent, and it's really exploded in the last two or three years. There are now 131,000 bike trips per day in the city of Vancouver, up from about 50,000 in 2008. Just to put that in perspective, that's more people cycling than are using some of the large, \$3 billion transportation projects in the province.

It's not just in Vancouver, though. There was a recent *BCBusiness* Insights West survey, and they found that cycling is especially popular among young people, adults 18 to 35.

[1405]

So 8 percent are already cycling to work, according to that poll, as opposed to about 2 percent of the population in general back in 2011, although it looks like that probably has increased as well. We'll get some really good numbers next year in the census, but certainly, it looks very positive.

Even more importantly, these people want to cycle more; 14 percent of that age group say cycling would be their ideal commute. When you add walking to that, about a third of that group, who we should be building infrastructure for.... They're the future generation, and this is what they want to do. Even more exciting when you include transit in there. About two-thirds of the millennials say they want to get to work by sustainable modes.

The challenge is people are already doing it, and they want to do it more, and the investment is really trailing. There's certainly been some good work done, but we simply need a lot more of it. If we don't do it, (1) people are not going to get healthy transportation and exercise in their daily lives, and (2) we'll start to see more people getting injured. In fact, the *B.C. Road Safety Strategy*, which is an excellent document, has pointed out that while the number of fatalities among people in automobiles has been going down, the level for people walking and cycling has about stayed steady, essentially.

Another sign is in the B.C. on the Move public engagement survey, 72 percent of respondents supported enhanced cycling infrastructure. A lot of people want it, and a lot of people are using it. I think it's really time to up the game as far as that goes.

Another couple of things that have happened in the last year. A couple of municipalities have come up with some pretty good active transportation plans for cycling, walking and other modes. In Kelowna, for example, the city, their active transportation plan is clocking in at \$267 million. Squamish just approved a good plan. I believe it was last week. That's clocking in at \$36 million.

Again, that, combined with some of the numbers we're seeing in Metro Vancouver, which is \$850 million; the CRD, \$275 million.... It all adds up. We've tried to add the numbers together. It's not perfect, and there are some gaps. But we estimate somewhere around \$2.3 billion is required to complete the cycling and walking networks.

Really, the vision is that if we want to enable everyone to cycle and walk in their daily lives.... And, of course, this would also be great for people in wheelchairs and other forms of mobility. Then when we start to see this number, cycling and walking are actually mass forms of transportation. When a lot of people do it, it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will reduce congestion. It will improve safety. A lot of the improvements, especially intersections, would also improve the safety for people in motor vehicles as well.

Now to the specific recommendations. We see there's huge potential, both for people in the province and visitors. A lot of people want to tour by bike, and the province has announced a cycling touring strategy, which is great, but we really need to get those facilities on the ground. So we're recommending \$100 million a year over the next ten years. That, combined with local and federal funding, should enable the majority of people in the province to cycle and walk for their daily trips.

I should mention that's not just adults. In Vancouver, we're seeing a lot of people cycling with their kids on their bikes, cycling by themselves and being carried on the bikes or in trailers. That's even a greater incentive to make it really safe, so when people are cycling with their families, nothing tragic occurs.

We also need to improve the maintenance. There are some places around the province — for example, Bella Coola. They have the funding for a trail; there's just no funding to maintain it. So we need to do a variety of things.

People also want to use electric bikes — people as they get older or with physical challenges or people that just want to cycle further. So we're recommending that the PST be eliminated on those and rebates be provided, the same as they are with electric automobiles.

Let's see. I think those are the main ones.

[1410]

Of course, we support greater investment in transit. Cycling highways is a new concept from Europe. These are long-distance routes that enable efficient commuting between suburbs and inner cities. Norway has committed \$1.2 billion to building out a network of those around the country. To put it into perspective, Norway is only 20 percent more than B.C., so again, other places are doing this, and I think we should really step up and let people do what they really want to do as far as transportation goes.

Education is also important. We'd like to make cycling education universally available for children in B.C. There's the Bike Right program, which is an excellent initiative. That would be a good start. We would hope you

would produce that. I believe the Bike Right people will probably be making a separate submission.

I believe that's the end of my comments. I would welcome any questions you might have.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Terrific. Thank you very much for that.

I will go to the committee for questions.

**J. Yap:** Thank you. Certainly, I know that cycling is becoming more and more popular as a form of exercise, recreation and for some, if it's practical, commuting. Your last point, regarding education.... Are there training programs available? We all assume that everyone can ride a bicycle or, at some point in your life, especially when you're growing up, you learn to ride a bike. But you know, being able to ride a bike versus riding it properly, especially if you're out in traffic, are two different things.

**R. Campbell:** Yes, there are a few programs. In Metro Vancouver, HUB offers cycling skills courses for adults so you know how to ride better. Also, there are some adults who have never learned how to ride a bike, and they will also offer beginner classes for adults. As well, they also offer classes for children.

We've just started up a program where we go into pre-schools, introducing children to runner bikes. It's probably the cutest thing you'd ever want to see.

Yeah. Definitely more education — of both the people on bikes and drivers as well — is certainly a priority.

**S. Gibson:** One benefit that you may not have thought about is the social benefit. I know some seniors in my town cycle together. They're elderly, but they do a lot of cycling, which, of course, is good for their health as they get into their latter years. They have a real club. They just rode to Victoria.

I think, having done quite a lot of long-distance cycling in California, you meet a lot of people along the way. If you're in a car, you don't meet anybody. You don't get any kind of experience of the sights or sounds or the smells of the coast, or whatever. I think that's an important dimension, frankly, to cycling.

**R. Campbell:** I certainly would agree that it's great. I cycle around and often run into people I intend on phoning or meeting, so it's a great way to stay connected both to people you know and to the broader community in general. I definitely agree.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Just one question from here. I'm just kind of curious. When it boils down, local communities have a lot of influence on cycling opportunities. I trust you collaborate on a regular basis with local communities, whatever incentives they may have or what-

ever programs they might want to be putting forward. Because they're all connected, right?

**R. Campbell:** Yes. They're all connected.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I've found that the greatest influence, when it comes to this sort of work and the kind of advocacy that you do, actually boils right down to dealing with the local folks. But obviously, from a provincial perspective, we're going to be around helping. It's great opportunities — one of the nicest places in the world to cycle, around here. That's for sure.

**R. Campbell:** Certainly, to touch on that, the B.C. road safety committee did a survey of local communities, and they found that funding was a barrier, and also staff expertise as well. We've also, in talking to people.... Sometimes the regulations around municipal highways.... It's tough to make it better for cycling and walking. It may conflict with some of the guidelines and standards that the Ministry of Transportation has. So that's certainly something that, hopefully, the province could work on — providing more support, especially for the smaller communities so they can do the protected bike lanes and things that maybe are not quite as standard and where there's not as much expertise around. That's certainly another way that the province could help.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Exactly.

Apparently I've provoked another thought here next to me.

**D. Ashton:** Richard, thanks for your presentation.

[1415]

One study you want to have a look at is being facilitated by Highways, at this point in time, in the Okanagan, between the city of Penticton, city of Summerland, regional district of Okanagan-Similkameen, Highways and your group up there, and also involving the Penticton Indian Band as a purveyor on the outside of it. Get a hold of a copy. It should be done by the second or third week of October, if I remember correctly.

It's very expensive to build bike lanes. We just created a lane between lower Summerland and Trout Creek. It's being used not only by bikers but moms pushing baby carriages and everything else. But the expense is there. And the school board, who's the other one I forgot, is involved in it also. It's not a one-legged stool.

There's an opportunity for us to all work together to get these in place. But just to come forward and say: "Please write the cheque...." That's very difficult to do. So if we all work — and you brought it up — with the municipalities and federal and everything, there is a good opportunity.

Get a hold of that once it's done. It might be a carbon copy you can use elsewhere.

**R. Campbell:** That is up by Penticton. Is that correct?

**D. Ashton:** Yes.

**R. Campbell:** I just got an email yesterday, I believe, informing us of the process that's coming up, so that's fantastic.

**D. Ashton:** Yes. It's a good process because it involves everybody.

**R. Campbell:** Yeah. There are certainly exciting projects. That's why we went from just cycling to active transportation, because that's far more inclusive. In most places, people can share the trail. When there's a lot of people cycling and walking, sometimes you need to separate, but in a lot of places, it works fine.

**D. Ashton:** You just hit on a key word — share. That's the issue. It's not only sharing the cost, but it's also sharing the utilization of it. With all due respect to bikers, and I'm an avid biker, there are other people that should have that ability to use it.

**R. Campbell:** That's one thing that we need to come up with is standards. What volume of people walking and cycling would you need to separate and what volumes can....

**D. Ashton:** Courtesy goes a long way.

**R. Campbell:** There's certainly a lot of work that needs to be done there.

One thing that I didn't mention is we're doing a petition. We actually have people from 120 communities around the province signing that petition in support of the greater investment in cycling. It's something that seems to be everywhere around the province and not just in a few places. That's really exciting.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much for taking the time to present. We appreciate it.

Next we have the Canadian Cancer Society, B.C. and Yukon — Jennifer Byford and Dr. Sandra Krueckl.

Welcome. Thanks for being here. Ten minutes to present. I'll try to get your attention at about the eight-minute mark so you can conclude your thoughts, and then we can go to the committee for questions.

The floor is yours.

**S. Krueckl:** Thank you, Chair and Deputy and hon. committee members. On behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, we're really grateful for this opportunity to present our requests for the 2017 provincial budget.

As you've already mentioned, I'm Sandra Krueckl. I'm the vice-president for cancer control. Joining me today is Jenny Byford. She's our advocacy lead.

The Canadian Cancer Society's vision is to create a world where no Canadian fears cancer. One of the key pillars of that vision is prevention, which is the focus of our presentation today.

While B.C. is congratulated for having the best health outcomes of any province, cancer rates are expected to rise nationwide with an aging population. Inevitably, as you know, this puts cost pressures on provincial governments.

We believe it is really paramount to invest in evidence-informed prevention as part of long-term planning for future generations. We commend the government, of course, for steady economic growth which has created revenue that could allow you to expand measures in terms of preventing future chronic disease.

Our primary ask to the government today is to expand the publicly funded, school-based HPV vaccination program to all genders to reduce future incidents of cancers and genital warts.

In the latter part of our presentation, we will also take advantage of this opportunity to briefly add our organization's support for removing the PST exemption from sugary drinks, and further tobacco control measures.

First, HPV, which is short for human papillomavirus. We thank the committee for your 2016 recommendation to expand the vaccination program. We bring this issue forward again this year to offer you both new information and also an even larger groundswell of support for the program's expansion.

The Canadian Cancer Society asks for a school-based, publicly funded HPV vaccination program equally available to all genders. This has now been endorsed by 25 other leading health care organizations.

[1420]

B.C.'s current HPV school-based program is limited to only grade 6 girls. A subset of males are also eligible to seek out that vaccination, but it's not through the school-based program and only through public health or travel clinics and only if they self-identify as males who have sex with males, are infected by HIV, are street-involved, are in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development or in youth custody services. All other males need to pay \$300 to \$450 out of pocket to receive a cancer-preventing vaccine — which is unaffordable, unfortunately, for many parents and young adults.

Our concerns with the current vaccination program are that, first, it does not offer equitable cancer protection for all British Columbians. Secondly, the men who are currently eligible for this program because of their increased risk are likely not accessing the vaccine when it's most effective to them, which is before they become sexually active. That's because of the different barriers and limitations inherent in the current program. Third, B.C.'s regional vaccination rates are not high enough to offer herd immunity for heterosexual males.

The HPV infection does not discriminate based on gender, and 75 percent of all sexually active Canadians

will be affected in their lifetime. On average, 600 British Columbians are diagnosed with HPV-associated cancer every year. HPV is associated with mouth, throat, penile, vaginal, anal and cervical cancers.

It's not just cervical cancer in women, which the current program is intended primarily to address. Males are two to four times more likely to be affected by mouth and throat cancers than women, and males of ethnic minorities are even at higher risk. In fact, mouth and throat cancers are projected to become the most common HPV-associated cancer, exceeding even cervical cancer by the year 2020, which isn't too far in the future.

Then additionally, HPV is associated with anogenital warts, which are a considerable public health issue, in respect to quality of life, and an economic burden. They affect all genders, and 5,500 British Columbians are expected to be diagnosed with anogenital warts, at a direct medical cost annually of \$1 million.

The HPV vaccine is safe, and it is effective. The Canadian Immunization Committee recommends the HPV vaccine for males and females.

Common feedback we receive about the vaccine is about herd immunity and cost-effectiveness. So we'll just address those two points next. We've been asked: "Won't vaccinating girls also protect boys?" From an equity viewpoint, I would argue that no one should have to rely on a partner for cancer protection, nor should the onus for HPV-related sexual health be placed solely on women.

Even if we are to set aside, unfortunately, any of the issues of equity, in practice, in B.C., we do not have sufficient vaccination rates in all regions of the province to achieve herd immunity. Estimates show that at least 80 percent of females need to be vaccinated to provide immunity for heterosexual males. B.C. rates have stagnated and currently range at between 50 and 70 percent in the various regions of the province. It's with an expanded school-based program that all British Columbians could benefit, especially regions of the northeastern part of the province, Vancouver Island and Kootenay-Boundary, where we have considerably lower vaccination rates.

The second concern, around cost-effectiveness, is the next thing I'd like to address. The B.C. government expanding the program, for you now, is more cost-effective this year than in any other year previously. That's due to changes in vaccination dosage.

Traditionally, in B.C. we've provided three doses of the vaccine to girls, but based on evidence, this year it was decided to reduce the dosage to just two for girls. Expanding the program at this point to include boys would only involve the additional cost of one vaccine dosage — moving from three for girls to two for girls annually and two for boys — so a total of four vaccine dosages.

As well, cost-effectiveness modelling, which assumes a 70 percent participation rate — and we're just under that

in B.C. — predicts that governments can save up to \$145 Canadian per individual, compared to no vaccine at all. [1425]

B.C., as well, is not keeping pace with certain other provinces. Six other provinces offer vaccination for all genders. Ontario and Quebec just added their assent to that this year. Alberta, which offers vaccination to boys, expects to save \$13.4 million annually with the inclusion of boys in their school-based program.

In response to our recent public call for expanded vaccination, the Ministry of Health noted that all health care costs need to be balanced, suggesting a potential lack of funding. If new funding needs to be sourced, we would like to suggest a tax measure that will encourage healthy behaviour.

That brings us to our next topic, which is sugary drinks. We thank the committee for recommendations made in 2013, 2014 and again in 2016 to explore implementation of a tax on sugary drinks. Sugary drinks are the largest contributor of excess calories. Of course, they have no nutritional benefit and contribute significantly to excess weight. Unhealthy weight is a risk factor associated with nine different types of cancer. Measures to reduce consumption of sugary drinks contribute, certainly, towards healthier population outcomes.

Currently there is a gap in the provincial sales tax for sugary drinks. Beverages with added sugars — such as soda pops, sports drinks, energy drinks, pre-sweetened coffees and beverages — are exempt from PST and, therefore, unintentionally subsidized. We encourage the removal of this tax exemption on sugary drinks as a way to generate revenue that could go towards expanding an HPV vaccination program.

Finally, tobacco. It remains a significant priority for the Canadian Cancer Society, and we would like to reiterate our recommendation from the 2016 budget consultations on increasing tobacco taxes and implementing a tobacco retailer fee. The Canadian Cancer Society, in partnership with the B.C. Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation, represents the Clean Air Coalition. We will be submitting a joint written summary of our tobacco control recommendations for the committee's consideration.

To conclude, I'd just like to reiterate our three recommendations. First, expand the publicly funded school-based HPV vaccination program to include all genders. HPV causes cancer in all genders. B.C. is the only government to exclude vaccination based on sexual orientation. At the end of the day, we should not be picking and choosing who receives protection from cancer.

Secondly, we would like to ensure removal of the PST exemption from sugary drinks. This is an opportunity to discourage consumption and generate meaningful revenue for health prevention programs.

Finally, increase tobacco taxes and implement a tobacco retailer fee, as per the written recommendations of the Clean Air Coalition.

That's it. On behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, we want to thank you for your keen attention and time today and the opportunity to present our recommendations.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Well, on behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you for providing a very good presentation.

**S. Gibson:** A quick question. This is a really important issue in our province. We've certainly heard it before, and it's to be considered.

I notice in the back here you've got a couple of organizations — the centre for excellence in oral cancer prevention. I'm not naive to think that we can change behaviours. You've alluded to some of the activities younger people get into more and more now. Can we prevent some of the resulting tragedy, which you have outlined so well in this document here today that you've distributed to the committee? Can we moderate some of that through encouraging young people to have more careful behaviour, I might say? That's my question.

**S. Krueckl:** I think, actually, one of the interesting pieces of information that, of course, we've been keeping an eye on generally is.... Some of the opposition to the vaccine was whether or not that potentially opened the door to increased sexual activity among youth. In fact, since the vaccine was introduced, which I believe was in 2008, they've been monitoring that through various surveys. Youth are engaging in sexual activity with fewer partners and have improved their safe-sex practices.

[1430]

Overall, education and other measures are contributing positively to that. Of course, limiting the number of sexual partners is always a keen and appropriate way to reduce HPV infection for all ages. Ultimately, the sure way, in addition to encouraging safe sex practices, is vaccination.

**S. Gibson:** I guess once you have more than one partner, as you say, then that person is....

**S. Krueckl:** Yeah. It's after the first year of sexual activity. It's that year, the first year of sexual activity, that, really, somebody becomes at risk. That's where their exposure is to HPV and infections. That's the greatest risk window, which is why we need to reach people before the age of sexual activity onset.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your presentation.

There aren't a lot of arguments to add. I think you've laid it out very clearly. We've certainly raised the issue of disclosure and the challenge for, particularly, boys of that age to have to disclose. Very difficult at any age, but to expect that that would happen at this age makes no sense. Certainly support the proposal.

One of the issues that I haven't heard about in the last year but that, when the vaccine was first coming out, certainly was raised with me was just the strains and whether the vaccine covered all of the strains that affected HPV and cancer related to HPV. I wondered if there's any further research. I haven't heard the concern in the last while.

**S. Krueckl:** Yeah. The vaccine continues to be improved with different iterations of it. I believe right now it's effective against over 90 percent of cervical cancers and over 83 percent of cancers affecting....

You've got the details right here, Jenny. Would you like to answer?

**J. Byford:** Well, that captured it well. It also protects against 90 percent of all anogenital warts, as mentioned.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much, ladies, for presenting. It's very much appreciated and the first time we've heard that theme this trip. Maybe we'll hear it again.

**S. Krueckl:** Oh good. I'm glad we could tell you about it first. You might hear it a couple more times. It's important.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Yes, it is. We appreciate you coming. Thank you very much.

Next we have Simon Fraser Student Society, Christine Dyson and Arr Farah.

Come on down. Make yourselves comfortable. Welcome. Just to let you know, there are ten minutes for the presentation. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes left so you can conclude your thoughts. Then we go to the committee, here, for them to rough you up with some questions. How's that? If you're ready, the floor is yours.

**C. Dyson:** Hello. My name is Christine Dyson, and I am a student at Simon Fraser University, studying geography. I currently serve as the vice-president, external relations for the Simon Fraser Student Society.

**A. Farah:** My name is Arr Farah. I'm studying political science at SFU, and I currently serve as the vice-president, university relations for the Simon Fraser Student Society.

The Simon Fraser Student Society represents over 29,000 undergraduate students who attend Simon Fraser University at our three campuses — in Burnaby, Vancouver and Surrey. We would like to begin by thanking the government of British Columbia for the following investments: \$1.96 billion for advanced education; \$2.5 billion in capital spending over three years by post-secondary institutions across the province in the 2016 budget; \$12 billion in support for capital investments for hospitals, post-secondary institutions, transit and roads over the course of the fiscal year; the U-Pass B.C.

program; and \$219 million in provincial grants for the operations of Simon Fraser University.

**C. Dyson:** The economic value of investments made into post-secondary education cannot be discounted, as more than three quarters of the job openings projected for 2025 will require some post-secondary education, as noted in the B.C. labour market outlook. Additionally, the 2015 B.C. student outcomes report found out that the majority of post-secondary graduates of 2013 were successful in obtaining employment post studies, with 89 percent considered to be in the labour force.

Investments into education are not only furthering individual intellect but also producing a workforce that has the training requirements relevant to employers.

**A. Farah:** Now that the provincial government has realized a surplus for the fiscal year 2016-2017, we would like to recommend that the committee take the following recommendations into consideration.

Our first recommendation is to continue investing in the B.C. open textbook program to allow existing resources to be kept up to date and to support the creation of ancillary textbook materials.

[1435]

The B.C. open textbook project was created in 2012 and was the first initiative of its kind in Canada. With resources produced by BCcampus, the program produces free open-source resources for students to replace standard costly textbooks. Currently, there have been 588 known adoptions of B.C. open textbook at 31 B.C. institutions, with over 12,000 textbook downloads. It currently reports that there are 17,000 students who use open textbooks in B.C.

With past support from the Ministry of Advanced Education, the open textbook project library collection has grown since to include 159 titles spanning 36 subjects, while BCcampus has already contributed to the creation of test banks and other teaching materials.

Long-term funding will ensure the creation of more ancillary services, materials and a greater number of textbooks for institutions to adopt. Further investments in the B.C. textbook project will also allow the ministry's initial investment in the program to be fully utilized by ensuring existing books can be updated regularly so that they are usable in ever-changing courses.

**C. Dyson:** Our second recommendation is to demonstrate that funding for U-Pass B.C. has been allocated beyond April 2018 as a long-term priority for increasing student affordability. The U-Pass is used by tens of thousands of students at ten institutions in Metro Vancouver and has been a successful program in increasing affordability for students, reinforcing transit culture and reducing the frequency of driving to campus.

The pass allows students to save over \$1,500 a year by paying only \$39.50 a month. Even though rates have

increased year after year, the most recent U-Pass referendum held at SFU in spring 2016 received a 94 percent approval rate amongst undergraduate students. It is arguably the most popular service offered while attending university.

U-Pass provides a critical service to SFU students in the Metro Vancouver region. In the 2015-2016 loan year, the student loan programs calculated the student living allowance for public transportation in B.C. was \$93. While this allowance would be just enough for a student to purchase a one-zone transit pass at a cost of \$91, it would certainly not allow for students to purchase either a two- or three-zone pass.

The U-Pass B.C. program is undoubtedly considered an essential service by post-secondary students who use the pass to not only attend classes but to commute to work and other activities. Even today myself and Arr were reliant on the U-Pass to bring us here to present to you all. The U-Pass B.C. program provides a critical service to post-secondary students in the Metro Vancouver region, and it is vital that the provincial government commit to continuing this program.

Our final recommendation is to commit to stable, multi-year funds to allow SFU to develop a phased strategy to address deeper systemwide renewal requirements. At SFU, deferred maintenance has become a major concern. The ministry's facilities condition assessment done in 2015 indicates that the Burnaby campus core academic buildings have a facility condition index of 0.53 with 57 percent of the buildings in poor condition. In addition to the maintenance backlog, there are significant shortcomings in terms of building code, seismic and accessibility compliance.

The total estimated replacement cost of the buildings at SFU Burnaby is approximately \$2.5 billion. Using even the lowest funding guideline of 1.5 percent of the replacement value, this would mean that SFU Burnaby would require \$31 million yearly simply to maintain existing conditions.

Traditionally, the provincial government provides funding to assist with deferred maintenance. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the province for the \$17 million investment in 2016, from the routine capital funding, for deferred maintenance and for notional commitments of \$19 million and \$23 million for the following two years. The ministry's facilities condition assessment system indicates that SFU Burnaby currently has urgent deferred maintenance needs for the academic buildings alone of approximately \$221 million and total deferred maintenance and capital renewal requirements for all buildings at the Burnaby campus of over \$900 million.

It should be noted that none of these estimates includes site services and infrastructure expenses such as repairs to roads, sidewalks, water, sewer and electrical services outside the building. Currently, these are esti-

mated as having deferred maintenance needs totalling 30 percent to 50 percent of the replacement value of the buildings.

Additionally, SFU is still challenged by the need to provide funding to maintain non-core academic buildings such as student residences and athletics and recreation facilities, which are not eligible for routine capital funding. These account for \$228 million of the total deferred maintenance and capital renewal requirements at the Burnaby campus mentioned earlier.

[1440]

While the increase in routine capital funding has allowed component and some system renewals to be implemented, the limitations of the one-year window of the routine capital funding make it very challenging to tackle the urgent needs to correct deep-seated building system deferred maintenance issues. While the notional funding in future years is a step in the right direction, confirming firm multi-year capital renewal funding will allow long-range planning to address the complex tasks of retrofitting existing buildings in use.

**A. Farah:** We would like to thank you today for your time and for giving us the opportunity to present to all of you. If there is anything that we can do to be of service to you during your budget consultation process, please do not hesitate to ask.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you. Excellent. Well done. Great presentation.

I'm going to go to questions.

**J. Yap:** Thank you. Great presentation, very focused — topics which, of the three, two.... Well, one of them we haven't heard your colleagues from other institutions talk about. Certainly, U-Pass, we know, is a very important program, and we've heard about the capital issue at SFU.

I'm interested in, number one, the open textbook program. The number of known B.C. adoptions is 588. Does that mean the number of textbooks that are now available on line? What does that number...?

**A. Farah:** Yeah, that number means that the current ones are actually available on line in the BCcampus registry.

**J. Yap:** Right. And the universe of books that could be open texts — what would that number be? So in other words, this 588 today.... In a perfect world, if every book could be on line, would it be 2,000, 3,000, 5,000? Do you know that number?

**A. Farah:** I don't know. I'm sure it would be a big number. There are so many different programs and courses that it could be.... Potentially, if the program was funded, it could be for every single course that requires a textbook.

**J. Yap:** Yeah. But this is great. I've just crunched the number. That's an average, of students using the texts — a savings of \$130 per student. Some more, some less. I think that's a great one. Thank you for mentioning that.

**A. Farah:** I also think it's important to note that SFU actually doesn't have any textbooks that have been adopted, and that's something that we're trying to change as well.

**J. Yap:** Good.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** I was just going to follow up on the textbook issue as well and just ask you.... I know that one of the other challenges that I've often heard from students is you buy a textbook one year, you go to sell it, and things have changed. You can't use the same textbook. Is that addressed through the open book? Do they make the changes that are necessary for the following year?

**A. Farah:** Because open textbooks are textbooks that are going to always, continuously, be changing, because it's open-source material, it does allow for the flexibility to change it every year, which is a good thing. It allows it to update all the graphs, all the information, so that it's relevant in every year, and it doesn't add extra cost to students.

**R. Austin:** I just had a quick question. By the way, a very good presentation.

The deferred maintenance on the SFU campus.... That seems like an incredibly high figure. Was the building only built to last 40 years or something?

**C. Dyson:** To my knowledge, because the campus was built all in one installment at one point in time over 50 years ago, what we're seeing right now is that all of the deferred maintenance is happening all at once. And even newer buildings.... Because we have such a high level of deferred maintenance that can't even be addressed at this point in time, if newer buildings are experiencing some form of maintenance concerns, those aren't being addressed either, just because of the overrun.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Should I say it? A long time ago, SFU was built with a lot of artistic impression, and I think there's a certain amount of suffering that's been created. It's a beautiful campus. Don't get me wrong. But aside from a square box that you can seal off — you know, things don't leak — with that comes complexities in years to come.

The open textbook — yeah, it's a great program. It's my understanding, John, that they are looking at more opportunities to expand that. Of course, you're going to try to knock off the books that are the most popularly used and then work your way down the list. Yeah, we know

what textbooks can cost, don't we? It's a lot of money — a lot of money that can go towards tuition and all kinds of other things that you don't necessarily have to spend.

Good for you. That was a great presentation. Thank you very much for coming and sharing your views. If you have anything else you'd like to add, you can always submit it to the committee. If you have an afterthought or something else you'd like to add to your presentation, let us know.

**D. Ashton:** Andrew Petter is going to be here.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Oh, yeah. Your president and vice-chancellor is going to be here soon.

**D. Ashton:** In 30 minutes. You might want to wait around.

[1445]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I can guarantee he's going to be talking about deferred maintenance.

Anyway, thank you again for being here. I appreciate it. Take care. Well done.

Now we have the B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association — Kishone Roy.

**K. Roy:** I'm Kishone Roy. Many people know me by Tony, which is my middle name, which I used for a long time. I'm using my real first name.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you for being here. I appreciate it. Ten minutes for your presentation. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes left so that you can conclude your thoughts, and then these guys go to questions.

**K. Roy:** Great. Thank you all so much for your time and for this opportunity. I'm going to shout a little bit about social housing. My members, by way of background.... There are about 600 of them, who run 60,000 units of social housing around the province. It's everything from housing for those who are middle- to low income, as well as urban aboriginal populations, seniors on a fixed income, people with disabilities as well as suffering from mental health or addictions or other issues.

It's interesting. You were talking about building condition assessments. The problems in our sector are two-pronged. There's an obvious need to build new supply. A new supply of social housing hasn't been built in a generation. The waiting lists are massive. I think things like the Premier's announcement on Monday are extremely helpful to start building thousands of units of housing. That's the kind of amount that we need to be building every year in British Columbia to make up for both the backlog that's happened but also the rising population.

However, it's happening at a time when the operating agreements on these 60,000 units of housing that were built in the Mulroney and Trudeau Sr. era are coming to an end, and so are the government subsidies that help pay those mortgages. On many of those units, we're going to be able to keep those viable afterwards. Over two-thirds of them not having a mortgage will mean that we're able to still provide those units to tenants at very low income.

But for about a third of them, they're going to be at risk — either because the building is deteriorating and there aren't enough funds in the bank or because in order to keep the building operating, the only solution is to raise rents. In addition to making the case that we need a certain amount of ongoing funds to be able to build new housing, we need to be able to repair and maintain the old housing. We estimate, based on those building condition assessments, that the quantum of dollars needed to keep those livable is about \$270 million. That will protect some 20,000 units of housing.

One of the other burdens that we'll face.... We're going to try and deal with this with municipalities individually, but it's also somewhere where the province could be helpful — property taxes. Right now, B.C. Housing pays the property taxes wherever there's an operating agreement on an existing unit of housing. It's the equivalent, often, of about \$80 a month in rent per unit for a low-income person. If you're somebody that's making — or only has — \$375 a month in your shelter rate, that \$80 is a big difference.

When B.C. Housing stops paying that at the end of the operating agreement, then the non-profit has to pay those taxes to the municipality. The only way to do that is to raise rents. So we're going to try and work with some municipalities to get waivers on those. But that's also somewhere where the province can come in and reclassify some of those or direct some funding to municipalities to help with their burden there.

The other thing I would like to talk about is homelessness. It's going to take many years to build the new social housing that we need, and in the meantime, homelessness is probably going to be on the rise in British Columbia. We would like to see an immediate program put into place that is able to give those individuals who are currently without a home some sort of portable subsidy so that they could find something in the market while we build the social housing.

We'd also like to make the case that the B.C. government should be funding the creation of a by-name registry of homeless individuals so that we know who they are, what conditions they're suffering from and where they are. As units become available, we could work to coordinate access so that we know who is most vulnerable, and we can go out and make sure they get a unit before their physical health deteriorates to the point where they die.

[1450]

In some years, up to 50 British Columbians are dying because they're homeless. While we're in a very important discussion about how to fix that in the long term by building new supply and saving some of the old ones, in the meantime, there's going to be a couple of years where things are going to get worse before they get better. We'd suggest that some sort of emergency program there would help solve that.

There are lots of other issues going on in social housing, but I wanted to limit my comments to those areas there that I felt were a priority: some changes with the tax situation; the need for a permanent program to build social housing on an ongoing basis, particularly in communities that are growing; and then the problems around homelessness — a by-name registry, some coordinated access and a portable subsidy.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. Appreciate that.

**J. Yap:** You referenced the past program of development of such projects in the 1970s and '80s. I recall — I'm dating myself here — that at the time, there was a federal program, multiple-unit residential building, which I think ended some time in the early '80s.

**A Voice:** MURBs.

**J. Yap:** MURBs, yeah. That really spurred a lot of development of such projects, I recall.

Are you aware if the federal government is considering something like that — to go back to that, which will be a federal investment — as part of their approach in working with provinces?

**K. Roy:** It's an extremely important question. When the federal government killed the MURB program, they also killed the social housing program. They essentially took all of the incentives away and all the funding away to build almost any rental housing in Canada. So the whole country sort of fell behind, with the exception of Quebec, where the provincial government came in and put together a pretty robust program.

As British Columbia's social housing providers, we would also make the case that these kinds of incentives in the private sector are critical, because there's no way we can build alone the kind of rental housing supply that we need. I know that the federal government is looking at removing the GST on rental housing. That was something that was in their platform, and I know some provinces are pitching that they should do something like the MURB program.

They kept all of the incentives for homeowners, right? They kept allowing you to take out money from your RSPs. They kept the capital gains tax exemption on the sale. They kept all of the CMHC insurance programs.

Everything that was there for homeowners stayed in place, and everything that was there for renters and for those poor was removed. I think focusing on the whole rental spectrum is really important.

The other thing I would say is that these problems disproportionately hurt British Columbia more than any other province. In our submission to the federal government on the national housing strategy, we're going to ask them to stop looking at their funding solutions just by population, because British Columbia's population grew a ton since 1990 — faster than almost any other province. Because of our weather and stronger economy here, the quantum of the problem here is much, much larger, and giving equal dollars to another province where there isn't a problem won't really help.

We also have cities in rural British Columbia where there's a huge rental housing issue. In Cranbrook, they have a vacancy rate of under 1 percent. You want to bring businesses into town, but there's nowhere for them to come and work. It's the number one issue for our tech sector. You know, that's different than the rest of the country, so it'll be hard, I think, for the federal government to come up with a program like that, because it's not necessarily needed everywhere else. They need to really understand the unique issues of B.C. here.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate you raising the issue of the need for a comprehensive plan, to be able to look at the range of housing. You mentioned the social housing agreements and a percentage that may still be in trouble because of the maintenance issues and not having the resources for the maintenance issues to be able to maintain the lower rents and the lower opportunities.

[1455]

If we lose those — I think you mentioned 20 percent to 30 percent, that percentage — again that will put pressure on communities that have, right now, no rentals, no affordable housing whatsoever. I just wondered whether there are any discussions going on at all with that percentage of housing — around trying to support them to be able to continue to maintain those units. That will have a huge impact on Victoria as well — an under 1 percent vacancy rate and the challenges that that creates.

The pressure I've seen building, which I hope isn't something we see continue, is the pressure between the Streets to Home community and the challenges that they're facing, versus families who are looking for affordable housing. People are feeling like there is going to be a jumping of the wait-list because of the need, which I don't think is going to serve anyone well.

**K. Roy:** There are two parts to that. I'll do your last point first, which is average- to moderate-income families — all of a sudden having nothing there for them in the private market. There's also really nothing for them in

social housing. There is a little bit, but in the big scheme of things, the percentage is quite small. So there's a whole gap of people who aren't being served by the current housing strategy of the province. I would suggest that some of the new housing that will be built will be targeted more at that middle group.

But I'd also say that I've made the invitation to B.C. Housing and the minister to start to think about affordable home ownership in a different way. Other jurisdictions that suffer from some of the crises we're having around the world have stopped looking at home ownership as strictly 100 percent ownership. There's partial equity, as well as the ability to use things like land trusts to sell just a unit to an individual, not the land, thus bringing down the price, and then taking a bunch of people who would otherwise not have the opportunity for housing to get in there.

To your first point, on the existing stock. We're in discussions with B.C. Housing as well as CMHC and some of the other provinces to create some toolkits so that our members can go out there and evaluate the problem and save as many of those units as possible.

I wait with anticipation for the national housing strategy. I think the federal government sees the legacy of what they've done, which is build over 600,000 units of housing around the country — that's social housing and co-op housing — and wants to protect it. The federal minister has made the case to me, very specifically, that that legacy of housing is something that they want to protect.

But I don't think there's a plan in place. There isn't a plan yet here in British Columbia. It's one of these things that everybody's monitoring. To some extent, it's case by case. In some situations, you can just fix the building. In others, it's beyond repair, so you should build something else. In others, you'll want to leverage the asset to be able to do a redevelopment project. There's not a one-size-fits-all solution.

I would say that one of the biggest impediments to success, though, will be the \$375 shelter allowance. It is not possible for us to house people, even if we own the building completely, for that rate. The property taxes and the staffing and the maintenance of those buildings equal more than that alone, so we're out fundraising and trying to do stuff in the marketplace and use our profits to help those individuals. Some sort of allowance that would change that dynamic would be most helpful.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Any other questions?

**J. Rice:** I just have a comment that I really appreciate your presentation. I guess I, too, wait with anticipation for the plans of both levels of government. I represent the North Coast, which includes Prince Rupert and Haida Gwaii, and we're certainly experiencing a vast array of housing and homelessness issues.

One that's really timely is the fact that those operating grants are concluding, and a lot of our units are flipping over to market rental rates. And then in the last year, our rates.... We have Vancouver-priced rentals right now without any of those amenities and options that you would actually find in Vancouver. It is something that my communities are certainly struggling with, and I'm certainly struggling, as their representative, in providing the solutions. So I'm pretty anxious as well.

**K. Roy:** One of the odd things we do in housing — certainly, this is perhaps even more the case in British Columbia — is we take what should be a temporary problem, like homelessness, and we put permanent funding into place by building something like a shelter. A shelter costs more to build than a social housing unit, more to operate, but it's there quickly to help people have a roof over their heads.

British Columbia now spends \$150 million a year on shelters. That was more than we were spending building social housing. We're building shelters to try and deal with homelessness.

[1500]

It's the same with rent supplements. What you've done is.... Those are kind of permanent. Once somebody has that supplement, how do you get away from it? You have permanent money to solve a temporary problem. Meanwhile, your permanent issue, which is the need for social housing, you come in with temporary money: "Okay, we're going to do a capital grant. We're going to build some stuff this year, and then we're not going to do it again."

Those things kind of have to be flipped around. We need a permanent program to build permanent housing. Then when somebody's in an emergency situation, like 112 people are in Terrace, where they're living without a home, we should come in with some temporary money to help them stabilize until we build that permanent housing. So I think a relook at what we're doing is probably something that's in order.

**J. Rice:** Those are excellent points.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much, Mr. Roy. I appreciate your coming forward and expressing your views.

**K. Roy:** Have a nice day.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** You too. Enjoy.

Next we have Simon Fraser University — Mr. Andrew Petter and Joanne Curry. Come on down. You've done this before. I'll try to give you some warning when there are a couple of minutes left. A ten-minute presentation, and then we'll go to the committee for questions. The floor is yours.

**A. Petter:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the committee. We really appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts and perspectives and are delighted to be able to do so here in Surrey, which is home to our third campus, SFU Surrey. If you haven't visited it, I encourage you to do so.

I think the starting point for our presentation is simply to emphasize the strength of the B.C. post-secondary education system. It's a very diverse system, it's integrated, and it makes an enormous contribution to this province's well-being, very much to the credit of successive governments that built that system.

However, I think there's evidence that is mounting to show that there is now a serious underinvestment in that system. We're not really maximizing the value of that system for the benefit of British Columbia and certainly not for the benefit of young people who depend upon it to achieve their full potential.

Last year with the committee, I referenced a study from the Conference Board of Canada that showed that, notwithstanding current investments in post-secondary education, B.C. suffers from a shortage of post-secondary graduates. It's costing the province \$4.7 billion in forgone GDP. That translates into tax revenues in excess of \$600 million that are not being collected.

That same study found that over 95,000 B.C. residents are not employed because they've not obtained a level of education adequate to meet current employers' needs. While that shortfall exists across the post-secondary system, including in trades and applied skills, the study found that the largest gap is in bachelor- and graduate-level education.

What I wanted to share with you today is that there have now been subsequent studies and reports that very much confirm that finding — recent reports from industry associations and leaders. I'll reference two.

The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade highlighted the education deficit in its *Scorecard 2016*. Compared to our closest competitors around the globe, Metro Vancouver received a C grade from the board of trade for the percentage of our people 25 years or over who have a bachelor's degree or higher. Just 31 percent of our population has this increasingly necessary credential. If you want to compare that to some of our competitors south of the border, in Seattle, it's 40 percent; San Francisco, 46 percent. That is an education deficit that is costing us.

Similarly, if you look at the B.C. Business Council's report on innovation, released only this week, they, too, found serious shortfalls — in areas such as engineering, technicians, technologists — that are costing the economy and costing employers the opportunity to create the jobs and economic growth that I know we would all like to see. Perhaps more importantly, they're costing young people the opportunity to gain those opportunities to contribute and to benefit.

It will come as no surprise, I'm sure, to the committee that we feel that need, particularly here south of the Fraser. In Surrey, I'm sure you've heard, from others who've appeared before you, of the incredible growth that's taking place in this region. But it's not only growth. It's the youthful makeup of the population here, with one-third of residents under 19. The South Fraser accounts now for one-third of all B.C. high school graduates.

Yet we know the region has significantly less access to post-secondary education than other parts of the province. In fact, if you look at all the spaces provided by SFU Surrey and Kwantlen Polytechnic University, what we offer is 12.7 post-secondary spaces for every 100 18- to 24-year-olds in this region. That's below the B.C. average, significantly. The B.C. average is 38 seats, so 12.7 to 38.

[1505]

At the same time, we know that in Surrey, regrettably, the residents don't have the same level of educational attainment as elsewhere. Only 16 percent of Surrey residents hold a university degree, less than half of Vancouver's average of 33. Surrey school district is now the largest in the province, with 32 percent of grade 12 enrolments and the largest population of aboriginal students in the Lower Mainland.

So there's a huge need, huge growth, a young population. Of course, what that means is we're seeing hundreds of students who, regrettably, are not getting the opportunities that they need to gain the educational attainment to contribute to economic growth and to benefit the province.

In fact, just to give you a sense of that, what's happening at SFU.... Our average entrance GPA at SFU, being driven by this population pressure, has risen from just over 80 percent to over 87 percent over the past five years. That's an indication of just how many qualified students are not getting the opportunity to participate in programs which would benefit them and benefit the province. That's even more the case in high-demand programs, where entrance level GPAs have risen by as high as 10 percent in some cases.

I am here to renew, therefore, the request of the committee for the excellent report you put out last year and the recommendation you made. You may recall that we referenced the fact that even back in 2006, we and the province reached an MOU that anticipated a doubling of the size of our Surrey campus from 2,500 FTEs to 5,000. It was supposed to happen by 2015. If I'm not mistaken, that has passed. But never too late to act. In fact, the population growth, I think, has probably exceeded those early projections.

Last year, this committee recommended that that doubling take place forthwith, and I'm hoping that you might recommend that again. We have very exciting plans to ensure that that growth will align with the needs of students and, as importantly, with the needs of B.C. and the local economy. Our first priority is for a program

in sustainable energy and environmental engineering, followed by a health systems innovation and sustainability program and one dealing with creative technologies — all high-demand areas, all areas that speak to provincial priorities and needs and in which there is ample employment opportunity and, indeed, opportunity for growth.

I will say that we're currently pursuing both federal and provincial capital funding opportunities for growth in Surrey and are cautiously optimistic. We're also looking for provincial operating funding, with a mind to that first development of an energy systems engineering program, which, in turn, would really help to spur the growing energy sector here in Surrey and in the province.

So we're hoping that the committee will renew its support that it gave last year and, indeed, has given twice before for this expansion. If you look at the general provincial case that I presented to you at the outset, that case is amplified here, south of the Fraser, for all the reasons I've given.

I will just touch on a couple of other issues. I'll touch very lightly on the issue of deferred maintenance and replacement. I think our students did an excellent job, as I understand it, in making that case. I will just point out that the age of our Burnaby campus — 50-plus years now — has caused serious problems. We're very grateful that the province has increased routine maintenance this year and, we understand, is hoping to do so in succeeding years. That will start to eat away at some of the accumulated backlog.

Some of the buildings, regrettably, are in a state now where maintenance is no longer the issue. It's replacement. Our biology building, for example, really needs replacement. I'm hoping that the province can find funds to allocate to replace some of the capital stock in situations where repair would be more costly and less efficient. Our life sciences building is certainly at the top of our list.

I'll also emphasize a few other areas, anticipating that you may hear this from other universities. We'll certainly submit a written report that captures this and some of the other submissions you hear.

Graduate student support. B.C. is really falling behind other jurisdictions in terms of its support for graduate students, both in the sense of supporting universities to take on graduate students — indeed, almost half our graduate students are unfunded — but also in scholarship and fellowship support to attract the best and brightest graduate students and retain them here in the province. These are the students who are going to really make a difference economically and socially. They're the ones who are going to be able to break through into new areas and develop new ideas that will benefit the province.

[1510]

We're losing them to other jurisdictions, either because we don't have the funding to educate them or because they don't have the support that they require through provincial fellowship programs of the kind that exist in

Alberta and Ontario. They're attracted elsewhere rather than coming here to B.C.

Finally, I'll just touch on an area that I think you're going to hear about in a joint submission from the colleges, the teaching universities and the research universities, and that is the consequences of the \$50 million in cuts that took place at a time when the province was looking for savings.

Those cuts, while perhaps understandable and necessary at that time, have had serious impacts, particularly on student services. SFU, along with other post-secondary institutions, will be looking to government to, hopefully, restore that \$50 million in annual funding so we can start to restore services in key areas that the province itself has said are priorities. I'm talking of areas of student mental health — very important issues in mental health that we need to address to ensure the health and safety and success of our students.

Prevention of sexual violence and misconduct — a big concern the province has highlighted. We're concerned about it, but it does require resources to address it and ensure we have the educational and support programs we need.

Expanding work-integrated learning. SFU is a leader in the nation in terms of co-op education, but we'd like to do even more in that area.

Finally, indigenous student support. I know the province is concerned, as are we. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirms the need for post-secondary institutions to do more in this area. We are doing more, but we struggle for the resources to support indigenous students in the way that could really help them to succeed and, again, improve the province's economy as well as the individual students.

Those are our submissions and our hopes, and I really appreciate the chance to share those with you. Joanne and I will be delighted to try to answer any of your questions.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Perfect. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**S. Gibson:** Thank you. I think one thing I've appreciated as an SFU grad is the flexibility of SFU as opposed to some other universities, making it possible for adult learners such as myself and others to be able to work on a credential without having to put aside their whole lives.

The Canadian model, traditionally, does not embrace that. Our U.S. cousins are much more progressive. I'd like you to comment on that.

**A. Petter:** I think universities are starting generally to become more adaptive, flexible and engaged. I do think — and I appreciate the comment — that SFU is a leader, a bit of a beacon. It always has been. When SFU was set up, we were set up as a tri-semester university so you could study throughout the year. We have a much larger proportion of students who are part-time students who work

and study. And yes, we have some outstanding continuing studies or professional development programs that are specifically targeted at the community.

Our vision of being an engaged university really looks to the community and puts community need and student need up front. I hope we're still breaking new ground in that area.

But I do want to say that I do detect among the whole post-secondary sector a much greater openness and understanding of the need for universities to be much more connected to the communities they serve. So I hope you'll see similar progress in other institutions. I think it's already there, and hopefully, you'll detect it, along with me.

**J. Curry:** I'll just add to that. At the Surrey campus, we have a really thriving continuing studies offering — both in Vancouver and, particularly, in Surrey. We're seeing incredible needs from management, education, human resources, brewing — a whole variety of industries that people are being attracted to for further study — and the first MBA program part-time in the South Fraser, which is also attracting a lot of interest.

**S. Gibson:** A supplementary, Mr. Chairman.

We had somebody from the Surrey downtown association earlier, and I asked the question: can you get a degree? Can you graduate with a degree from the campus here in Surrey? The answer was no, but she aspired to that. She said you can't get a degree without having to do Burnaby as well. That was her impression.

**A. Petter:** Well, Joanne, as the former executive director of the Surrey campus, can be more authoritative. But I can certainly tell you, you can get an executive MBA and study only in Surrey. And certain programs are delivered almost entirely in Surrey. Some are not. We're a multi-campus university, and we don't want to duplicate effort in a way that would be inefficient.

Joanne, you may want to....

**J. Curry:** Absolutely. It was really important for the original vision of the campus that there be full degree program opportunities. Two of our most significant programs are mechatronics engineering and interactive arts and technology, and both offer bachelor's, master's and PhD components to that program.

There's also available, for example.... Doctoral programs in education are also offered at the Surrey campus. So a fairly wide range.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** A couple of minutes left.

[1515]

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your presentation. And thank you for once again.... Maybe it'll be fourth time lucky on the recommendation.

I think you put forward a very clear case, and I think you're continuing to show the innovation when you talk about the kinds of programs that you could put into an expanded campus and the opportunity there. I think it is a question about whether that expansion needs to be bigger now with the increased population. I think that's probably a discussion that needs to occur.

The other piece I think that Simon Fraser does well and that you certainly hear about is the engagement of communities in a lot of the work that you do. In many ways, universities were the place to be able to have that kind of engaged dialogue with communities — with the larger community, not necessarily just university students. I think we kind of got away from that, and I think Simon Fraser has hung onto that.

I wonder if you could just talk about a few of the things that you might be doing in that particular area, because I think it's unique, but it's also critical and important, I think, for universities to stay connected.

**A. Petter:** At SFU, it's really reflected in all the aspects of what we do. The new program I referred to will have mandatory co-op terms which require students to participate in work terms within the community that are related to their study.

Our researchers in Surrey. I'll use Surrey examples again. We have an initiative here called Surrey innovation boulevard. It's a unique partnership between the city of Surrey and Simon Fraser to create an economic hub around, initially, medical technologies, but we hope it will grow into clean tech. It brings together university researchers and students with healthcare professionals, with small, medium and large business to really work on how we can grow a health technology sector.

On the social side, we're doing a lot of work with indigenous communities. We're in the Downtown Eastside but also on the mid-coast, for example. One of the things I think Joanne and I are particularly proud of is the fact that in Surrey, we have launched a Surrey Community Engagement Centre, which is specifically designed to make sure the community can connect with us and we can meet community needs.

I'll give you one more example. I really am very proud of a program called Friends of Simon, delivered through that centre.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** We will conclude with that example.

**A. Petter:** This puts university students into high schools and elementary schools to help kids who are having trouble because of cultural and language barriers to do better. It's highly successful. And the students who do the teaching get a great education, as well as the students who are taught.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** On that note, thank you very much. I know we could talk about it for hours and hours.

**A. Petter:** It's endlessly fascinating too.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I know. I know. I do appreciate you coming down and presenting.

Okay, next. On we go. B.C. Food Processors Association. Mr. James Donaldson and Mr. Rick Gagner.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Ten minutes to present, then I'll give you a high sign with a couple of minutes left, and then we'll go to the committee for questions. The floor is yours.

**J. Donaldson:** Very good. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present to you today. The longer I do this, the more familiar the faces are becoming, so that's nice to see most of you again.

For the benefit of the committee, the B.C. Food Processors Association is a membership association representing all aspects of the food, beverage and natural health products industries. Our membership is nearing 400, and they represent over \$6 billion in revenue and \$20,000 jobs in the provincial economy.

In order for the province of B.C. to achieve its stated goal of \$17 billion of the agrifood sector by 2020, we have summarized some key areas where we're counting on the province to support our industry.

First is for the government to support the B.C. agrifoods sector to ensure a level playing field with imported goods. Exports for food processing and agrifoods in general has been a success story in this province, but what most people don't realize is that, as much as exports are growing, imports are growing by twice the rate.

In fact, nationally, in 2004, we had a trade deficit for manufactured food products of \$1 billion. That's grown to over \$3.6 billion, and that was actually in 2011. Provincially, our trade deficit on manufactured food items has grown by \$500 million in the last five years. It's the only group in the food industry with a net trade deficit. So agriculture and seafood has been having positive variances, but processed has not.

In the past few years, we've seen a rise in the number of imported processed products hitting B.C. and Canadian markets. All too often, these products are lower in quality, lower in price and not compliant with our own regulations.

[1520]

We recognize that CFIA has capacity issues and isn't able to manage their large workload, and this has been the reasoning behind a lot of the non-compliance continuing to flow into our province, onto store shelves and on restaurant menus. Most recently, we've seen this happen with imported duck from Hungary and honey from China.

We urge the province to impress upon the federal government the need for CFIA to refrain from certifying for-

eign companies to import into Canada and B.C. without physical inspection and assurances that they will adhere to the same food safety and humane-slaughter standards demonstrated by domestic processors. Simply put, if CFIA does not have the resources to regulate imported goods, they shouldn't be approving them for import.

For us to continue to be competitive, we need to make sure we have a level playing field. Our members are not afraid of competition, not one bit. But the rules of engagement need to be consistent, and they need to be universally applied, not just to domestic producers.

The second item I wanted to share with you today. I was talking about programs needed to attract more labour to our industry. This is not a new challenge for the agrifood sector, but in a recent poll of B.C. processors, lack of available labour was identified as the number one industry weakness and identified as one of the largest threats to growth of capacity and output.

Processors' inability to find skilled workers has become an inhibitor to growth, not only by negatively impacting production capacity but by higher costs associated with overtime, recruiting and training less-skilled workers to manage more challenging roles. We urge the province to continue to offer funding under the B.C. jobs grant that will allow B.C. processors to develop solutions to mitigate the risk in this critical area.

Additionally, our industry is characterized by a variety of positions and labour needs, which is quite unique and which also makes it very difficult to have a provincial or industrywide training strategy that is consistent across all sectors. Tofu manufacturers have very different needs than abattoirs — it's just reality — as well as natural health products manufacturers, which Rick is.

Labour productivity in the industry is actually lower in B.C. than in most other provinces. At \$40.10 in output per hour worked, B.C. lags behind other major food manufacturing provinces, such as Quebec and Ontario. Ontario is actually at \$64.38, so it's quite a significant difference. Because of the significance to B.C.'s economy, which is actually \$9.1 billion in total, investing in a labour market strategy specific to the food and beverage manufacturing sector may help to address labour issues facing our industry.

**R. Gagner:** I would just add to that that several years ago, we made a presentation to Minister Murray Coell to open up the provincial nominee program to include low- and semi-skilled workers in the food processing sector. At the time, it was simply long-haul trucking and, I believe, the tourism sectors. They did open up. My plant at the time had 24 employees that would have been returned back to the Philippines if they hadn't received the concession.

Obviously, that made 25 families' lives a windfall, and they've gone on to educate their kids and become valuable parts of our community. I'd just say that the provincial nominee program is extremely important.

We have an abattoir that has ten positions that are vacant and can't get low-skilled employees. If we want to have productivity, if we want to have economic growth, we need to have the ability to bring in.... Employees, unfortunately, aren't willing, in Canada, to work in those trades. It's sad to say that I couldn't even get my 21-year-old son at the time to work in that plant. But I love those people that came and worked and are doing a great job and a service to our community.

**J. Donaldson:** The third item that I wanted to present to you today was recommending an incentive for food and beverage manufacturers to invest in production technology. Compared to other manufacturing sectors, food processing is actually quite far behind in terms of age and productivity of equipment. So this, compounded with the labour issues that our industry struggles with, is what you'd call.... The technical term is a double whammy. We have inefficient and cost-prohibitive production equipment and a shortage of labour.

According to the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, food and beverage processing has older production equipment than almost all other sections. We have underinvested in this area, and frankly, our window of opportunity to do so was when the exchange rate was close to par with the U.S. dollar, because almost all of the manufacturing equipment is coming from Europe and from the United States.

[1525]

Older, less-efficient production equipment, coupled with the labour shortages, has become a threat to our industry's overall competitiveness. Incentives are needed to encourage B.C. processors to invest in production technology. This would serve three major economic benefits:

- (1) More efficient equipment will serve to improve operational efficiencies and combat rising costs.
- (2) Overall increase in production capacity, which will drive continued economic growth and profitability.
- (3) With better and more efficient equipment and automation, B.C. processors may be able to reduce their exposure to the scarce labour force.

In practical terms, if you can put a more efficient production line in place and only need five staff instead of seven on a production line, you're not necessarily eliminating jobs. You're simply reducing your risk for those roles that you can't actually fill.

The federal government does offer an accelerated capital cost allowance write-off, but currently most incentives around innovation are centred around brand-new technology, including intellectual property and patent development, not around practical production technology. It's also very agriculture-focused. There have been very, very few incentives for investment in technology within the food and beverage processing sector. I believe that this is critically needed and will help our sector immensely.

**R. Gagner:** I'd just make a comment there that that paradox that we faced in the industry when our dollar was strong and our margins were down, so we didn't invest when we could have invested. So now that our dollar is weaker and we've got....

I actually have a plant in the U.S., so I can manufacture products in the U.S. and sell them in the U.S., and I get a premium, of course, with the U.S. dollars coming back. But the cost of the equipment has run away on us, so it is a bit of a challenge to try and catch up. My productivity of my team down in the U.S. with better equipment is 20 to 30 percent better than it is in Canada. So it does put us at a distinct productivity disadvantage.

I think it's not just an issue for me in the natural products industry. It is for processing in general.

**J. Donaldson:** Finally one last comment. B.C. continues to remain the only province that does not have a food innovation centre to help food processors with product development. There's a lot of work being done being by groups such as UBC, where they're actually getting industry to come to the table, as well, to work collaboratively. We're requesting the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Advanced Education to support these efforts. Even Saskatchewan, for an example, has two innovation centres, and I believe we actually dispose of more product than the processing industry in Saskatchewan produces. So I think it's a critical need.

When you look at the makeup of processors in this province, over 90 percent are what would be considered micro or small in size, and those are the companies that needs those resources the most. They're also, typically, heavily focused in the categories that offer the most short- and long-term potential of growth both domestically as well as in the import market.

Natural health products or unique organic products — those are the products that are being developed in B.C. that are distinctive for B.C., but there's a real challenge for those companies to continue to be able to develop those products and research and continue to improve their methods. Really, where we can make a difference in the export market is through differentiated products. We're not going to win exporting commodity-type manufactured goods. We just never will be cost-competitive. But if we can focus on value-added and differentiation, then we'll have a competitive edge. That's the resource that's missing from enabling us to do that.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. We'll go to questions.

**J. Yap:** Thanks for your presentation. Your first issue — a more level playing field with imports. You gave an example, I think you said that duck from Hungary.... Is it a food safety issue, or is it a cost and price-dumping

issue, or both? Have you lobbied the federal government to step up on CFIA?

**J. Donaldson:** We have, not in this instance but in a number of instances. To answer your questions, I think it is both. The issue is that there were over 30 processing facilities in Hungary that were approved for import into Canada. None of them were physically inspected at all, because they didn't have capacity.

The product that's been hitting the market has been over a year old. It's significantly cheaper, and while those products themselves aren't hitting grocery store shelves, the domestic industry, particularly the producers in B.C., have lost almost all of their food service business, because anything that's going on menus or is even an ingredient in a finished good.... People are buying the cheaper product.  
[1530]

So in a lot of respects, it is just dumping. But it's also: how do you define that? We don't necessarily know their cost of production because we've never had anyone physically inspect their facilities.

**J. Yap:** Are there not tariffs on product coming from that part of Europe?

**J. Donaldson:** In certain categories, there are. But duck actually doesn't fall under supply management. If it fell under the chicken industry, it would be, but because it's duck, it's not. Birds of a feather.

**R. Austin:** Thanks for the presentation. That's a very interesting story. The other thing is food products coming in from China. We sell some of our products there at a huge premium to China because the Chinese people themselves don't trust their own food system. So it's kind of ironic to think the people in this country are accepting Chinese products when we don't even know what quality it is. That's one thing.

But I want to speak to Rick's comment around bringing in labour. I think that if we cannot find folks to do certain jobs.... I mean, you mentioned that your own son didn't want to do certain things. If we can't find people here in British Columbia to do them, I think it's perfectly good for us to be thinking about lobbying the federal government around the nominee program. I think the important thing for British Columbians is to be able to enable people to emigrate to this country, do a job that Canadians don't want to do, then stay here, become citizens here.

I think that's something that I would certainly be in support of, rather than bringing in temporary foreign workers, for example. I certainly think it's something we can discuss when we have our deliberations.

**R. Gagner:** This is totally coincidental, but I met with my HR director today, and she asked me when we were

going to hand out the long-service awards. I have ten people that are five years, five that are ten, four that are 15 and one that's 25, and all of them are immigrants to Canada. I mean, it's a phenomenal legacy. That happened last Christmas, where I did the same thing. I've got 25-year employees, and where do you see that today?

**J. Donaldson:** That's actually become one of the largest inefficient costs of food manufacturers — bringing people in and training them. When you look at some of the younger demographics, they come in; they spend six months. They don't have the skills. They train them, and then somebody offers them 25 cents an hour more, and they move on. They have to reinvest those costs in somebody brand-new, and the cycle keeps repeating itself just because of those shortages.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. Thank you, gentlemen, for presenting. It's a very interesting subject and the first time we've heard that one this week. Hopefully, much of what you said is going to be absorbed, and we'll have more discussions going forward about some of the issues you brought up.

**J. Donaldson:** Appreciate that. Thank you very much for your time.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Take care now. Have a good day.

Next we have the B.C. Wildlife Federation, Lower Mainland — Troy Halliday.  
Mr. Halliday, greetings.

**T. Halliday:** How are you doing?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Good afternoon. I'm doing well. How are you?

**T. Halliday:** I'm good, thank you.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Good. Thank you for being here. I think you'd be about the third person as an outdoor enthusiast that's presented to our committee this week, and that's great. We love to hear it.

**T. Halliday:** Well, we're making sure you get the point, right?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** That's great. I love it. Ten minutes for the presentation. I'll try to get your attention when you're winding down to the waning seconds.

**T. Halliday:** We'll be okay.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. All right, I'll leave that up to you.

**T. Halliday:** My name's Troy Halliday. Currently I'm a director on the region 2 board of the British Columbia Wildlife Federation and access chair for the provincial board. On behalf of the 11,000 members of the BCWF located here in the Lower Mainland, region 2, I thank you for the opportunity to present before the Standing Committee on Finance regarding important issues in relation to natural resource management and sustainability in our province.

I've lived here in British Columbia all my life — mostly all of it, more specifically, in the Fraser Valley. It's a life that's included angling and hunting. At a young age it started with my family fishing for chinook, oolichans and sturgeon on the mighty Fraser. Later on, I was introduced to hunting moose in the Cariboo region.

When I was old enough to be on my own, the province of British Columbia offered me endless possibilities. I've fished the Queen Charlottes and Vancouver Island for halibut, salmon and rockfish. In fact, I owned and operated a fishing charter business out of Port Renfrew for five years.

I've fished the Bulkley, Kispiox, Morice, Vedder, Thompson, San Juan and Alouette rivers for steelhead, just to name a few.

I've explored far greater reaches of the province in the pursuit of wild game: elk in the Kootenays, bison in the Peace country, mule and whitetail deer in the Okanagan and Thompson-Nicola, moose in the Skeena and Omineca regions, blacktail deer and black bear on Vancouver Island, California bighorn sheep and mountain goat in the Chilcotins and grizzly bear in the Skeena. I've laid foot on more of this province than many will in their lifetimes, all attributed to hunting and angling.

[1535]

In that time, I've witnessed fluctuations in wildlife and fish species populations, and there's been an alarming trend, a slow, downward spiral of populations for most species. You won't see it year over year, but one does see it over a lifetime.

Once boasting the highest concentrations of moose populations in the world, the Omineca region is down 50 to 70 percent. In the late 70s and early 80s, the Cariboo region supplied resident hunters with approximately 3,000 moose annually and 70,000 hunting days. For the last 15 years, on average, it has been less than 1,000 moose and 20,000 hunting days.

Mule deer and elk populations have seen a drastic decline in the Kootenays. For what reason, we don't know yet.

This year's Fraser River sockeye returns were the lowest in recorded history. Thompson River steelhead are at critical levels, with a return of only 600 fish last year.

Resident anglers have not been able to fish for oolichan since 2004.

And finally, one word — caribou. If this trend continues, by the time my grandchildren are of age to hunt

or fish, they won't be able to do so. There won't be anything left.

Cumulative effects are taking their toll on all wildlife species. It's a death by a thousand cuts. Habitat loss; degradation of habitat; resource extraction, be it mining, forestry, gas and oil; our own population growth; urban sprawl; pollution of both land and water; our lack of concern for the environment and mismanagement; differences of opinion between user groups, be it resident hunters and anglers, First Nations, guide outfitters, anti-hunting organizations and industrial users; and even infighting amongst ourselves have all been detrimental to habitat and wildlife.

How can we reverse the trend? Simply put, money. Funding for habitat enhancement of forests; wetlands, rivers, lakes and stream rehabilitation projects; adequate funding for conservation services and enforcement; education that will inform all British Columbians what conservation and wildlife management is — both the good and the bad; and, lastly, we will need something that is free. That's the collaboration and the will to do it.

The B.C. Wildlife Federation believes resident hunters and anglers are willing to take the lead. Currently, licence fees for hunting generate approximately \$15 million a year. Provided our licence fees and government funding are directed to resource through a third party, we believe resident hunters and anglers would be willing to see an increase in licence fees to facilitate our funding goals.

We have the ability to leverage direct dollars and in-kind support through non-government organizations such as the BCWF, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Trust of B.C., the Nature Conservancy of Canada as well as local governments, corporate citizens and industry, turning \$25 million into \$100 million. And \$25 million over four years would show resident hunters and anglers, First Nations and conservationists alike that our government is dedicated to conservation, and successive governments are committed as well.

Resident hunting alone puts \$230 million back into our provincial economy every year. This does not include guide outfitting or resident and non-resident angling.

How much has been taken out of our province from both renewable and non-renewable resources and not been re-invested into habitat and wildlife?

This is why we believe industry should be chipping in. With a little help from the government and industry, in addition to our increased licence fees, our minimum goal of \$100 million a year is easily attainable.

We could go one step further. There has been discussion within the BCWF regarding a new tax similar to the Pittman-Robertson Act in the United States. It is a tax that was implemented in 1937 to aid in the management of habitat and wildlife where most things related to outdoor and back country users are taxable, from sleeping bags to firearms and tents to cross-country skis.

Government just dedicated half a billion dollars for

affordable housing — 3,000 units to house, I'm guessing, 9,000 people. Imagine what that money could do for habitat, wildlife and conservation. And \$400 million over the next four years has the potential to put wildlife and habitat back on track, providing for hundreds of thousands of British Columbians, including First Nations, every year for the foreseeable future.

Not just in table fare either. Employment in the form of biologists, conservation officers, government employees, the guiding industry for both fishing and hunting, wildlife viewing, tourism, game cutting, sales of sporting goods, ATVs and vehicles, just to name a few.

[1540]

Imagine the overall economic input that would have on our province, and it's all renewable.

Our highest ever number of licensed resident hunters was 178,000, and for resident anglers it was at 326,000. Last year we had 111,000 licensed hunters and 280,000 licensed anglers.

Without a doubt, our habitat has the ability to provide for that many — and many more. Let's not leave it in such disrepair that our children are unable to repair the damage that we have caused. We owe it to them. We owe it to the wildlife. We owe it to the land, water and air.

Again, thank you for your time, and I welcome any questions you may have.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you for your time. I appreciate the presentation.

I will definitely go to questions from the panel.

**R. Austin:** Thanks so much, Troy, for your presentation. As has been noted, I think you're maybe the third or the fourth person....

**T. Halliday:** There are more behind me too.

**R. Austin:** I'm sure. And that's good, because the more that we hear, the better it is for us.

I live in a part of the province, as you know, because you've been up there.... I'm from Terrace, and I have an office in Kitimat. As you know, hundreds of people, local residents, love the area because of fishing — not so much hunting, but certainly because of fishing — and it attracts people from all over the world.

I think your point that we have something very special here in British Columbia.... We kind of take it for granted, most of us, particularly when you think that the vast majority of our population lives in a big city down here in the Lower Mainland and may never actually go out and experience the beauty of the wilderness of British Columbia. I would agree with you. We have something very special, and we need to start to pay attention to it and put some resources in.

Your message, I think, has been heard loud and clear, certainly by myself and, I would suggest, by other mem-

bers here, and it will be an important part of our deliberations. Thanks for coming.

**T. Halliday:** To be honest, the renewable resources in the province have barely even begun to be tapped, right?

**R. Austin:** Water rental rates, for example.

**T. Halliday:** We could do a lot more and employ a lot more people just on what we can grow on our land and in our water.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Well, we appreciate your advocacy. The people that you represent are the best stewards we have in terms of our natural environment in this province, as far as I'm concerned. Your eyes are always out there, and you treasure it, and so you should. We all do, but you, in particular, sort of add that extra special care, and I really do appreciate that.

**T. Halliday:** We're the feet on the ground.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** You are.

**D. Ashton:** Just on the advocacy that Scott mentioned, we had an elderly gentleman that has tried for years to get a steelhead hatchery on the Thompson River, but I can't remember the location he had mentioned there. On that advocacy, it's people like yourself that get behind that that help push government. I'm being very frank. The gentleman.... It's been studied to death for years and years about this.

I look at the success at home — I come from Penticton — and what the Penticton Indian Band has done with the Colville Tribes on the new sockeye hatchery that they have in Penticton. We have hundreds of thousands of sockeye coming back into our lake system.

**T. Halliday:** That's a great example, right?

**D. Ashton:** But it took an advocacy where they just said, "We're doing it. We're getting it done," and they did it. I mean, government has a tendency sometimes — and I say this with the utmost respect — to study things to death. There are opportunities, and it's your weight that can make a difference.

**T. Halliday:** Right. That's why we want to control whatever funding we get. You know, a third party....

**D. Ashton:** Sometimes it's not good, though, to get what you wish for. I can be honest with you.

**T. Halliday:** Well, I guess that gets back to the infighting, right? But we're focused in on one thing. You all have so much to deal with, so many people talking to you all week long, asking for funding, right?

**D. Ashton:** Keep up the good work and working together. We will have an opportunity, but please, we do want to hear from you and your groups on a continual basis, even after these opportunities are presented by the government. I mean, you still have the opportunity to speak to your individual MLAs.

**T. Halliday:** Right. Excellent.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Call my office anytime. Thanks very much for coming in. Appreciate your time.

Okay, moving on, we have PacificSport Fraser Valley, Jared Kope and Jayne Chow-Olsen.

Hey, greetings. Hi. Good afternoon.

[1545]

While you're settling in, ten minutes for your presentation. I'll try to get your attention with a couple of minutes left so you can wrap up, and then we'll go to the committee for questions. When you're ready, the floor is yours.

**J. Kope:** Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present here today in Surrey. Thank you to the provincial government for its strong history of investing in sport and, specifically, PacificSport Fraser Valley.

My name is Jared Kope, and I'm the executive director at PacificSport Fraser Valley. PacificSport's purpose is to enrich lives and energize communities via sport. I'm honoured today to present with Jayne Chow-Olsen, mother of 2016 Olympian Shallon Olsen. Shallon represented Canada in artistic gymnastics. She had a fantastic games, placing eighth overall in the vault apparatus. Jayne has an intricate, firsthand understanding of British Columbia's sports system from the community to elite levels — a perspective really few have.

Today we want to touch on the importance of sport overall — with the province's investment in sport yields — and detail the work PacificSport Fraser Valley does in our two portfolios, which is in sport participation and in high-performance sport.

Sport is a means to healthy lives and healthy communities. Sport is a means for advancing broad public policy in areas such as mental and physical health as well as community and economic development. Positive sport experiences fuel the development of healthier and more active communities, enriching lives through personal, social and economic development and creating a greater sense of belonging.

At PacificSport Fraser Valley, we advocate for sport development best practices by working with municipalities in their policy advancement. For example, we recently published the active Abbotsford plan, a plan developed by a cross-sectoral influential group that will help ensure all community members will have access to positive sport and recreation opportunities.

Sport attracts the highest number of volunteers and volunteer hours in Canada and is present in all com-

munities. However, because sport organizations rely on volunteer hours more than any other sector in Canada, it is imperative we support their continued development. PacificSport Fraser Valley provides this through coach education, organization capacity and policy development, and through post-secondary partnerships.

With the latter, we partner with University of the Fraser Valley, where we link students to local sport organizations through their institution's co-curricular program. These students help with local clubs in coaching, athletic therapy, communications, administration and event planning.

Participation in school-based sport and physical activity has been shown to result in considerably healthier social and academic self-concepts. We are currently working with Langley school district to create an overall physical literacy plan for the school community. We are doing this through a teacher mentorship program, consistent messaging development and creating a physical literacy library.

A PHE Canada study conducted in 2013 showed that 85 percent of Canadians agree that federal, provincial and territorial governments should devote a greater percentage of the health care budget to preventative measures. At PacificSport Fraser Valley, through the ViaSport Regional Alliance, we are marshalling the physical activity sector in the province to take action. When this government invests in a strong sports system, it is investing in a broad public policy that results in a stronger province.

Sport has a strong track record of producing an excellent return on investment as well. In 2015, a direct contribution of \$1.065 million was made across nine different regions of the province to help advance goals in area participation, coach development and performance.

Partnerships allow us to leverage the province's investment and create more value for communities we serve. We have strong ties with recreation departments, school districts, local sport organizations, community groups and local businesses to ensure we create the most impact from provincial investment.

PacificSport Fraser Valley and the sports sector is committed to continuing to leverage government investment and asks that you commit to sustaining funding levels. We also reassure you, from our collective track record, that any increase to funding will have a strong return on investment and will result in more British Columbians benefiting from sport.

Sport has been paying attention to physical literacy for years, and we are pleased to be the local leaders in physical literacy development in the Fraser Valley. Currently we are leading cross-sectoral initiatives in Abbotsford, Mission, the township of Langley and the city of Langley based off of a collective impact model.

These initiatives are possible through successful grant submissions for a total of \$80,000 over the past two years

through RBC. We have leveraged this investment to nearly \$170,000 through community partnerships.

What we have learned through these initiatives is communities that understand the importance of physical literacy and take a cross-sector and collaborative approach have a stronger impact on their citizens. For years RBC has provided grants to support this cross-community leadership through their learn to play grants. Now that these \$25,000 grants are sunsetting, there's a gap in funding for community-based leadership around physical literacy.

[1550]

We encourage the provincial government to consider establishing a targeted fund of \$500,000 to grant communities that bring matching funds to the table to enable cross-sector collaboration and activation of physical literacy programming.

B.C. also has a proven track record on an effective sports system that results in exceptional representation on the national and international stages, and 142 athletes, 45 percent of the Canadian Olympic national team in Rio, had a connection to B.C. Fifty percent of the medals won at these 2016 Olympic Games were won by B.C.-affiliated athletes. Forty-four athletes, 27 percent of the Paralympic national team in Rio, had a connection to B.C. These athletes hail from 20 geographic regions across the province.

B.C.'s athlete pathway, with its regionally based performance system of multisport and provincial sport organizations — for example, PacificSport Fraser Valley — is the entry point to the B.C. sport excellence system. British Columbia has a strong tradition of excellence, which is underpinned by the consistent and innovative performance pathway delivered by the ViaSport Regional Alliance members, servicing over 2,000 athletes and 300 coaches provincewide.

PacificSport Fraser Valley supports more than 200 targeted registered athletes and coaches who represent our province nationally and internationally. At the recent Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio, we had 13 registered athletes compete for Team Canada.

I'm going to turn it over to Jayne.

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Hello. My name is Jayne Chow-Olsen, and I am the mother of Shallon Olsen.

Shallon has been in the sport of gymnastics since she was three, and she is now 16. She advanced very quickly through the provincial level and into the national level and began competing when she was just seven. From 2011, when Shallon was 11, to 2014, consecutively, she was the Elite Canada and national champion.

Shallon made the national team in the espoir category when she was nine, which meant she was being sent on international meets to represent Canada. However, she was not fully funded for those trips. Often Gymnastics Canada would pay for Shallon and her coach's flights to

international competitions, but we would have to pay for their hotel and food.

The good news was that Gymnastics B.C. would compensate us for a portion of costs related to travel for one international meet per year as well as awarding Shallon with a cheque for how well she did at Elite Canada and nationals at the end of each gymnastics season.

Thank you so much to the province of B.C. for supporting provincial sports. This means so much to us, and we are very proud that our own province supports and recognizes Shallon's efforts in the pursuit of excellence.

When Shallon was ten, it was difficult for our family because we were financing Shallon's gymnastics on one income. I gave up my job as a legal administrative assistant so I could fully support Shallon in her gymnastics. I reached out to local politicians to ask where I could get some financial help. I was told that until Shallon was at the national novice level, which was another year away, there was no funding available. I was stressed — and more than just financially. If we didn't come up with some money, we'd have to take Shallon out of gymnastics.

It was about this time that my father-in-law offered to give us his old motorhome because he was planning on buying a new one. As nice as it would have been to accept the gift and go on short vacations with it, we couldn't afford to keep it. Then my father-in-law got the idea to sell the motorhome and give us the money from its sale, and this is exactly what happened.

When I think back now, if not for that infusion of \$10,000, Shallon would have been forced to quit the sport. Further, she never would have gone on to represent Canada at the Olympics. She would have been an athlete full of potential but never realizing it, never fulfilling her dream of competing at the Olympics.

Since Shallon became a junior a little more than four years ago, when she was 12, she has been carded. The carding money has been a blessing, but it's just enough to pay for her gym fees with a little extra left over to pay for her travel to compete at Elite Canada. I have accompanied Shallon to every Elite Canada and national championship since she was old enough to attend these competitions. We as a family pay for this, since Shallon has always been too young to travel on her own.

Currently Shallon has to see a physiotherapist regularly as she has an ongoing abdominal injury. She has also gone to see a sports psychologist to help her with her time management, sleep, mental performance, etc., as well as a nutritionist to help her eat for maximum health and nutrition to aid her performance.

We pay for Shallon to go to ballet and contemporary classes, as this helps with her artistry, body alignment and awareness. We also hired a strength and conditioning coach in the months leading up to the Olympics through PacificSport Fraser Valley, who kindly gave us a 50 percent discount, to help strengthen Shallon's muscles. Since Shallon only goes to school for half

days to accommodate her heavy training schedule, we found it necessary to employ a tutor to help her with core subjects.

[1555]

Without help from Gymnastics B.C. and carding money, certainly Shallon would not be in gymnastics today. But as you can see, there are many ways that Shallon could benefit from additional funding.

Although the Canadian women qualified a team at the Olympic trials, they missed the opportunity to compete in the team competition at the Olympics by 2/100 of a point. It was devastating and heartbreaking for Canada, who went to the Olympics anticipating to compete as a team.

This disappointment has motivated Shallon to try for the next Olympics. Shallon is a talented and hard-working athlete, but she has much room to improve and become a better gymnast. She is young and has the potential to win a medal or medals at the next Olympics. This is Shallon's goal, but she will need more funding and support to make this a reality.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to speak about the challenges of having to support an elite gymnast in what she needs to succeed.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much for that. I will go to the committee for questions.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you for your work, and thank you for your extraordinary support. I think you've laid out very well the kinds of sacrifices and the kinds of challenges that parents have.

I ask this question.... You talked a little bit about it in your opening remarks, about the partnerships with the school districts, and I just wondered if you could talk about any other programs you may have within the schools. I know one of the real challenges in sports is that very few specialist teachers are left who used to teach. The specialists are gone. And so I wondered if you're doing any work with teachers around support for daily physical education or physical education in the schools.

**J. Kope:** For sure. That's actually a great topic right now because there's a new curriculum that just rolled out this year for physical education and health for the K-to-9 years. Physical literacy is the premise of and the base of it. With that, we are leaving our generalist teachers with more freedom to work within that system, but they don't have the skill set to be able to work within that system. So right now there's a cry for help.

The curriculum is there. The curriculum is great. But without the support for the teachers, it's going to fall flat, and so that's the work that we're doing — partnering with the school districts to run teacher mentorship programs. We are doing curriculum support as well. We're also partnering with the Vancouver Giants, who are just moving

to Langley, and doing programs with them to build up resources for teachers and helping them that way.

So through provincial initiatives, through Action Schools B.C. and DASH BC, through local grants, with RBC and through private — we're working with the school districts.

**J. Yap:** Thank you for your presentation.

To Jayne, you must be very proud of Shallon. I'm interested in.... You described some of the supports that you've received for your daughter. What would all the different levels of support total in dollar amounts? Can you give a ballpark figure? I'm wondering how that compares to other jurisdictions, if you know that.

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Well, I know Shallon, although she was a senior two years ago, she wasn't an international senior, so she was just getting carding as a junior. As a junior, I think she gets \$10,800 a year. Then Gymnastics B.C. compensates us maybe \$500 to \$800 for one international competition a year. And then I think they give her a cheque for about \$800 each year, just because she always usually does quite well at Elite Canada and nationals. So \$10,000 a year. I don't know — \$11,000?

**J. Yap:** Not quite \$12,000.

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Yeah. Not that much.

**J. Yap:** That's the total support?

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Yeah. This year, she is a technical senior, so she will be getting, I think, \$15,000 a month. That will help a lot. But as her body wears down over the years, because she's been doing this going on 14 years, things just start to ache — chronic injuries.

**J. Yap:** Would this be the same level of support as an athlete in, say, Ontario would receive? Like, is this a national program or...?

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Well, that's the thing. Most of the trips.... Elite Canada and nationals are held in the east. So although the carding is the same for each province, we have to spend much more money here in the west to travel to the east. So the money that we get is less than what the eastern gymnasts would have at their disposal because they don't have to travel hardly ever.

[1600]

**J. Kope:** And that's across sports. We lose a lot of our athletes to southern Ontario for that reason.

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Quebec too.

**J. Yap:** They relocate and live there.

**J. Kope:** Yes. The advantage we have is that for the climate, we also have some national teams that now are situated here — just on being able to train year-round. That is a perk.

**D. Ashton:** As you were speaking, I was watching your daughter on the beam and on the uneven bars and on the floor. She's a talented young lady.

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Oh, thank you. She only actually competed on floor and vault. She was a vault and floor specialist, though.

**D. Ashton:** She was active on the beam, though.

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Oh, she's been doing this forever. Yeah, she is good on the beam. There are certain moves that hurt her feet on landing so she's taken those really hard moves out, but she's capable of doing superhard skills. She had them when she was very young. She's talented.

**D. Ashton:** It gives us the opportunity when we have presenters to see on the Internet what they're saying and what they've done. It's fascinating to watch her.

**J. Chow-Olsen:** Yeah, she's fun to watch.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much for taking the time to present. We appreciate it, and good luck. Next we have HUB Cycling, Erin O'Melinn.

Ms. O'Melinn, welcome up. As you may have overheard, ten minutes for the presentation. I'll try to get your attention, and we can go to questions right after that. The floor is yours.

**E. O'Melinn:** Perfect. Thank you. Good afternoon, I'm Erin O'Melinn. I'm the executive director at HUB Cycling. We are a non-profit here in Metro Vancouver, and we're working to get more people cycling more often. We feel that that creates happier, healthier and more connected communities.

We provide education in schools, community centres and workplaces and action to inform and engage stakeholders, and events, like Bike to Work Week. This is mostly focused on cycling for transportation. It's an important differentiation from sport and recreation, which are wonderful but a little bit different.

I'm here to recommend increased funding for transportation cycling in British Columbia. I cycle for nearly all of my day-to-day trips, and I know many others that do the same. When I cycled across the Port Mann Bridge for the first time this spring, it was very empowering to be able to ride across a regional connection that had only recently been opened up for active transportation for the first time in its history.

I appreciate the high-quality cycling facility on this

bridge, which was an investment of the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. So thank you for that.

Unfortunately, when I reached the north end of the bridge and attempted to connect to New Westminster, I was forced onto the road with fast-moving truck traffic along United Boulevard, with not even a painted shoulder to protect me. There was no other option for me to go anywhere. So as I tried to access the cycling network in New Westminster, I felt unsafe, I felt disconnected, and fearful. There is currently no safe way to ride from the Port Mann Bridge to New Westminster within more than a kilometre parallel to Highway 1. This is a major gap.

You can change this. You can improve the cycling trips and quality of life of thousands of people. You can increase the province of B.C.'s investment in cycling to allow people like me to travel safely and allow municipalities across B.C. to reach their active transportation objectives. You can provide the funding to help ungap the map.

We're seeing really consistent growth in the number of people participating in our own Bike to Work Week, as well as all the data coming in from municipalities. Vancouver residents cycled 32 percent more just in the past year alone, and Vancouver is now up to 10 percent of trips to work by bicycle. This is not just a small number of people, and it's growing.

Municipalities around B.C., along with the provincial government, have been making investments in connecting the cycling network and are starting to provide those safe and direct and comfortable spaces. We're looking to allow people to do that at any time of the day. When this is properly connected, this investment is clearly paying off with more people using more cycling infrastructure.

However, municipalities are telling us that they can only build limited segments of their cycling network. They need more resources to finish those networks. There are significant gaps preventing people from taking up this very cost-effective, space-efficient, congestion-reducing and healthy form of transportation.

That strong potential to accelerate investment will help ungap the map in the near future instead of the many decades it would take with the current pace of investment from the province. Over 40 percent of locals report that they want to cycle more, but they're held back by these gaps. In the ministry's B.C. on the Move reports, 72 percent of British Columbians said enhancing cycling infrastructure and improving transportation options was important.

[1605]

Cycling provides everyday physical activity. It is one of those affordable and all-ages-friendly activities, and it helps people get to their destinations, providing those said options.

Almost all municipalities have cycling plans that they'd like to implement, but they do require more cost-sharing to complete them. They also desire support for offering

cycling education, promotion and enabling, which are proven to increase ridership significantly.

Currently, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure only invests approximately \$6 million per year into municipal cost-sharing, through the Bike B.C. program. This represents approximately 0.5 percent of MOTI's current annual budget. With the average \$182,000 Bike B.C. contribution in a municipality, very little can be done to meaningfully connect the network. Without that, people can't feel they have a viable choice for transportation cycling.

People driving motor vehicles have scads of connected roads that connect them to move safely through the region and the province. People who want to cycle have no such infrastructure. They're faced with facilities that are often disconnected, indirect, poorly constructed and often put their safety at risk because, over time, decision-makers have never completed even a basic cycling network. This fundamental work must be prioritized now.

Cycling rates have already topped 10 percent in some B.C. municipalities, and they reach well over 30 percent in other jurisdictions, serving more trips than by automobile in those places. The difference is those places have systematically invested in cycling for the last 30 years at a much higher level than we have here. We're behind, and we need to catch up on both infrastructure and education. Like them, in those different places, we also aim for every child to receive cycling education in school so that everyone knows how to safely and respectfully ride and feels comfortable.

What we request from you now is a chance for millions of British Columbians to be able to use safe, connected and meaningful cycling infrastructure and education. Municipalities are keen to build and offer more, and they require cost-sharing from the province.

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure also does invest in their own jurisdiction — projects such as the Port Mann Bridge, Stanley Park Causeway, Iron Workers Memorial Bridge, which are important regional connectors. If we include these investments with the cost-sharing that I just mentioned, on average, since 2001, it means MOTI has invested less than 1 percent of their annual budget to cycling each year, despite a current cycling rate of 3 percent across the province, 5 percent in Metro Vancouver and 11 percent in some B.C. cities.

Not only is there underinvestment for that current number of British Columbians cycling, but there's a greater inequity between that current investment and the potential and the targeted ridership, if we had even a basic connected safe-cycling network. This could all be achieved with increased investments done upfront in the near future to complete that basic network.

I will note that infrastructure for cycling is far less expensive to build than for motor vehicles, and it creates more jobs. Also, once built, the operating and maintenance costs of cycling infrastructure are far lower than for

motor vehicles. It takes over 17,000 trips by bike to equal the road damage by one car and over 7 million trips by bike to equal the road damage of one large truck.

Not only is there a mobility imperative with investing more in cycling, but also a safety imperative. HUB Cycling fully supports the B.C. government's Vision Zero goal: zero fatalities and serious injuries from road collisions. Investing in provincial cycling infrastructure and cost-sharing for the infrastructure would be a major step towards improving road safety for vulnerable road users, and this is a very important piece. It's been called out by the provincial *Road Safety Strategy* and the provincial health officer's annual report as a vital area for improvement.

I encourage you to accelerate the municipal cost-sharing cycling investments in Metro Vancouver to \$36 million per year. We focus here on Metro Vancouver, but of course, we think aligned investment around the province would make sense. Our B.C. counterparts have said that \$100 million per year would provide that for the province. That would be provided until those cycling networks are connected.

We hope that residents can have a true active transportation option and that we can realize these shared goals of improved road safety, increased mobility, reduced congestion and better air quality. Metro Vancouver is our area of focus, but as I say, we do support this across the province.

[1610]

I encourage you, also, to provide adequate funding to build the safe and connected cycling facilities within the province's own jurisdiction — and transportation projects like Massey, Brunette–Highway 1 from Port Mann Bridge to New Westminster and the Mountain Highway — which will fulfil the ministry's existing cycling policy that commits: "Provisions for cyclists are made on all new and upgraded provincial highways." This commitment has been neglected in some completed projects in the past.

For next year, when I want to ride across the Port Mann Bridge to New Westminster without fearing for my safety, I do look forward to bringing out others to enjoy it once it is connected. It is an important connection to many destinations. It's just one example of one of the gaps in that map. We do encourage you to increase investment in cycling in B.C. so that we can ungap the map very shortly and the province of B.C. can showcase its commitment to cycling, improved mobility, better health, increased affordability and road safety for vulnerable road users.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Thank you very much. That was a great presentation. I appreciate that.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** It was a terrific presentation, very clear. I appreciated the distinction you made

between transportation and recreation, that there are in fact different kinds of needs. I think we don't often think about that when we think about cycling.

I think the other piece that is really important and that you've emphasized is the issue of being incredibly proud of ourselves and thinking we've taken care of it by putting a bike lane in on a bridge, for example, and then not looking at where it connects to. I think you've emphasized the importance of the network being broader than simply saying, "We've taken care of it on this project because we added a bike lane," and not remembering that you've got to get off the bridge. You've got to go into a community without any kind of infrastructure there. So thank you for a good, clear presentation.

**S. Gibson:** One query. We have a lot of inclement weather here, and this is the Lower Mainland. This is Rainyville for about five months of the year. I'm often driving in Vancouver, and I'm sometimes frustrated. I get it. I'm in my car, and I've done a lot of cycling over the years, long-distance cycling. I did the California coast with a buddy of mine. I like bicycles, and I get it. But sometimes I'm out there, and there are no bicycles, and here the poor cars are getting snuggled in there. There's no room to get around, and here are all these incredible bike lanes completely unoccupied for months at a time.

I'm not a critic, but how do you defend that? Sometimes it's tough for drivers to navigate Vancouver downtown because you've got these huge lanes that have been taken over for bike lanes that are not used much in the rainy weather.

**E. O'Melinn:** Well, I'll go back to the ungap-the-map principle where, depending on where you are in the region, the network isn't necessarily properly connected. So people aren't willing to take those, particularly in the rainy or darker months, where they feel like they need to have proper infrastructure. In places like Copenhagen and the Netherlands, they also have rainy weather, but they have mode shares of over 30 percent of people riding. That's one component.

In Metro Vancouver we're lucky that we don't get a lot of snow, so you can ride in the rain — and most of it is just rain — if we provide the proper infrastructure so that people are safe when it does get darker and wetter. We also need to provide the education to people that it's actually very simple to get out there. I ride year-round for almost all of my daily trips, but it does require some of the right gear.

**S. Gibson:** The other point — Dan and I were just discussing this — is that the share-the-road model.... I remember when I was riding long-distance trips with a buddy of mine, we were on the road. Yeah, you've got to be careful as a cyclist. But there was a share-the-road philosophy. So we were on the median. There were no lanes for us.

They're incredibly expensive to build. I know that in the province we are adding them all the time, as you commented. We're connecting. The routes are coming along well. But sharing the road has been the paradigm for many, many years, and I think it's going to continue, especially in a lot of rural areas where I've cycled. Yes, there are trucks and RVs and large vehicles, but you've got to be careful, and you can share the road in most situations, especially in rural areas. Wouldn't you agree with that?

**E. O'Melinn:** Well, it's very contextual. You're right. If the traffic volume and traffic speed is low, then you can have a shared-road model. It's the same with residential streets where the speed is 30 kilometres an hour. Even in a bigger city, that works if there's been traffic calming and that kind of thing. It does not work when those traffic volumes and traffic speeds go up. That's when you start to need designated space for people riding.

[1615]

We are aiming to allow people of any age to feel comfortable. So you may feel comfortable as a middle-aged man. Somebody who is maybe an older person or a novice cyclist does not feel as comfortable. I have to remind myself as well, because I've been cycling for years. I'm fairly confident out there. But when I bring somebody new out, they're not. We need to be able to allow them that gateway to get into this movement. Sharing the road can work in some situations, but it also can cause issues, depending on the context.

**S. Gibson:** Good point. I agree.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Well, Ms. O'Melinn, you should be a diplomat. You really let him off the hook when you referred to him as middle aged, first of all. [Laughter.]

Secondly, yes. Thank you for the presentation. It was very insightful.

We had another presentation a little earlier from a cycling advocate. I mentioned to him what I'll mention to you now. We can't do it alone. I'd certainly suggest you get a hold of maybe the city of Coquitlam and the city of New Westminster and advocate as much as you can. Quite often the money is there. They need apply for it. We love to contribute to causes like that, obviously.

I mean, there are more people out there cycling than ever now. I think a lot of that.... People have been drawn to it because, slowly but surely, the infrastructure is being built, and cycling is becoming safer because of it.

We always rely on people like yourself to come forward and remind us that we need to do a little bit more.

**E. O'Melinn:** We will keep reminding.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** And when you're out there cycling, please be careful.

**E. O'Melinn:** You too.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** You bet.

Thank you very much. I appreciate your presentation and taking the time today.

Our next presentation is Sharon Gregson, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C.

I'm going to guess that you're Ms. Gregson. Please come up and join us. Make yourself comfortable. As you probably know, ten minutes for the presentation. I'll give you a little wave when time's getting down there. Then we'll go to these guys to fire some questions at you.

**S. Gregson:** I apologize ahead of time. I'm a little under the weather today.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Oh no. Well, we'll turn up the microphone a little bit and make sure we can hear you.

**S. Gregson:** Thank you. I'll try not to cough.

It's my pleasure to present to you again this year on the very important topic of early learning and child care.

In front of you, you have a booklet — which is a very popular booklet in British Columbia — as well as some material inside that shares with you how a comprehensive plan can be costed in British Columbia, as well as a couple of fact sheets about why child care is good for business and why it's good at alleviating family poverty; also, an important list of the organizations — municipal, regional, government, school districts — that are supporting the information I'm presenting to you today: the \$10aDay child care plan.

I know that you don't get a chance to read every single scrap of information, so I'm going to give you some of the highlights of the material in front of you with a presentation.

I would just draw your attention to the fact that the last three committees have recommended to the Legislature that there be funding and support for the development and implementation of a child care plan. That was in 2013, 2014 and again in 2015.

However, to date, the provincial government has not responded in a meaningful way to implement that plan to respond to the current child care crisis in British Columbia.

What is the crisis? Or, as many people say now, it's actually beyond crisis. It's actually to chaos now. For B.C. families with young children, the child care crisis is just as serious as the housing crisis that we hear so much about.

The 2014 snapshot from Stats Canada told us that there were 570,000 children in British Columbia. Of those children, 363,000 of them had mothers who were employed but only 106,000 licensed child care spaces — so a lot of children in the unregulated, potentially unsafe and illegal sector.

There are high costs for child care in this province — the second-highest fees in all of Canada. Only Toronto really beats us. The average, and this is just the average, across the province is between \$959 to over \$1,400 a month for child care. You can imagine if people have two children, the fees that they're having to pay. In fact, in Vancouver, fees are as high as \$2,125 a month per child. [1620]

Subsidies exist for very, very low-income families, but they're nowhere near enough to cover the cost of the actual fees. Fees, in fact, have risen faster than inflation in previous years. We have long waiting lists and only enough child care for about 20 percent of children in the province. Sadly, any vacancies that exist in quality child care programs are not because families don't need them, but it's because nobody can actually afford the fees.

We have lots of information about women forced to abandon paid work and career goals after lots of post-secondary education because of lack of access to child care. Estimates from UBC are that the work-life conflict for employees because of child care costs business more than \$600 million a year. There's a reliance, as I mentioned, on the unregulated sector, and you should know that there's an increasing amount of vulnerability of children between zero and five in this province.

Low wages for early childhood educators. They're mostly women, which is contributing significantly to the gender wage gap in this province. Starting wages, even in the city of Vancouver, are about \$17 an hour for people with post-secondary education in this field — certainly not a living wage.

A severe shortage of staff. Because, of course, people go into this sector, realize the terrible wages and don't stay. They go on to be baristas at Starbucks, where they can make more money. So we have a severe shortage of staff — 84 job postings just in one snapshot for two organizations that monitor these stats in Vancouver.

Unfortunately, on July 18, there was an order-in-council signed by Minister Terry Lake which reduced the required amount of outdoor play space, which, for some bizarre reason, was a decision to roll back quality in licensed child care programs in this province. Absolutely no rationale for that move.

What's the solution to this chaos? Well, it's the *Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning*. A very long name — it doesn't work well on Twitter — but it's abbreviated now, and the branding has become the \$10aDay child care plan. There's even more reason to move ahead with this plan now that there are new federal dollars on the table for child care. With the change in government and a new budget announcement, we know that there's \$400 million on the table for child care, and B.C.'s share is about \$52 million. Those dollars will start to flow in April of 2017.

There is every reason to invest those funds in goals which support the rights of First Nations and aboriginal

communities to design, govern and deliver culturally relevant child care programs for their communities and to start to implement the \$10aDay plan.

The good news is that some of government's recent policy directions echo elements of this very popular plan. For example, our plan proposes that families with incomes less than \$40,000 a year would pay no child care fee at all. That would allow us to dispense with the very outdated, bureaucratic, welfare-oriented red tape of the subsidy system. That mirrors the single-parent employment initiative that the government recently implemented.

Senior staff in the early years office also now recognize that there is no sense in us increasing the low-income subsidy without also putting a cap on fees, because the two go hand in hand. The value of the \$10aDay proposal to integrate child care into the Ministry of Education, as most other provinces and territories have already done, now seems to be more widely understood within government and organizations across the province.

I did want to highlight for you a recent change in Canada around child care, which I think the B.C. government should be paying attention to, and that's the change that just happened last week in Ontario with their throne speech. Their government is committing to build 100,000 new child care spaces in the next five years. They're committing up to \$3 billion in capital and \$750 million in operating. That will double the number of child care spaces for children zero to four in the province of Ontario.

We are so far behind, we don't even measure on that graph in B.C. But you would think that with the best-performing economy in Canada, surely British Columbia could match Ontario's commitment to its children. A job is important, certainly, but parents need access to quality, affordable child care in order for them to go to work.

[1625]

We require investment in three areas: increasing capacity, ensuring that there's access to licenced spaces for all families who need that access; improved affordability, with fees set at a maximum of \$10 a day and no fee for families earning less than \$40,000 annually; and investment in higher-quality care through higher education levels of staff and fair compensation, with monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

What does that require? Well, it's \$1.5 billion when we get to full implementation. But that is the gross investment. There would be an immediate boost in economic activity. Economists are able to demonstrate that there would be \$1.3 billion in revenue to provincial and federal governments once this plan is fully phased in, with the net cost to government being only \$200 million. With new federal money on the table, this is entirely doable.

The \$10aDay child care plan for British Columbia is dealing with affordability issues for middle-class families and the creation of a poverty reduction plan that British Columbians are calling on the government to implement.

Support for this plan is unprecedented. I certainly know that you've been hearing about it in your constituencies and over the years in these presentations at the Finance Committee. We have now 46 local governments that are on record as supporting this plan — municipal and regional governments — and 30 of the school districts around the province.

We have credit unions, all the major labour groups in the province, small businesses, hundreds of community organizations, thousands of parents and grandparents, chambers of commerce, the Surrey Board of Trade, the medical health officers council, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, etc.

To get to the crunch of the matter, the recommendations. First of all, we need you to endorse the \$10aDay child care plan and commit to a ten-year implementation model. Commit new federal funds to that gradual implementation of the plan.

Immediately reduce fees to \$10 a day for all licensed infant and toddler programs that embrace the accountability requirements of the plan. Right now, in the city of Vancouver and Victoria and Kelowna, families can be paying up \$100 a day for child care.

Reducing fees to \$10 will create immediate relief for families, who now pay some of the highest fees in the country. It will create economic spinoff when families can spend more in their local economies on goods and services.

The fourth recommendation is to eliminate child care fees for families earning less than \$40,000 a year. This will significantly reduce family and children's poverty in this province and eliminate the costly and bureaucratic red tape of the current low-income subsidy system.

The fifth recommendation is for you to follow the lead of the majority of provinces and territories in Canada by moving child care out of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and into the Ministry of Education, where it belongs. It is, after all, early childhood education. This costs government little and ensures that, from the start, the \$10aDay plan is implemented in a way that ends the false divide between early learning and care.

The sixth and final recommendation is for you to implement an immediate moratorium on public funds for commercial child care chain expansion — rather, to work with the many municipalities and school boards who have endorsed the \$10aDay plan to expand access to child care through public and community-owned spaces, promoting accountability for public funds.

I think I'm under my time.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** No. Just over. But that's okay. I wanted you to conclude your thoughts.

**S. Gregson:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I appreciate that. I'll go to committee for questions.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Thank you, Sharon, for your presentation. Thank you for your passion on this issue. I know you've presented a number of years now.

I just wondered. The new Ontario dollars — do you know whether they're looking at utilizing federal dollars as part of their program? Do you have any of those kinds of details? I wondered if you could also talk a little bit just about the federal money that's there as well.

**S. Gregson:** The federal money for the budget.... In the federal budget, the speech very clearly identified that child care is no longer a luxury for families in Canada. It's a necessity. So \$500 million was committed for the year 2017-2018 to develop an early learning and child care framework.

We anticipate that Ontario, yes, will incorporate those new dollars into their expansion. They're actually calling the Ontario investment transformative. Of course, we'd like to see that same kind of investment in British Columbia. Of the \$500 million in federal dollars, if we think of B.C.'s population being about 13 percent, we expect \$52 million to be coming here. Of the \$500 million, \$100 million is for on reserve and \$400 million is for mainstream.

[1630]

There's absolutely no reason that British Columbia couldn't use that money wisely by starting to invest in this plan that is, again, endorsed continually by organizations like the UBCM. I know that it's going to be a topic there — for them as well — next week.

[C. James in the chair.]

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** All right. Thank you. Any other questions?

**J. Yap:** A couple of questions. That \$52 million that you estimate — is that one-time funding, or would that be annual, continuous funding?

**S. Gregson:** Right. We actually expect that it will be ramping up from the federal government. This was their year one to look at the development of the early learning and child care framework. So our expectation is that that money will continue and even extend.

**J. Yap:** At that level or...?

**S. Gregson:** Or greater.

**J. Yap:** Or greater.

**S. Gregson:** That's our expectation, and that's certainly the pressure that's coming from across the country.

**J. Yap:** My other question. You mention in this proposal that they would income-test, and families earning

\$40,000 and less would not have to pay. Would you income-test at higher levels?

**S. Gregson:** No. When you think about how now the child tax benefit and even British Columbia's early learning benefit is based on your tax return from the previous year, we anticipate that that would be a model that would work. We expect that families who earn more would pay more through their taxes, as our system is set up for.

The same way that all families have access to libraries and emergency services and kindergarten through grade 12, we would expect them to have access to child care as well.

**C. James (Deputy Chair):** Simon, one minute.

**S. Gibson:** Thank you for your presentation. The materials are very helpful.

You've got local government support for the plan here, which is interesting. What kind of dollars are they contributing? Or this is just support...? There's no financial support. It's only emotional support. Is that correct?

**S. Gregson:** In British Columbia, child care is a provincial responsibility. So these governments are saying that they're impacted by the lack of child care in their communities, and they want the provincial government — with help from the federal government — to make the necessary investment.

We have municipalities like the city of Vancouver and Burnaby and Richmond and Cranbrook that are talking about using their leverage around accessing public facilities, but it is ultimately a provincial government responsibility.

**S. Gibson:** Okay, so it's just more an endorsement.

**S. Gregson:** I think this is their way of sending a message to say that this is a plan that they think is viable, and they want the provincial government to move forward on implementation. That's the typical motion that was passed at those councils.

**S. Gibson:** That's a good explanation. Thank you for that.

You have quoted here the president of the B.C. Business Council, Greg D'Avignon. He's come to our meetings. So he's in favour of this? I'm not familiar with that.

**S. Gregson:** I contacted him at the time and asked if I could use the quote — or we could use that quote — in this material, and he said yes. So he's not an endorser of the plan, but he recognized the significance of parents having access to quality affordable child care so they can participate in the labour force.

**S. Gibson:** Which we all do, of course. Okay, thank you very much. That's great.

**S. Gregson:** My pleasure.

**D. Ashton:** A question for you: why are you against commercializing? There's two sides. If people can afford it, why are you against it?

**S. Gregson:** I'm not against it. I just don't think that that's the suitable place for public investment. So we have private schools, but private schools in this province are actually not-for-profit societies. Right now, we have public funds that are going to shareholders and investors and people who are publicly trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange. I don't think that's an appropriate place for B.C. funds.

I'm not saying that those organizations, those companies and those corporate entities shouldn't exist, but I don't think they should be the recipient of these kinds of public dollars that we're talking about here.

**D. Ashton:** So \$1.5 billion was your start-up. Is that correct?

**S. Gregson:** No, not start-up. That's by the time we do the ten years of implementation. So at year ten, that would be the investment. But then we've also got the return back to government when more, particularly, women are able to participate in the workforce and contribute income taxes back to the economy. So the net cost to government with the federal money included is about \$200 million.

**D. Ashton:** Thank you.

[S. Hamilton in the chair.]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** That concludes our time. Thank you very much for taking the time to present. It's very much appreciated.

**S. Gregson:** Always a pleasure.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. Our final presenter of the day — Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, B.C. office, Alex Hemingway and Iglia Ivanova.

[1635]

Greetings. Thanks for being here. Ten minutes for the presentation. I'll give you a little wave when we've got a couple minutes left remaining, and then we'll go to these guys for questions. All right? The floor is yours.

**I. Ivanova:** Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee and for sticking around till the end. I am sure it's been a long day.

As you probably know, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has been researching and writing on the challenges facing our province for nearly 20 years now, and I am pleased to be here and offer some of our research findings and recommendations for the next budget. I will start with an overview of the provincial challenges, and then Alex will go over our recommendations.

At first glance, B.C. appears somewhat isolated from the economic challenges that are facing the rest of the country. Headline economic indicators, like GDP growth and job creation, are posting strong increases. However, a closer look at the recent economic performance suggests that the growth we're experiencing here in B.C. is imbalanced and fundamentally unsustainable.

The first warning sign that I see is that much of the economic growth over the last year was driven by real estate and retail sales, both of which are partly financed by foreign money and partly by an expansion of household debt. B.C.'s consumer debt continues to rise faster than their incomes, and B.C. households remain the most indebted in the country. The real estate sector alone accounted for about 30 percent of GDP growth in 2015 in this province. The flip side of this economic growth is rising housing unaffordability, with all of its negative social and economic consequences.

Despite historically low interest rates, which the Bank of Canada maintains now in an attempt to spur business investment, business is actually not investing. Statistics Canada data shows that B.C. businesses intend to scale down capital investment in construction, machinery and equipment by about 4 percent this year, and that's after a 2 percent decline last year. That doesn't bode well for the future of economic growth in the province, because household borrowing is not a sustainable economic driver. We need business investment.

Notably, the private sector forecasters are actually projecting that after fairly strong growth this year of 2.9 percent, we're going to return to a more modest 2.4 percent next year.

Another worrying sign that we see here is that, despite strong economic growth and job creation in the province as a whole, prosperity has not been broadly shared across all parts of the province. For example, virtually all jobs created this year have been in Metro Vancouver and greater Victoria, while other regions in this province have lost jobs and, in fact, have yet to recover the jobs that they lost in the recession seven years ago.

In addition, many of the new jobs are part-time, temporary or low-paid. If you look at Statistics Canada's job vacancy and wage survey, you will find that among the ten occupations with the most job vacancies in this province in the first quarter of the year, five of those ten paid less than \$12 per hour.

Those are not family-supporting wages, and this is why having a job is no longer a guaranteed path out of poverty in this province. One out of nine British Columbians

who used food banks last year were working but were not earning enough to afford groceries. And a recent CCPA study found that there are over 100,000 working-age adults in Metro Vancouver alone who are working but still stuck in poverty. And that doesn't count students or youth living at home with their parents.

Despite strong growth on the surface, poverty remains a very serious problem. We have one-in-five children living in poverty; we have one-in-three single senior women. We know that housing unaffordability has reached crisis levels in Metro Vancouver and Victoria, and this is where most of the jobs are located and where most of the people live in this province.

We just heard the shortage of child care spaces, and exorbitant fees for the spaces that are available, compound the unaffordability crisis for many families and make it very difficult for women to return to the workforce after having a child. To make things worse, our public schools are over-stretched and lack the resources to support children with learning disabilities and other special needs.

[1640]

This isn't what a strong economy looks like, which is why the CCPA recommends that the 2017 B.C. budget prioritize measures to rebalance the provincial economy to ensure that growth is socially and environmentally sustainable, and that it is broadly shared. I think B.C. is in a great position to make strategic public investment, given the low cost of government borrowing and the strong revenue projections that we just saw tabled in the Ministry of Finance first quarterly report.

Alex will now outline some of our recommendations.

**A. Hemingway:** To start, investment in the public sphere is needed more than ever if we're going to tackle the pressing problems that we face in this province today. We've identified seven priority areas for action in the budget.

First, as you've just heard, Budget 2017 should invest in implementing a \$10-a-day child care plan. There's a large body of research that shows early years are critically important for brain development, health and life-long learning, yet too few children get the opportunity to participate in such high-quality programs because of long wait-lists and high fees. A large-scale investment in child care will create jobs and increase women's labour force participation, while positioning B.C. as a leader in the knowledge-based economy of the future.

Second, Budget 2017 should fund and implement a comprehensive poverty-reduction plan. Tolerating high poverty rates and homelessness is not only wrong but it's also very expensive. Poverty costs us between \$8.1 billion and \$9.2 billion annually in the province in lost productivity, lower school success, higher health care costs and higher criminal justice system costs. Funding priorities in Budget 2017 should include immediately increasing income assistance rates, investing in child care, afford-

able housing and community-based health initiatives.

Third, Budget 2017 should increase funding for much-needed improvements in key public services, including education and health care. Now, unfortunately, funding for our education system in B.C. has been seriously eroded. B.C. has among the lowest per-student levels of education funding in the country, and funding has fallen substantially as a share of our economy, which is an indicator that major reinvestment is both possible and affordable. Education research shows that investment in the system, including in smaller class sizes, substantially improves outcomes for students and helps disadvantaged students the most. So Budget 2017 should increase education funding.

Now, on health care, if we want to enhance care and reduce wait times, we do need renewed government leadership and investment. So Budget 2017, from our perspective, should invest in home and community care, fund a shift to interdisciplinary team-based care and make investments to reduce surgical wait times by scaling up successful public sector best practices provincewide.

The fourth item. Our recommendation is that Budget 2017 should increase investment in affordable housing. Now, the new 15 percent property transfer tax on foreign purchases is a welcome shift in policy orientation, as is the recent announcement of \$500 million for 2,900 units of housing over the next few years. But there is a lot of catching up to do. About 5,000 to 10,000 new affordable rental units are needed per year, and much of the challenge is dealing with upfront costs.

To finance the front end, Budget 2017 should add progressive tiers to our property tax regime. For example, a property surtax kicking in at the \$1 million level of assessed value would exempt two-thirds of homeowners, and with a series of tax brackets as values rise, raise \$1 billion to \$2 billion per year of stable, inequality-reducing revenue.

Fifth, Budget 2017 should fund decisive and bold climate action. B.C. should reassert leadership on carbon pricing, with new annual increases of \$10 per tonne starting in 2017. In tandem with increasing the carbon tax, the tax and revenue-recycling framework does need to be fixed. We recommend that half of the carbon tax revenues flow into an improved carbon tax credit, such that the bottom half of the income distribution would be net beneficiaries. The remaining half of the revenue should be invested directly in climate action, which, needless to say, is extremely urgent and requires bold leadership at all levels.

There's a strong appetite, for example, for new investment in public infrastructure and a strong case for new investments in areas like public transportation and energy efficiency. We also recommend the reallocation of \$3.5 billion earmarked for the new Massey bridge to be invested in public transportation.

[1645]

Six, Budget 2017 should ensure that the province is receiving a fair share of the proceeds of natural resource development locally. Our research suggests that there is room for collecting more rent and royalties from key public resources — our forests, natural gas and water. In the case of natural gas development, we recommend that costly royalty credits that serve as a subsidy to fracking operations should be ended.

Finally, Budget 2017 should include tax reform measures to improve the overall fairness of the provincial tax system. B.C.'s tax system is now remarkably regressive, as we've documented at the CCPA. When all personal taxes are considered in the province — income, sales, property and carbon and MSP premiums — higher-income households pay a lower overall tax rate as a share of their income than lower-income households. This is unfair and should be urgently addressed.

In Budget 2017, one large, concrete step that should be taken is to eliminate the highly regressive MSP premiums. Igluka recently published a report, of which you should all have a copy in front of you, modelling two specific options to replace that MSP revenue in a way that would dramatically increase progressivity and result in savings for a majority of B.C. families.

Finally, B.C. Budget 2017 should strike a fair-tax commission with a mandate much more comprehensive than that of the Tax Competitiveness Commission now underway. The mandate of a fair-tax commission should be to objectively review the entire B.C. taxation system and make recommendations for meeting provincial revenue needs in an equitable way.

Thank you, and we'd be happy to answer any questions.

**S. Gibson:** Just a question of clarification. My understanding is you were speaking against the new bridge that government has announced across the river at Highway 99, and you said that we'll want public transit. Perhaps you didn't know, but public transit is a part of the bridge. Were you aware of that?

**A. Hemingway:** I'm aware of that. It's an issue of prioritizing the resource allocation there.

**S. Gibson:** Yes, there's public transit on the bridge.

**A. Hemingway:** Certainly.

**S. Gibson:** Okay. I just didn't know whether you knew that or not.

**R. Austin:** Thanks for your presentation. I think it's interesting, and this is a great time to be having the discussion around the MSP premium. We're seeing some consensus here when you've got the Premier of the province acknowledging publicly that it's a regressive and unfair tax but not quite figuring out what the solution is.

You're bringing here a solution. I think most people do agree that it is a regressive tax.

My question for you. In your modelling, though.... Currently, a lot of people don't pay any MSP premiums because they're getting premium assistance — which, of course, complicates the whole thing. That's an acknowledgment that it's unfair. We're giving premium assistance to around 25 or 30 percent of the province, I think. In this option, would those of low income now be having to pay towards this new health tax?

**I. Ivanova:** No, the new option doesn't affect the people who currently receive premium assistance. They would not see any change. They would not pay MSP, but they would not see any income tax increases either. The income tax that I propose is designed such as to make this happen. We can make it happen by structuring it in a particular way, and that's what we've done. That's what we recommend should be done.

**R. Austin:** Okay, that's good. I guess my second comment would be that while we're acknowledging that the MSP premium has been a regressive tax, I think it's good to open the door to an overall discussion around how we tax ourselves fully, because we've seen income inequality rise so dramatically in this province.

Many people are doing very, very well, and that's a wonderful thing for everyone who's doing very, very well, but we are leaving a whole slew of people behind. I don't think any of us here in British Columbia want to sort of reach the levels of the United States, where you see the kind of gross income inequality that has created almost a divided society.

I hope that.... Your challenge to all of us is that in the future we can see a tax commission that'll look at the big story, the full picture. I think when people understand the value of taxes.... I know that sometimes people look at tax and think of it as a bad word. When they think of all the benefits that come from taxation and realize the benefits, you can have, I think, an open discussion. So I appreciate your bringing that up.

[1650]

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I'll close with a couple of comments. First of all, I want to focus in on your comment about surcharging of property taxes on homes assessed at \$1 million or more. Keep in mind, people that own million-dollar homes aren't necessarily millionaires. There are people out there that are heavily leveraged, living in their \$1-million-plus home, that we just want to throw another tax at. We have to be careful how we proceed with a broad brush like that.

My other mention that I wanted to make. Have you costed out any of...? Have you actually applied numbers to this and realized: "Okay. This is what that's going to cost, but we're going tax this"? What are the final

numbers here? Are we net even? Is it going to cost more? Where are we going to get the money from? We've got to raise taxes over there if we're going to eliminate them over here. Have you costed out this whole proposal?

**A. Hemingway:** On the overall, not just the property tax you're talking about?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** No, everything. There's a lot on the table there.

**A. Hemingway:** This is part of why we recommend a fair tax commission. We have to look, as a province, at: what do we need? What do we need to invest in, collectively, to address this very serious range of challenges we're facing? And what's the fairest way to raise that revenue?

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Absolutely.

Finally, on the MSP, I agree. I agree with all the comments that have been made. It is a regressive tax. It really has to be reworked.

I also consider that yes, the person who earns a quarter-million dollars a year can probably afford to pay more for their health care, as opposed to the person who has far less income. At the same time, that person who earns \$250,000 a year pays a lot more in personal income tax and buys a lot more consumables, which are taxed. A lot

of the money that the province derives from that, a big chunk of it, goes into health care.

There are always trade-offs, I guess. That's all I'm trying to say.

**A. Hemingway:** It's important to look at the total level of taxation when we're talking about what level different income groups are taxed at. That's one of the key points. We do have this unfair situation where....

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** I agree. I just needed to look at both sides. That's all.

I do appreciate you coming forward and taking the time to present.

**D. Ashton:** Just really quickly. A quote that I've lived with for a long time is: "A fine is tax you pay when you do something wrong. A tax is a fine you pay when you do something right." Don't forget it.

**S. Hamilton (Chair):** Okay. Anyway, thank you very much. I appreciate you coming out and spending the time, giving us your opinion and expressing your views. I really do.

The meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 4:52 p.m.



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