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6TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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Afternoon Sitting

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2005

The House met at 2:03 p.m.

Introductions by Members

Hon. I. Chong: Today I'm privileged to introduce some very special and talented young guests. Before I do so, I'd like to just preface my remarks. There's no question as to our government's and our Premier's commitment to literacy, and this is evidenced by the literacy summit we held last November, as well as the matching funds towards the Raise-a-Reader campaign, and mostly recently in the throne speech, where one of the goals is to have the most educated and literate jurisdictions on the continent.

Last November I invited all grade 6 students in my riding of Oak Bay–Gordon Head, including home-school students, to participate in an essay contest, the title subject of which was "B.C. is the Best Place on Earth." I am delighted today that five essay winners joined me, along with their parents, for lunch in the dining room and then a very brief tour of the Legislature.

I would like to introduce to this House a young lady from Willows Elementary, Wynter Caron, and her father, Bradley Wotis. Also from Willows Elementary is Alex Gurney, with her father, Mr. Blair Gurney. From Arbutus Middle School, Megan Griffin, with her father, Jim Griffin, and her mother, Susan Phillips. Also from Arbutus Middle School, Miranda Meijer, with her mother, Gina. From Gordon Head Elementary, Jessica Round, with her father, Adrian. Would the House please make them all very welcome.

[1405]

S. Orr: Today I would like to introduce five very special friends that are visiting us today. First is a very, very dear friend of mine, Vicki Kuhl, who is no stranger to this community. Vicki is a former Saanich councillor. She is now on the Saanich police board. She is a director of the Victoria Airport Authority and also serves as a governor for the Victoria Foundation. With her is Paul Senez, who is the coordinator of the Victoria Foundation Youth in Philanthropy program, and also three wonderful students who are involved in the Youth in Philanthropy programs. Two students are Kate Dearden and Alan Manning, and they're here from Oak Bay Secondary. The other student, Katrina Kala, is from Lambrick Park Secondary. Actually, both of these schools are in the member for Oak Bay–Gordon Head's riding, and I know for a fact that she visits and is involved in these schools all the time. Would the House please make all my guests welcome.

Hon. M. Coell: In the House today I have some guests from my constituency: 19 members of the Probus Club of Sidney, with Alan Lester as their leader. Would the House please make them welcome.

B. Lekstrom: It's a privilege to rise in the House today to introduce a guest of one of our workers,

Devon Keller, from the PAB. Today we have one of her friends visiting us from Toronto, Ontario. I understand that this is not her first visit to beautiful British Columbia. Apparently it seems to be growing on her. So I would like the House to welcome Joselyn Nalasco to British Columbia and to the Legislature.

C. Clark: On my own behalf and on behalf of the member for Chilliwack-Kent, I'd like to welcome the former Attorney General of British Columbia, Alex Macdonald — my favourite silk-stocking socialist — to view the proceedings from the gallery today.

R. Hawes: In the gallery today is Elsa Bokelman. Elsa is a constituent from Maple Ridge who is here on behalf of a number of specialists and GPs from South Africa that are.... She was here to discuss immigration issues with the Minister of State for Immigration Services and the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. Could the House make Elsa welcome.

V. Anderson: Today we have in the Legislature 90 energetic young students from Jamieson Elementary School in Vancouver, in my riding. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Milo Wu, Ms. Flora Chen and Ms. Yvonne Lam, and by their parents. They are here to attend question period and learn about government, parliamentary procedure and the history of the Legislature. I look forward to meeting them after they have been to the Legislature, but would the House make them welcome.

J. Bray: Joining us in the gallery today is Bernie Pauly. Bernie is finishing her dissertation for nursing. Bernie has also been very involved in, and on the board of, the James Bay Community Project, as well as an active parent in South Park Family School and an all-round great community person. I'd ask the House to please make Bernie very welcome.

Hon. P. Wong: In the gallery today we have several guests from China: Mr. Ri Tao Ni and his assistant, Ms. Susanna Xu, and Ms. Yan Zhang. They are coming here to look for business opportunities in British Columbia. Would the House please make them most welcome.

P. Nettleton: I would ask that you join me in welcoming two dear friends from Victoria. These ladies are long-time residents of Victoria — seniors. Please join me in welcoming them today.

[1410]

Hon. P. Bell: Today I see we're joined by one of our legislative interns, who also happens to come originally from the riding of Prince George North, attended UNBC and graduated with a degree in political science there. I ask that the House please make Alayna van Leeuwen welcome.

P. Nettleton: I had a birthday a few days ago, and I think the effect of that is beginning to show. In any

event, I forgot to name my dear friends from Victoria, Joy and Pauline Culpersmith.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, although he is not present in the House, I would like you to join me in wishing a happy thirtieth anniversary to the member for Kamloops–North Thompson and his wife, Debbie.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

YOUTH IN PHILANTHROPY

S. Orr: There is nothing more satisfying than being able to stand up in this chamber and talk about positive things, especially when it is about our youth. Positive stuff that involves youth, in my opinion, is what makes the world go around. They are our future. In fact, they are the reason I do this job — to try and make a better future for them.

I first talked about the Youth in Philanthropy program in 2002, when it started. This is an in-school, extracurricular program, funded by the Victoria Foundation, which is designed to engage young people, driven by values, in learning how to make grants to local charities.

Youth in Philanthropy started in 2002 with three high schools involved, and it now has grown to six. The schools are Belmont, Frances Kelsey, Lambrick Park, Oak Bay, St. Michaels and Vic High. Some of the organizations that have benefited from this program are the Victoria Transition House, the Land Conservancy, Kiwanis Emergency Youth Centre and PEERS, and that is just to name a very few.

The students who participated learned about these organizations, thus giving them a better understanding of their community. The kids in this program really care about helping people, and they find out firsthand what it is like to be a philanthropist and how good it feels to give.

I am very pleased this program is growing, and I would like to see it grow across our province, allowing all kids the opportunity to know what it is like to be a philanthropist, so that they can take that knowledge into the future with them and know how good it feels to give.

CZORNY ALZHEIMER CENTRE

D. Hayer: In late January I was honoured to help begin construction of Surrey's new Czorny Alzheimer Centre, a centre that will not only care of those suffering from the most tragic of diseases, but a centre that demonstrates the remarkable caring and contributions of a Surrey-Tynehead family. That family is the Stewarts — relatives of our member for Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows. Chick and Marilyn Stewart and their family not only contributed 8.4 acres to build this fabulous home for those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, but they have also contributed \$10 million in capital funding to build a 36-bed facility. The generosity of the

Stewarts was spurred by Marilyn's desire to honour her father, Michael Czorny, who battled the debilitating disease for nine years. Marilyn Stewart recalled how powerless she felt trying to help her father deal with Alzheimer's.

She and her family are now helping many other families today and well into the future with this exceedingly generous donation. The Czorny Alzheimer Centre is named for Marilyn's father and mother, Michael and Nancy Czorny. It is located on 66th Avenue and 168th Street and will house 36 Alzheimer's patients in their home-like cottage on a secure park-like ground complete with a stream. The new centre created by the Stewarts will provide the care needed by seniors in Surrey, while helping facilitate their independence.

[1415]

Czorny Centre, the first stand-alone facility for Alzheimer's disease in the Fraser Valley, is scheduled to open next spring. It will benefit our growing communities and serve as a model for the rest of the province. The people of Surrey and all of British Columbia can be very proud of the caring and sharing demonstrated by the Stewart family, and I ask that all members of this House join me in applauding their munificent generosity toward aiding those stricken by Alzheimer's disease.

2010 OLYMPICS COUNTDOWN EVENTS IN CARIBOO AREA

W. Cobb: "Let the Countdown Begin" was the headline in the *100 Mile Free Press* as they got ready to show the Olympic spirit by celebrating the five-year countdown to the 2010 games.

Mayor Barnett is the local committee chair in 100 Mile. She raised the Spirit of B.C. flag at the South Cariboo visitor information centre to bring awareness to the games. Joining the mayor were Bev and Jeff Kendy, who are co-chairs of the 2006 B.C. Northern Winter Games to be held in 100 Mile at that time.

In Williams Lake they co-ordinated the flag-raising ceremony with a winter carnival, which they hoped to be the first annual. The carnival — even though we had a little shortage of snow — was a huge success and brought many families into the downtown courthouse square for the festivities. The carnival was sponsored by the business improvement area association and of course tied in the Olympic theme for the first event.

Earlier this week, John Furlong, head of the Olympic bid committee, spoke at the chamber of commerce lunch and also spoke to about 550 students on the opportunities available leading up to the games. I was available to drop the commemorative puck at the minor hockey tournament, and they also received a Spirit of B.C. banner.

In Cache Creek the ceremony was held at the elementary school. The students marched out one by one and took their place around the flagpole. Mayor Ranta read the proclamation, and a drum ceremony was performed by the Bonaparte band elders. The flag-raising ceremony in Ashcroft was performed by the cadets,

with Legion members on hand for the event at the landmark fire hall and Mayor Anderson reading the proclamation.

The countdown to 2010 has indeed begun.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Oral Questions

SURREY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL SERVICES AND TERMINATION OF FRASER HEALTH AUTHORITY CEO

J. Kwan: In 2002 Kathy Kinloch, an executive director with the Fraser health authority, said the emergency ward at Surrey Memorial was stretched, and it needed a capital expansion. In December the Cochrane report put forward recommendations for changes to emergency care. Last month Fraser health authority CEO Bob Smith sent a memo to staff raising alarm bells about overcrowded emergency rooms. But the government has done nothing.

Why is the Premier making Bob Smith the fall guy today, when the situation at the Fraser health authority has been a mess since the B.C. Liberals reorganized health care into chaos?

Hon. S. Bond: We absolutely agree that there are growth pressures in the Fraser health authority and, in particular, facing Surrey Memorial Hospital. But as we've pointed out numerous times, demographics are not new to anyone. As we move forward, we are today making sure that we are going to move forward rapidly and aggressively to address the pressures that face Surrey Memorial Hospital.

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

J. Kwan: The government knew as far back as 2002 that there were growing pressures in the emergency ward. The fact is that B.C. Liberals are the ones to blame for the crisis at the Fraser health authority.

The government can try to blame Bob Smith and make him the fall guy three months before an election, but the buck stops with this Premier and this government. If Bob Smith really wants to be blamed, can the Premier explain today why the Minister of Health — actually as recently as yesterday — defended the Fraser health authority on the handling of the emergency care in this House? The Minister of Health defended the Fraser health authority's actions as recently as yesterday.

Hon. S. Bond: We've made it clear that there is work to be done in the Fraser health authority. Let's look at the track record of what this government has actually managed to accomplish in the period of time we've been in Victoria.

[1420]

We are actually going to see the delivery of a new hospital in Abbotsford, which people knew about for

how many years — a decade? — prior to this. We have seen a response by the Fraser health authority to deal with the short-term pressures, but we expect more.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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

J. Kwan: Certainly, the people of Surrey expected more from this government and this Minister of Health. Bob Smith was paid \$320,000 a year. This government spent more than \$50,000 just to move him out here from Halifax to take the job. Here's what the former Minister of Health, now the Minister of Finance, had to say about Smith's on-the-job performance: "I believe he has done a first-class job as the CEO of a multibillion-dollar organization." Again, to the Premier: how can British Columbians have any faith in a government that gave Mr. Smith glowing reviews but then fired him at the first sign of political trouble less than three months before the election?

Hon. S. Bond: Health authorities are large and complex, and there comes a point in time where it is perhaps necessary to have a change in leadership. In fact, that was certainly evident in 2001 in Victoria — wasn't it?

We're actually going to see a new direction in the Fraser health authority, because we believe the people of the Fraser health authority deserve the best quality health care they can access.

J. MacPhail: Government's motto is "Shoot first and then find out what's wrong later." Here's what the former Minister of Health had to say about complex organizations: "He is worth every dime of that salary we are paying to provide leadership for an extremely complex organization." That's what the former Minister of Health had to say about Bob Smith.

Well, what's happening at Surrey Memorial under this government's leadership? The average wait time for Surrey Memorial in the emergency room is six to eight hours. The emergency room today is 42 percent above capacity. Surgical wait times are exploding since this government took over.

Again to the Minister of Health: after three years of giving Bob Smith their full support up to and including yesterday, despite ongoing chaos in emergency rooms, what changed last night to warrant his firing this morning?

Hon. S. Bond: Let's talk about the accomplishments of this government in terms of health care. We have record health care spending in the province of...

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: ...British Columbia. In fact, across the province we've added almost 70,000...

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Let us hear the answer, please.

Hon. S. Bond: ...new procedures across the spectrum in terms of people's ability to access hips — new hips — and knees and angioplasties. This is a government that has an aggressive plan for reform...

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: ...and we are going to continue to move aggressively toward improving health care in this province.

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

J. MacPhail: Let me remind the Minister of Health and the Premier that on top of Bob Smith's salary, this government paid his predecessor, Pat Zanon, \$700,000 in severance to make room...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, let us hear the questions and the answers.

J. MacPhail: I'm fine with this. It shows how little they understand the problem they've created, Mr. Speaker. It shows just how little they understand what they've done to patients.

They paid Pat Zanon \$700,000 in severance to clear the way for Bob Smith because they thought Bob Smith could be trusted to do their dirty work. You see, Mr. Speaker, they don't get it.

Again to the Minister of Health: what did she learn between yesterday's question period, when she defended the Fraser health authority, and this morning that finally convinced her that their hand-picked candidate that cost the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars had to be sacrificed to cover her political hide?

[1425]

Hon. S. Bond: Let's talk about the mess we had to clean up when we got to Victoria. Severance is a perfectly good example of that. In fact, we now have the most rigorous standards in the country in terms of termination expectations. I'm always surprised....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please, hon. members.

Hon. S. Bond: I'm always surprised...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If we're going to continue with question period, let's have some order in the House, or we'll stop it right here.

Hon. S. Bond: ...that a former Minister of Health would actually be able to stand up and continue to point fingers across the floor of this House, when there was not one single FTE in the previous government that was responsible for planning in health care.

SURREY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL SERVICES AND HEALTH ESTIMATES DEBATE

J. Brar: Since becoming an MLA, I have heard nothing but horror stories about patient care at Surrey Memorial Hospital. With a large and growing population, the Surrey Memorial Hospital is not equipped to take care of patients properly and provide quality care to the patients in Surrey.

Can the Minister of Health tell us how much it's going to cost to expand the emergency room and how much it's going to cost to build the necessary long-term care beds to take the pressure off acute care beds?

Hon. S. Bond: First of all, while there are always challenging circumstances that occur in the health care system, the men and women that serve every day in the health care profession are extraordinary. The vast majority of experiences that people have in the British Columbia public health care system are exceptional. A great deal of work has been done in terms of looking at the need to expand Surrey Memorial Hospital. That work is being done. We expect to see that expedited as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge has a supplementary question.

J. Brar: The minister says they didn't know how much money it was going to cost but says there are plans and all that kind of stuff. I have been hearing that since the by-election. When the by-election took place, all those kinds of plans.... I don't know where those plans are, and where the money is, I don't know. But can she tell us how much it will cost or point to dedicated funding in the budget?

There's one simple reason why so many of my constituents did not vote in favour of this government in the by-election. They simply don't trust this government.

Will the Minister of Finance...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. members.

J. Brar: ...commit today that he will allow this House to examine the health estimates in detail so we can find out ourselves whether these promises are real?

She is talking about plans. Show me the money. Where is the money?

Hon. G. Bruce: The work of the House.... The government has business to undertake. We will be undertaking that business here. We're all here. We're doing supplemental estimates now around the clock as we sit here. We've been going at it. You've had minutes and hours on all of the supplemental estimates as we're here. The people's business of this province will be done in this House. And when it's finished, we will go to the polls, and once again British Columbians will elect good government in the province of British Columbia by returning this side of the House to government.

CANCER CLINIC IN PRINCE GEORGE

P. Nettleton: Rumour has it that the cancer clinic has been approved for Prince George. If that is the case, has the Minister of Health Services been instructed to hold back on the announcement closer to the writ being dropped in order to achieve maximum voter impact?
[1430]

Hon. S. Bond: The member should be well aware of the process that we're undergoing in terms of the cancer strategy. Currently the northern health authority plus the provincial health services authority are doing a study on how we can improve cancer care across northern British Columbia. I've made it clear that that report has not yet been received. We expect to receive it within the next couple of weeks.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN B.C.

E. Brenzinger: As the health care system slowly erodes due to operational cutbacks and poor planning on the asset side, it means that this government has not anticipated growth and, hence, has not built hospitals to serve regions where the population is increasing. British Columbians are witnessing an unacceptable rate of misdiagnosis, infection, unclean facilities and unnecessary deaths.

What threshold needs to be reached before the Minister of Health recognizes that there is a health care crisis and that Surrey Memorial Hospital is the second-busiest emergency ward in the country and needs to be given the funding to operate properly?

Hon. S. Bond: In the budget recently brought down, we'll see that the health care budget was increased by \$1.5 billion. By the end of next year, in fact, the Fraser health authority will have received an additional \$200 million.

SEVERANCE PAYMENT FOR FRASER HEALTH AUTHORITY CEO

J. MacPhail: The Minister of Health wants to blame everybody else except her Premier and herself for the

absolute failure of Surrey Memorial Hospital to deliver quality patient care. This morning she fired Bob Smith and blamed him for all of the problems.

If Bob Smith is the problem at Surrey Memorial Hospital, why are this Premier and this government paying him \$300,000 in severance pay?

Hon. S. Bond: We've already made it perfectly clear. We have the most rigorous standards in terms of severance in the country, and we will adhere to the expectations that are laid down in legislation.

[End of question period.]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please, hon. members. Order, please. Would the members please take their arguments outside the House. The member for Coquitlam-Maillardville has the floor.

Reports from Committees

R. Stewart: I have the honour to present the report of the Select Standing Committee on Education for the fifth session of the thirty-seventh parliament entitled *A Future for Learners: The Path to Renewal of Education in British Columbia*.

I move the report be taken as read and received.

Motion approved.

R. Stewart: I ask leave of the House to permit the moving of a motion to adopt the report.

Leave granted.

R. Stewart: I move that the report be adopted, and in moving adoption, I wish to make the following comments.

The Select Standing Committee on Education was mandated to assess the progress made to date in implementing the recommendations contained in the committee's 2002 report. The preparation of this 2002 report was, in fact, the first time in almost a quarter-century that the Select Standing Committee on Education had asked the people of B.C. for their opinions on our education system. The results of our review of that report concluded that increased school board autonomy, a simplified funding formula and a new comprehensive accountability framework had provided British Columbia students with world-class learning opportunities.

[1435]

I appreciate this opportunity to move the adoption of the committee's report, and I would like to thank the organizations who took the time to provide us with

their thoughts. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to all members of the committee for their input and dedication throughout this important process.

Motion approved.

Orders of the Day

Hon. G. Bruce: I call Committee of Supply.

Committee of Supply

The House in Committee of Supply; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 2:39 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION (continued)

On vote 37(S): ministry operations, \$550,000,000
(continued).

J. MacPhail: Just before we broke for the noonhour, I was asking questions about the Sea to Sky Highway and the fact that the government now has to account on taxpayer debt for the portion of money that was supposed to be paid by the private sector.

[1440]

I would like to ask the minister about the logic behind the accounting principle that when a commitment to a capital lease is made, it is defined as a public liability. Could he explain that accounting principle, please?

Hon. K. Falcon: The member knows that we as a government, as part of our openness and transparency, are the only government — that I'm aware of — in North America that is now following generally accepted accounting principles, otherwise known as GAAP.

In terms of the logic which belies the accounting profession and the auditor general's possible requirement that the financing portion of the private sector partner's contribution be considered a capital lease.... I can't begin to totally understand the arcane nature of accounting policy and the requirements thereto, but I can say this to the member: we will, as always, be fully compliant and GAAP-compliant. That is why, through an abundance of caution, we are ensuring that as part of going forward, we will include that portion of the private sector financing as part of the total government debt, in anticipation of a pending ruling by the auditor general.

J. MacPhail: This is why it is such a mockery to not debate the estimates of this new budget. This minister can't answer the question, and we're not going to get any access to the Minister of Finance. The answer he just gave is ridiculous — absolutely ridiculous.

Once again the citizens of British Columbia are being harmed by the secretiveness and the scaredy-catness of this government. They're going to run away without answering any of these questions.

My information is this. When a contribution is determined to be a capital lease, it means that the person who will be doing the leasing is taking no risk and that the only risk is to the taxpayer. That's why the debt associated with that capital lease has to be assigned to the taxpayer. It has got nothing to do with GAAP — nothing. We faced this in the 1990s; we faced it in the 1980s.

Perhaps the minister could tell us: what is the risk factor that the private sector is now not taking and that leads to the auditor general's conclusion that this is a capital lease?

Hon. K. Falcon: There is no change at all in the risk profile. The only difference is that as the owner of the asset the government of British Columbia.... That is primarily why the accounting rules require that the capital lease be included: because we will be the owner once the work is completed. That is why this drives that accounting issue.

[1445]

J. MacPhail: Well, Mr. Chair, it's ridiculous for me to pursue this line of questioning with this minister, because he doesn't know what he's talking about. He simply doesn't know what he's talking about, and frankly, it's embarrassing for us to continue this discussion.

What we do know is that since this government made the announcement that they were going to have this wonderful public-private partnership on the Sea to Sky Highway, it has all fallen apart. There ain't nothin' left of it. The government has to assume all of the risk, and that's why they're being charged the full accounting for the debt. That's why this is, and that's the difference from what happened last announcement.

I don't know why they don't just admit it. It's a publicly owned highway. It's public money that's covering off this highway. At best, the private operator is getting a good advantage to make a profit at the taxpayers' expense, which is, of course, typical of this government. It's absolutely typical of this government, under the guise of public-private partnerships, to have them all fall apart except for the portion where the private operator gets to make a profit at taxpayer expense. That's the nub of this issue, plain and simple, and it's right there in the budget plan.

It is unfortunate that the abuse of this House doesn't allow for that to come out, except for with the opposition. If we could actually debate the estimates, perhaps the Finance minister would be able to explain all of this. But oh, no. We're not going to get to do that. No. We're going to have people stand up, like the member for West Vancouver-Capilano, who stood up and said, "Blah, blah, blah. Can you tell me why you're so wonderful, government?" instead of asking hard-nosed questions about the Sea to Sky Highway and how his constituents

are being raked over the coals because of that. The minister of highways can't even explain what a capital lease is — can't even explain it. It's embarrassing.

Under the gateway project, what's changed with this supplemental estimate?

Hon. K. Falcon: Prior to answering that, I want to touch on something the member said. I can't let that go by, because she is trying to impugn the benefit of P3s. As a government that single-handedly set the standard for public tax dollars being wasted on megaprojects that went disastrously wrong, it is amazing to me that she can stand there and critique a process called P3s — public-private partnerships — whereby you do have risk transfer, where the taxpayer doesn't have to take it all on the chin when something may go wrong.

It's funny that she mentions Sea to Sky, because on the Sea to Sky we had a great example of that when the Rutherford Creek Bridge collapsed. Instead of the taxpayer being on the hook for that, the private proponent was responsible for replacing that, at their cost, when something went wrong — not us as the taxpayers.

The other thing I will say about Sea to Sky is that I really want to take a moment to recognize the incredible work of the contractors and their employees who have been doing the work there. It is ahead of schedule. It is under budget. They have been doing exceptional work in very challenging circumstances, and I have heard this positive feedback from mayors up and down that corridor. I have heard this feedback from travellers along that corridor. It truly is a great success, and try as that member might, she will not be able to impugn the fact that it will be a great asset for British Columbia.

[1450]

Speaking of the gateway program — something I'm very excited about — the key difference here is that we've added \$200 million. Those dollars will be utilized for planning purposes; for environmental assessment work; and for some partnering with the federal government on some potential capital aspects of that, which we're currently negotiating. So there are very, very many strong benefits coming forward as a result of the gateway program.

J. MacPhail: I didn't find out what changed except for \$200 million. Where is the money being allocated?

Hon. K. Falcon: Actually, I just said that, so I'll say it again for the member because she may not have heard that part. The dollars will be allocated in a whole range of areas. They're going to be allocated towards.... It could include everything from property acquisition. It will certainly include substantial planning work. It will include a very substantial public consultation process, which has already begun. It will include some potential capital initiatives that would be undertaken.

There is a whole range of issues that will be.... Some will be dependant on what level of federal government involvement we have. More importantly, what this recognizes very clearly, I believe, is this gov-

ernment's very strong commitment to moving forward with the gateway program.

J. MacPhail: Perhaps I could have just a few more specifics. Could he name a capital project that's going to benefit from this \$200 million? For instance, the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge and the expanding of Highway 1, which is a gateway project, cost \$1.05 billion. The minister tried to announce that during the recent Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election. He spent a real whack of money there. How much is going toward the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge and the expansion of Highway 1 in '05-06?

Hon. K. Falcon: We are in the midst of negotiating with our partners on this. There are negotiations that take place with local governments and with the federal governments. I expect we will have more to say in the coming months about that, but at this point I'm not prepared to talk about that just because we haven't concluded those negotiations. Upon conclusion of those negotiations, we will, of course, be talking about that in the coming months.

J. Brar: On the Port Mann Bridge, you know, there's a history there. I saw, during the by-election, that this was the number one issue for the Liberal government. Yes, I understand that they have to negotiate the project with the federal government, but what are you going to negotiate? Do you have a plan? How much is it going to cost? Do you know about that? We want to know how much it is going to cost and what your plan is on this.

Hon. K. Falcon: Certainly, as I have said many times before, we're in the midst of determining the scope of that project. We have, for example, wanted to include improvements to all the interchanges along the No. 1 highway to ensure that we work with municipalities so that traffic flows in and off the freeway will be improved. That is ongoing.

We've always said that the total cost, when you include the interchange work, is likely in the \$1.4 billion range, but again, that scope is something we're in the midst of establishing. This is all part of our plan of moving forward with the gateway program. It is a very important part of that.

We also happen to believe that there will be strong federal interests in the gateway program, because of the enormous impact it will have on the economy of British Columbia and on the ability to move not just people but goods throughout the lower mainland gateways. The South Fraser perimeter road, the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge, the widening of No. 1 and the improvement of the interchanges and, of course, the North Fraser perimeter road are all critical parts of that gateway program.

J. Brar: What I want to know is: is there any money — even a single dollar — allocated for the construction of the Port Mann Bridge?

Hon. K. Falcon: As I mentioned to the member, we're in the midst of negotiations right now. I will be saying in the coming months where some of those dollars will be going, so I would ask the member to stay tuned.

[1455]

J. Brar: I have difficulty understanding that when you are going to negotiate, particularly.... We have this bridge and we need to twin it. The minister, at this point in time, doesn't know how much it's going to cost. What I'm asking is: what is the cost of twinning the bridge? Do you have any money allocated in the current budget for the construction of the bridge from your side? Leave aside the federal government.

Hon. K. Falcon: The bridge portion at this point is estimated to be about \$800 million of the \$1.4 billion. As you can see from the substantial financial commitment just over the next three years alone — almost \$300 million towards the gateway program.... Again, I will have more to say on what, if any, of the capital portions of that will be in the coming months once we conclude some negotiations that are underway.

J. Brar: The minister is saying that the money we have allocated is about \$300 million at this point in time for the whole gateway project. Out of that, can the minister tell how much money is going to be allocated for the Port Mann Bridge?

Hon. K. Falcon: As I've said, no, I can't, because we're in the midst of negotiations right now. We'll have more to come in the coming months. Once we conclude those negotiations, we'll have a better sense of what portions we are able to move forward on immediately. Stay tuned, because in the coming months you'll know that.

J. Brar: The total cost for the Port Mann Bridge is \$800 million, as per the minister's estimates. So the total money allocated by the government at this point in time, \$300 million.... Is the minister expecting only \$5 million more for the gateway project from the federal government?

Hon. K. Falcon: We're in discussions with the federal government and have been for some time. I'll be very candid. I am seeking every possible penny I can out of the federal government for this project. The reason I'm doing that is because I actually think there is a strong Canadian interest here. Canada benefits when British Columbia benefits from making up for the historical lack of infrastructure investment that the previous government did not make in lower mainland infrastructure.

This is very, very important for Canada. I expect that the federal government will recognize its importance to Canada, and I expect to get every possible dollar I can out of federal government contributions to a project that will have enormous pan-Canadian benefit.

[1500]

J. Brar: I'm trying to understand the numbers here. The total cost for the gateway project, as projected by the minister, is \$1.5 billion, if I'm correct. The money committed by the government for the next three years, up to year 2008, is \$300 million. My question is: if the government does not get the remaining almost 80 percent of the money from the federal government, is this government committed to elevate the funding from this government? If that's the case, what is that? How much is that?

Hon. K. Falcon: We will cross that bridge when we come to it. What I can tell the member is that I think it is very important to recognize that these dollars are a very substantial commitment to moving this project forward as aggressively as we can. I do happen to think — I'm always hopeful and optimistic — that we can bring some federal dollars to the table.

I think the federal government will recognize — with, hopefully, even the encouragement of the member opposite, who is from Surrey and knows how challenging it is for residents of Surrey just to access Highway 1, whether it's from 152nd, 160th or 176th — what a problem that is for the residents that member serves. I hope that member will be joining me in writing and pushing the federal government to contribute to this very important project.

J. Brar: I understand the need for the Port Mann Bridge, and I have said that from the very first day. The question I have is.... I'm not going to stand up here and support something which is not viable, which is not workable. My question again is: do we have a workable, fully developed business plan which you are going to present to the federal government and which has all the estimated budgets of every project?

Hon. K. Falcon: I think it might be helpful for the member to know that on a project of this size and this scale, whenever we approach the federal government, it's with numbers that are of what I call an order of magnitude. The reason is that until you go through the public consultation and the consultative process with all of the respective municipalities.... Some of that can change, and that will impact costs. What you do is establish an order of magnitude so that people have a sense, especially the federal government, as to how much we're talking about in terms of the magnitude of the project.

The other thing I would say to the member — and I think it is very important — is that this 200 million in additional dollars that has now been contributed towards the gateway program is just the beginning of an ongoing process. What I would say to the member is to not get himself overly concerned about the construction-cost funding portion, because of course, you know we have to go through the environmental assessment work and the public consultation work. This will allow us to accelerate that work and get through it. The outer years that you don't see here will be where you will

need the very substantial capital dollars for the actual construction itself.

J. Brar: This government has been talking a lot in the past and even today about how we should run the government as a business. I understand that. But any business, even if it's a very small business, has to start with a full-blown business plan which includes everything from market analysis, consultation done and all the projections in the budget to information from their partners. I don't understand, at this point in time, if you don't have a business plan to start with, on what basis you are going to negotiate with the federal government.

Can you tell me whether you have a business plan or are in the process of developing a business plan where you have full and complete information after doing the necessary work to get the business plan completed?

[1505]

Hon. K. Falcon: The member likes to keep talking about business plans, so I would refer him to a couple of things. One is that the federal government, Transport Canada, did a study which showed that congestion actually costs the lower mainland economy — wait for this — \$1.5 billion annually. That is the lost economic cost to the economy of the lower mainland because we have traffic gridlock and there has not been historical investment made by the previous government in the transportation infrastructure.

The Port Mann Bridge, in particular, was built in 1963. That was 40 years ago. The population of the GVRD 40 years ago was about 800,000 people. Today it's three times that number, and there still has been no new investment.

The final thing I would say to the member is that yes, we do have a business plan. That business plan will be part of the public consultation process and will be shared, because we are in the midst of, as I've said to the member....

Interjection.

Hon. K. Falcon: I keep hearing heckling from the member for Vancouver-Hastings, who was the leader in a government that did absolutely nothing for lower mainland infrastructure at all for the decade that she was in power.

Interjection.

Hon. K. Falcon: "HOV lanes" is apparently this member's answer to what she did to solve the transportation gridlock crisis in the lower mainland. Unfortunately for the member, the HOV lanes didn't solve the \$1.5 billion worth of congestion challenges we face in the lower mainland.

Interjection.

The Chair: Order, please.

Hon. K. Falcon: We are actually moving forward. The member, along with the public, will be able to peruse the business plan that will be shared with all the public during the consultation process. Part of these funds will go towards making sure it happens.

J. Brar: Well, finally. This is the first time I've heard that there is a business plan; I don't know at what stage, though. I would like to know: is the business plan complete at this stage? If not, on what day will it be completed, and can I get a copy of that?

Hon. K. Falcon: The business plan will go out to the public through the public consultation process, which will take place in the fall. The business plan will incorporate the public consultation that we hear, and any final refinements will be made to the business plan as a result of that public consultation.

J. MacPhail: So we've got no business plan, no public consultation. We have a failed announcement that didn't work during the Surrey by-election. We've got this government having done absolutely nothing along this corridor in its four years, and all of a sudden we learn that they're expecting the federal government to pay 80 percent of the project.

Could the minister tell me where, in the history of Canadian federal-provincial relations, the federal government has ever paid 80 percent of an infrastructure project?

Hon. K. Falcon: Well, I have to say that I never cease to be amazed by the unbelievable things that come out of that member's mouth. Apparently an over \$300 million commitment this year and three years out isn't a commitment and apparently isn't doing anything. That member had a decade to do something and did nothing. A band-aid solution was one thing they did on the Port Mann Bridge, and that's all it was. We are actually engaged in the most massive infrastructure program that the lower mainland has ever seen.

Now, this member talks about 80 percent federal dollars. You know, the member is just frankly, as usual, wrong. We go to the federal government and ask them to be partners in projects like this, and as the member knows, there is a substantial amount of work that has to take place before you ever actually start the major construction process. What we are doing is demonstrating this province's commitment to moving that forward by undertaking these expenditures. We will be building that bridge. We will provide a twinned Port Mann and a widened Highway 1, and it will be an enormous benefit for British Columbians in the lower mainland not just today, but well into the future.

[1510]

J. MacPhail: I guess the proof is in the pudding. Here we are, days away from the end of this government's first term, and they've done nothing. Here we are, days away from this government's term, and they've committed \$300 million on a \$1.5 billion pro-

ject. They have no business plan — none, zero. They've done no public consultation, they've done no environmental assessment, and people are supposed to say: "Oh gee, that's a good record." Well, their record stinks, and we know that. They'll be judged on that record come May 17.

The reason why I say, "Has there ever been a federal government that's committed 80 percent to an infrastructure project?" is because that's what the minister said. He said: "The project costs \$1.5 billion. We've committed \$300 million. We have no plan. We've got nothing to negotiate with the federal government, and we're expecting the federal government to come up with the dollars." That was the answer to the question.

We in the opposition can only assume that they're expecting the government to come up with \$1.2 billion. Oh wait, there's another possibility. Let's see. Maybe in the year '09.... Let me see. How many years away will that be, and how many of those people will even exist on the other side? Maybe in '09 the government.... Well, I should say the Liberals. The Liberals might say: "Well, if we're elected to government, we'll commit more money."

Again, this government — and particularly this minister — have such poor business acumen that they think.... Well, actually, it's been tested. It was tested in the by-election. This minister stood up and made the big promise about the Port Mann Bridge. I don't think anyone believed him.

Wait. Does his mother live in the riding? No, his mother doesn't live in the riding. So maybe nobody believed him, and that's why he did so poorly as the political lead in that by-election. His commitments are so false, they're like cotton candy. They're backed up by absolutely nothing, and we see that from the questioning.

When are the negotiations going to begin with the federal government? Do they start after the business plan has been done next fall?

Hon. K. Falcon: Actually, the member just doesn't quite understand that the fullness of my political genius strategy will be fully exemplified on May 17, when we will again revert to seizing the opportunity of winning that chair back.

I will say this to the member. She's wrong again. I have to say it's getting a little tiresome having to say that all the time. It must be difficult being proven wrong so many times. She's wrong that we haven't started consultation, because actually, we have. In fact, consultation is underway as we speak. She's wrong when she says we haven't consulted. Actually, we have consulted with all of the councils up and down the corridor. She's wrong when she says we haven't done environmental assessment work, because we've actually done extensive environmental assessment work. It's not completed yet. We still have more to do, but it's well underway. Again, I find myself in this position of having to point out that the member is wrong, wrong, wrong.

As far as the government commitment, let me just say this. Unlike a previous government that — as one of their members used to say, "We used to make announcements we had no concept of ever fulfilling.... Unlike a government that used to make announcements that had no dollars to fulfil.... For example, the \$125 million mental health plan comes to mind. Not one dollar was put aside for that. Unlike that kind of a sorry, tragic....

Interjection.

Hon. K. Falcon: Sorry, I hear a voice. I do believe the voice is the member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasantness or whatever. That member should know that she was actually a leader in creating that tragic decade of broken promises and broken dreams.

What we have done instead is actually put into place over \$334 million from this year and going forward for the next three years to actually open up British Columbia. We are builders again in British Columbia. We are creating opportunity. We're not going to be like the naysayers on the opposite side, who can find a thousand reasons why you should never do anything. We're doing it. We're building. British Columbia is growing again, and that's why we're going to be re-elected so massively on May 17, 2005.

[1515]

The Chair: The member for Surrey–Panorama Ridge on vote 37(S). Let's get back to the debate.

J. Brar: The minister has said that they're working on the business plan. My question is pretty simple. What specific steps are they going to take to build the complete business plan? Can you tell us?

Hon. K. Falcon: There'll be several stages that we will go through. We will finalize our consultation with the cities that are involved in the corridor. We will complete our engineering and environmental work that is underway. As I talked about scope of project, I talked about the fact that we've already begun the environmental assessment work. That work will be completed. We will continue negotiations with the federal government, because obviously we think that they should be an important player in this, and we're hopeful they will be. Then we will go out in the fall to the public for consultation on the entire project, including the business plan that we put in front of them.

J. Brar: The benefit-cost analysis is a very important part of developing a business plan. Can the minister tell: has the gateway program done any benefit-cost study of the Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1 expansion?

Hon. K. Falcon: Our preliminary benefit-cost ratio for the entire project is 3.3. The portion for the Port Mann was actually substantially higher. I haven't got the exact number, but it was in excess of 4.

J. Brar: There is a consultant report that Vaughn Palmer has reported on, but it's not published anywhere on the gateway program website. Can you tell me what that consultant report is?

[1520]

Hon. K. Falcon: Member, I'll need more information on that. I'm not familiar with the consultant report that Mr. Palmer has commented on.

J. Brar: Can the minister tell me the scope of public consultation? Where will that take place, and what community will be part of it? What municipalities will be part of it?

Hon. K. Falcon: We're already consulting with municipalities about this issue. We're actually in the process of designing the public consultation process. What I can tell the member is that public consultation is something I think... Frankly, I'm very proud of how our ministry handles that. We've done a substantial amount of work throughout the province, whether it's Kicking Horse Canyon or Sea to Sky Highway or whatever the case may be.

I can tell you that it will include features you see in all of our public consultation processes. It includes open houses, it includes meetings with stakeholders, and it will include community meetings. It also includes pretty substantial website feedback criteria, where we allow people to enter onto the website and provide feedback from there. It's a very open process that allows maximum opportunity for the public to have their input.

J. Brar: Mr. Chair, you know, this is a very huge capital project we have. I think we must have a lot of things very clear in our mind at this point in time. The stakeholders — who are they? Can you tell me the list of those people, who they are?

Hon. K. Falcon: This is not a comprehensive list but will be sort of typical of the kind of stakeholders that typically have input in these kinds of things. It includes the Trucking Association. It includes the railway operators. It includes the ports. It includes the B.C. Automobile Association, various user groups, members of the general public, etc.

J. Brar: Does this list also include...? You mentioned the word "municipalities." I understand there are a number of municipalities that are going to be interested in this project and also maybe a number of communities which will benefit or be impacted by this project. Does the government have any list of different municipalities you are going to consult?

Hon. K. Falcon: As I mentioned, those consultations with the municipalities are already underway. They are key players in this whole process, because we want to ensure that we work cooperatively with them to ensure that traffic flow is moving to the benefit of,

frankly, all the players. I think the easiest way to explain to the member in terms of which municipalities.... It's virtually all of them, except those on the north shore of the Burrard, and Richmond. Excepting those ones, virtually everyone else is involved in that consultation discussion.

[1525]

J. Brar: The consultant report.... I have more specific information on that. This is from the *Vancouver Sun*. It's June 26, '04. The headline is: "Ten years, \$6 billion in roads and bridges." In this article Vaughn Palmer reports, on the second page: "The consultant report released last month forecasts annual revenues starting in the \$40 million range at the time of completion in 2007, rising to \$50 million by 2010." Does the government know about that consultant report at all?

Hon. K. Falcon: Based on the numbers I'm hearing, I think the member is referring to the Fraser River crossing, otherwise known as the Golden Ears project. That sounds very suspiciously to me like the numbers, exactly, for that Fraser River crossing.

J. Brar: We will come back to this one with more clarity later on.

I know the minister has been talking about tolling the bridge. Are these net benefits that the minister is talking about greater or fewer under the toll scenario? I know the minister has been talking about tolling the bridge at some point in time. Under a benefit analysis, are these net benefits greater or fewer under the toll scenario?

Hon. K. Falcon: We have provided the cost-benefit ratios. Those are ratios that do not include tolling. Should tolling be contemplated as something that would move forward, we would obviously undertake those and determine what those benefit-cost ratios would be.

J. MacPhail: I've been listening, and I wanted to explore some of this issue about what the benefits and costs are. The minister is talking about ratios. I actually want to talk about net benefit and costs. Does the minister have any net-benefit-and-cost analysis?

[1530]

Hon. K. Falcon: When you have a benefit-cost rate of 3.3, that coincides with a net benefit of more than \$6 billion.

J. MacPhail: What discount rate was used for future costs and benefits?

Hon. K. Falcon: Eight percent.

J. MacPhail: Over what period of time?

Hon. K. Falcon: Twenty-five years.

J. MacPhail: I heard the minister say that that's for the Fraser River crossing. But does that study also include the Port Mann Bridge? Perhaps he could tell us the range of the benefit-cost study. I have some other questions on that.

Hon. K. Falcon: That rate of 3.3 includes the whole gateway program. It does not include the Fraser River crossing. I imagine GVTA probably did its own assessment on the Fraser River crossing.

J. MacPhail: Sorry, I may have missed this. This study is public? The minister is making this study to which he is referring public?

Hon. K. Falcon: No, this is part of the draft business plan that will be coming out in the fall as part of the consultation process, once we've completed our discussions with the cities and determined the other issues that I mentioned to the member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge.

J. MacPhail: Well, I assume this study will be made public. Can the minister tell us what the title is of the study on which he's just been answering questions, so that we will know to make sure that it's made public?

Hon. K. Falcon: It's a working paper. I don't believe it has an official title. But I can tell that member that in the fall it will be fully released, and the member will be able to share it and enjoy it along with the rest of the public.

J. MacPhail: Well, we'll see whether we'll be enjoying it or not. I'm not quite sure why this study isn't released now. It doesn't give any disadvantage to anyone who may bid on the project, including the federal government — no disadvantage whatsoever. I assume the study is for the project and not the proponents. So no, I don't in any way trust the government to do the right thing and release this at all.

What costs around environmental impact does the study take into account?

Hon. K. Falcon: They do include environmental impacts.

J. MacPhail: Yes. Which ones?

Hon. K. Falcon: I don't have those numbers with me, but again, they will be released in the fall as part of the public consultative process.

J. MacPhail: What did he expect we were going to talk about under the \$200 million? Oh, thank you. You committed 20 percent of ferry money to a project that you haven't got any business plan for — no business plan. We're trying to figure out what other studies you've done.

Does the study take into account lost transit revenue or impacts on highway safety?

Hon. K. Falcon: Yes.

J. MacPhail: Why can the minister tell me that, but he can't tell me what the environmental impacts are? Are greenhouse gas emissions taken into account?

Hon. K. Falcon: I don't have all of that information with me. As I said to the member, it will all come out in the fall. You will see everything, and you can fill your heart with all the information that will be there. There's lots of it.

[1535]

J. MacPhail: Well, that's completely insulting to the voters — completely insulting. But actually, I guess we could use that quote in an election ad showing that this government doesn't have any substance behind its promise — nothing. Given their record of broken promises, the voters will go: "Uh-huh, you're right. Let's be scared. Let's be very, very afraid."

What traffic pattern modelling did the government use? Was it from the regional transportation plan or their own?

Hon. K. Falcon: We jointly developed a traffic modelling program with TransLink, and that's the model we're using.

J. MacPhail: Does TransLink have this study to which the minister refers?

Hon. K. Falcon: As I've said to the member before, this is all still preliminary work that is underway. We'll continue to work on this. Of course, once that work is completed, we will share all that work with all the stakeholders, including TransLink.

J. MacPhail: Whenever the minister gets into a corner, all of a sudden it turns out to be just preliminary work. He can answer some questions but not others — all sounds pretty iffy to me. Why? Because it is iffy. The money ain't there; the study ain't there. The partners aren't there; the public isn't there. No one's there except the Minister of Transportation trying to buy votes. That's the only reason we're having this discussion at all, because he's trying to buy votes.

The minister said that the benefit-cost study was for the entire gateway program. Well, is there any specific cost-benefit study done for the Port Mann Bridge or the Highway 1 project? It seems to me that in order to do a cost-benefit study, you have to do it on the individual parts. I don't think this government is going to be able to get enough money from the other partners to do even one part of this project, let alone all three.

Hon. K. Falcon: I already answered this question for the member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge. The member for Vancouver-Hastings wasn't here when I answered that, but as I indicated, we did also do a separate rate for the Port Mann Bridge portion of it. I

didn't have the exact number, but I knew it was well over 4.

J. MacPhail: Mr. Chair, just for the benefit of a seasoned member, he was just unparliamentary — number one.

Number two, it's his job to answer questions no matter who they come from. He's not supposed to discuss who is not in the chamber, Mr. Chair. God forbid that be done for his government — I'll tell you that.

Number three, he did not.... I asked this question before, and he said the study was done for the entire gateway project. It's got nothing to do with what previous question was asked. He said the study was done for the entire gateway project, not the Fraser River crossing.

J. Brar: There are numerous neighbourhood groups — including the livable region coalition and the recently merged Langley conservation network, Surrey environmental partners — who are opposed to this project.

My question to the minister is: has the minister done any consultation with those groups, or is there any plan to do that consultation?

[1540]

Hon. K. Falcon: As I've mentioned repeatedly, there will be full public consultation in the fall. All those groups will have every opportunity to avail themselves of the numerous and many consultative events — whether they're open houses, community meetings, the website or what have you.

J. MacPhail: How far geographically will the consultations go? The four exits from Highway 1 flow into the constituency of Vancouver-Hastings. What consultation is going to be done in the riding of Vancouver-Hastings? Specifics, please.

Hon. K. Falcon: I've already indicated that we're still in the midst of designing that consultative process in consultation with the municipalities. As I've already said before and I'll say again, all of the municipalities are involved except Richmond and the North Shore.

J. MacPhail: Well, let me see — the fall. Could we have a date of when it's going to be started — the consultation, this grand project? Oh, I know. Well, then let me ask for this commitment. Will the minister commit to revealing all of the work that hasn't been done in preparation for this as he rolls out his election goodies?

The minister didn't want to answer that question. That would be called truth in advertising, and I know that's anathema to the Liberal government.

I'll tell you something, Mr. Chair. If this minister raises the phrase "Port Mann Bridge" once, he will have to be held accountable for all of the work that he hasn't done in Surrey, in Burnaby, in Vancouver, in the North Shore, where he hasn't.... It's not even on the radar screen amongst the public or the city councils, includ-

ing TransLink and GVRD, that he's done any outreach whatsoever on the planning of the Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1.

He's shaking his head. Well, stand up and tell us, because that's all we've been asking. He's saying: "No, no. That's not true." Well, that's all we've been asking. Tell us what the outreach has been. Let me know right now what discussions he's had with the city of Vancouver about the effect of this gateway project on Vancouver-Hastings.

Hon. K. Falcon: Well, I'm forced to once again say the member is wrong. We actually have engaged in consultation with all of the councils. We have engaged in consultation with the GVTA. We have engaged in consultation with the GVRD and the GVTA board, and we will continue to do that as we go forward with a public consultative process, which begins in the fall.

I don't have the level of detail that the member wants for the specific riding of Vancouver-Hastings, because we're in the process of working with the staff at the municipalities to get that information. Then we will come forward with the full and complete public consultative process.

J. Brar: Do we have...? In a business plan, we usually have.... A good business plan should include some sort of time line on different issues. Does this government have time lines about when the consultation process is going to start, when it's going to finish and when the government actually plans to start — any projection of dates — the actual construction of the bridge?

[1545]

Hon. K. Falcon: I appreciate the member raising the issue of business plans, because business plans are very important before a government undertakes major capital projects. As the member well knows, there was no business plan for the fast ferries. That was one of the reasons why the taxpayers found themselves in such a horrific situation, where almost half a billion dollars of taxpayer money was wasted. That should give the member real encouragement.

We are still, as I mentioned to the member, designing the process and working with the municipalities. That consultative process will start in the fall. Typically, a consultative process on a project like this will last probably.... Six to eight months is the likely time frame we're talking about. As a result of that public consultative process, we will be able to finalize a lot of those kinds of issues into the business plan that the member talks about.

J. Brar: Is there any tentative date you have in the supposed business plan for when the construction of the bridge is likely to start?

Hon. K. Falcon: Actually, the fact of the matter is that you can't. You can't until you've nailed down the environmental assessment work, because believe it or

not, you actually have to know what impacts are going to be created. You can't until you've completed the engineering, the scope of engineering work required. The public consultative process is a big part of that because you're going to hear from the....

Interjection.

Hon. K. Falcon: Is there an echo in here? No.

Interjection.

The Chair: Order, please, member. Member, just listen, please.

Hon. K. Falcon: If the member for Vancouver-Hastings would actually listen, she might learn a thing or two here. As I indicated, there will be a full consultative process, and the public will have an opportunity....

Interjection.

Hon. K. Falcon: Yes, of course they do, member. They will be able to have their say.

Interjection.

The Chair: Member, please. You'll have an opportunity to ask questions. Just listen now, please.

Hon. K. Falcon: As a result of the contributions of the public, we can then nail down all the elements of the business plan when we have completed the public consultative process, when we have completed the scope of engineering work and when we have completed the environmental assessment work. That's actually how you build a business plan that makes sense.

Interjection.

Hon. K. Falcon: Well, I'm apparently being lectured by the member opposite on how to do a business plan. I can't help but remind that this member was the one who actually had no business plan for fast ferries. In fact, when the board dared to suggest this might not be a good use of taxpayer dollars, you fired them, and you put a new board in place made up of people who didn't have a clue how to undertake a major business project.

It's a little bit difficult for me to hear this member lecture me on business plans. I'm sorry; it's a challenge for me. But I can assure the member that our business plan will include all of the information that needs to be there. It will be fully shared with the public. The public will have full input on that. That is actually how you move forward on a major project and protect the public purse.

J. MacPhail: Well, the one infrastructure project that I was responsible for, the millennium line, came in under budget and on time.

In fact, what this government has just said is that they have no construction date. They have no construction date in mind. What they're going to do is go to the public, I guess, and say: "Hey, when would you like the project started?" It's like a hippie kind of thing. "Hey, man, any idea when you'd actually like to reach nirvana?" Then you work back from there.

Maybe there would be an epiphany among some certain public groups where they would say: "You know, I just love it when Capricorn comes together with Aries, and I think that would be a good day to start construction." Then others may say: "We don't want you to start construction at all, and it makes sense for us to have that input, because you don't have any plan anyway — no construction date."

This government has no business plan, no public consultation planned, no construction date planned, no budget. This project is a fake — an absolute fake. Can the minister name any other business plan that...? Well, actually, no. That's an unfair question, because this government hasn't built anything. That's an unfair question.

[1550]

Okay, let's look at the RAV project, then. There are construction dates for the RAV project. Was that wrong? The public consultation is ongoing on that. They've got construction dates in there. Are they wrong to do that?

Hon. K. Falcon: No, they're not wrong at all. That project is obviously much more well-advanced. I couldn't help but note that the member mentioned how she was responsible for the millennium line. Boy, that triggered some fond memories, like how they overrode the environmental assessment process and overrode local governments so they could ram it through without the appropriate environmental assessment work.

You know what? We're not going to do that the way you did that, member for Vancouver-Hastings, because it was appalling — what you did. In fact, I would encourage the member and her new member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge to read some of the headlines from back in the nineties when you overrode the environmental assessment process — made a mockery of what was supposed to be there to protect the environment.

That is the record of that member, and that's not how we're going to do it. That's why I'm proud. When this member says we have no commitment, I'll tell you, I think most British Columbians would say \$330 million is a pretty significant commitment. I think most British Columbians would say: "We are proud of a government that actually is going to undertake the full environmental assessment impact and not shortchange it the way that member and her government did."

We will not run roughshod over public consultation. We will not run roughshod over environmental assessment impact. We are going to do it right. It will be a business plan that will stand up to scrutiny. Frankly, it will be a stark contrast to the absolute legacy of mismanagement and roughshod overriding that the

member's hopelessly incompetent government undertook during their decade of dismal economic performance in British Columbia.

J. Brar: I keep hearing different scenarios of this whole project. The consultation will start sometime in the future; the negotiation with the federal government will start sometime soon, and so on. I think the minister, by now, would understand that the government works from year to year in different budgets.

What I don't understand at this point in time is how the minister is going to present his case to the federal government in asking for the partnership — for money — without indicating any date, any budget year to the federal government. Can you explain that?

Hon. K. Falcon: Actually, the federal government were the ones that came up with the study that demonstrated there's a \$1.5 billion annual cost to our economy as a result of congestion and gridlock. The federal government, perhaps more than almost anybody, is keenly aware of the huge challenges that gridlock and congestion cause. That's why we are working with the federal government, together as partners, to help solve this problem and move forward in British Columbia so that we can have a transportation network that actually works for British Columbians.

J. Brar: The GVRD argues that the Port Mann Bridge does not support the livable region strategic plan, which is the region's long-term plan. What is the government doing to ensure that their concerns are addressed?

[H. Long in the chair.]

[1555]

Hon. K. Falcon: We've already started that dialogue. We've met with the board of the GVRD. I'll remind the member that the liveable region plan has not been updated in over ten years. I was speaking to the chair of the GVRD, and the chair was telling me that they are actually beginning the process of updating that liveable region plan so it reflects the reality that's out there. I encouraged them to do that. Of course we will continue, through the public consultative process, to ensure that they have every opportunity. We will work with them as they work through a new liveable region plan that will be updated to reflect the reality of growth and what's happening.

J. Brar: If in this case the GVRD does not come to the table, will the government push through with this project and override the interests of the GVRD, even if it resolved to oppose the project?

Hon. K. Falcon: Our intent is to work with the GVRD. I believe we will be able to fashion a working relationship. We may not agree on every issue, but I do think we all agree that congestion is a major problem, and it needs to be dealt with. I look forward to having

a constructive relationship with the GVRD. I actually have a very good working relationship with the chair of the GVRD, who supports the gateway program. I think that working with other members of the GVRD, we can fashion a consensus and move forward in a positive way for all British Columbia.

J. MacPhail: Here's what the Minister of Transportation said on September 8 of last year about congestion: "You cannot build your way out of congestion completely."

I searched all sorts of transportation plans to try to find, in North America, where adding capacity has reduced congestion at all. There's not one transportation study or analysis that shows where adding capacity has reduced congestion — not one single one. So maybe the minister could show me or tell me where I should look. Clearly, my research is faulty. What jurisdiction in North America has he looked at where adding vehicle capacity has reduced congestion?

Hon. K. Falcon: I'm not surprised the member will take that position. In fact, it's exactly why there was no investment in transportation infrastructure throughout the province. One thing that this government and our Premier recognize is that there is a direct correlation between the economic prospects of British Columbia and its transportation network.

The fact of the matter is that we know that when we talk about economic corridors.... I did say that — and I always say that, I should add to the folks in this House — you cannot build your way out of congestion. I accept that as a given, but I also accept that Highway 1 and that corridor is the most congested corridor in the entire province. It's a congested corridor because it was built 40 years ago when we had a third of the population that we have today.

The other thing I would say to the member is that we also recognize that this is just one piece of our bigger transportation plan to deal with the challenges we face. That's why we are part of a \$1.7 billion rapid transit project for the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver line. That's why we are contributing \$170 million towards the northeast sector public transit. That's why we continue to fully fund a transportation plan with B.C. Transit, and that's why this gateway program is so critical.

Remember, at the end of the day we have to move goods in British Columbia too. Not all of those goods go by rail and air. Some of them go by truck. We also have to make sure that we recognize that the tens of thousands of truckers and the businesses that rely on getting their goods to market must have a network that they can get through. That's why this is one piece of a big transportation vision and a plan for British Columbia — a plan that we set out and introduced late in 2002 for British Columbia called Opening up B.C. I'm very proud of that plan and the leadership our Premier had in fostering and putting together the plan, and also the leadership that the former Minister of Transportation had in setting out that plan.

[1600]

J. MacPhail: Let me just take this a little bit more slowly, then, for the minister. It's congestion that causes the economic malaise. That's why I looked for studies that would demonstrate that adding capacity, the way this government is doing, reduces congestion let alone eliminates it — that adding vehicle capacity, reducing congestion, would solve the economic dilemmas faced by the trucking industry. So I searched for studies all throughout North America, and I couldn't find any that proved anything except the opposite point: adding vehicle capacity does nothing for congestion. It does absolutely nothing for it. That's why I asked the minister for his study. That's all. It's just a basic, factual question. What studies does he have to show that congestion will be reduced by the gateway project? What comparators elsewhere has he examined?

Hon. K. Falcon: What I will say to the member is that the member needs to look at the successful economies in the world today, and to look at.... For us to be successful, an economy like that of British Columbia, a small trading province competing around the world, needs to have a comprehensive transportation plan that includes investment in public transit and appropriate investment in infrastructure.

The member should know that the northeast sector of our oil and gas is exploding in growth. One of the primary reasons is that they came to us and said: "We need to be investing in transportation, roads and infrastructure." As a result of those kinds of investments, we now see drilling happening not just in the winter season but year-round.

That's what the Sierra-Yoyo-Desan P3 was about: an award-winning private partnership, a \$40 million road built up in the northeast sector, which is now helping to continue the huge, explosive growth in economic activity in the northeast sector. This member has challenges understanding that, and I get that. This member philosophically opposes making these kinds of investments, but I can tell him you that as part of an overarching transportation plan, these investments are very important.

The one and a half billion dollars that congestion costs the lower mainland each and every year is a cost on the economy that affects every small business person in the lower mainland. It affects every part of this province because even in northern and rural British Columbia, when they're shipping their goods by truck to get to market, and when they're sitting in that congestion for three or four hours a day, it actually impacts their ability to be competitive.

That's why we're making these investments, and that's the economic plan we have for British Columbia: to get ourselves into a position where British Columbia is a world-competitive economy. That's exactly what we're doing.

J. MacPhail: I take it from that, with the minister shifting ground from the gateway project up to the northeast corner of the province, that he has no studies.

He has none — absolutely no studies to show or demonstrate that what he is going to do will have any impact on congestion whatsoever.

The studies I looked at, just for his information, are from the cities of Phoenix, Houston, Los Angeles, Seattle, Montreal and Toronto. Those are the studies I looked at. The minister can't even name one study to prove his point that adding capacity actually reduces congestion. I have all those studies that show adding capacity has zero effect and sometimes a negative impact on congestion, and the minister doesn't even have one study.

Let me ask this, then: what is the effect on ridership on the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver rapid transit line when the gateway project is fully implemented?

Hon. K. Falcon: The answer is it will have virtually no significant impact at all on ridership. In reflecting on what the member says, I can only assume that the member feels the way she does because their economic plan, or at least the result of their economic plan, was actually to slow down the economy of British Columbia to such an extent that perhaps infrastructure wasn't needed.

I suppose it is kind of like their small business plan. Their small business plan is to take large businesses and, through regressive regulatory and tax policy, reduce them to small businesses. Sadly, in many cases they just fled the province for a greater opportunity elsewhere.

[1605]

That appears to be the plan that the member has, but I'll say this. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: that's part of the great choice that British Columbians will have in front of them. We are builders in this province again. We're not afraid to be builders. We're not afraid to ensure that we have a comprehensive transportation vision that includes some of the most massive investment in public transit we've seen in the history of this province, that includes certainly the most massive investment in road and rehabilitation infrastructure improvement we've seen in this province. We want to ensure that British Columbia is going to be not just competitive but the most competitive economy in the country. We are going to lead the nation in economic growth and opportunities for the people of British Columbia.

J. MacPhail: I know that flourish of rhetoric probably impressed the Minister of Transportation, but unfortunately, it's all smoke and mirrors. This government actually hasn't invested one single cent yet in any of these projects we're talking about — not one cent. That's why he can't answer any questions. That's why he can't tell us when the construction date is going to be.

I would just remind him that each and every year through the 1990s a half billion dollars was invested in roads and bridges and transit — every year. This government has done nothing. Now they're going to make an election promise — a latter-day election promise —

saying: "Oh, trust us. If you vote for us again, we promise to invest something."

The government doesn't have any study whatsoever to show that adding vehicle capacity reduces congestion — none. But he just said that he can absolutely, factually tell me there will be no effect on ridership of the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver line with the building of the gateway project. How does he know that? Can he tell me what study he's done?

Hon. K. Falcon: Our preliminary analysis suggested there is virtually no impact. We're talking about two very different corridors, and therefore it's demonstrating in our preliminary work that there is virtually no impact whatsoever.

J. MacPhail: Is it the entire gateway project that the minister is talking about — upon which those analyses have been done? The minister is nodding yes. Perhaps he could describe the analyses then, please. When the minister stands up and says there's virtually no linkage whatsoever between the rapid transit line, SkyTrain and this gateway project.... Perhaps he could just tell me.

Hon. K. Falcon: The preliminary and initial runs of the traffic model don't indicate any impact. Now, the member knows these are very complex and complicated technical models that we go through. But, as I say, the preliminary information is that there is virtually no impact.

J. MacPhail: Does that include the South Fraser perimeter road as well in the impact study?

Hon. K. Falcon: Yes.

J. MacPhail: I would love to see that study, then. I'd just love to see it. Could I have a copy of it, please? Sorry, Mr. Chair. I'll let the minister answer on the record.

Hon. K. Falcon: As I've indicated on at least half a dozen occasions, the member will have full access to that in the fall when the public consultation process begins.

[1610]

J. MacPhail: What's the problem with releasing it now? I don't understand that. The minister just went on record saying he has a study, and it shows that there will be absolutely no impact. I'm just very curious as to how that could be. I'm skeptical. I'm sure a whole bunch of people in the GVRD would be skeptical as well. Let me ask this: does the GVRD have that study?

Hon. K. Falcon: The member keeps referring to it as a study. I've said again that this involves preliminary work on initial runs of a traffic model. As I said, in the fall when we begin the public consultative process, we

will share that with all the stakeholders and all members of the public including that member.

J. MacPhail: I guess, then, that it's not a study. They looked at some traffic patterns, and the minister concludes that there is no issue. Hoo, boy, that's really comforting. I think the minister is just making it up as he goes along. And the public is supposed to have confidence in him or his government?

Let's find out what other studies the government's done on this. Claims to be the big enviro-guru; says the former government, on the millennium line, overrode environmental assessment. That's simply not true. He knows that. It's the greenest project, the cleanest project under budget, done in record time. It turns out that the municipalities, after consultation, welcomed the project, as did the public. Of course, they were actually involved, unlike this government, where you have to take the minister's word.

His word has been challenged. His word has been challenged, actually, in the hallway — about the truthfulness of the things that he has said in here. And then he's had to apologize. Now, that was about matters of criminal activity. You're right. That was about criminal activity raids on the Legislature. That's true.

The Chair: Member, will we please stick to the vote? I don't think it's necessary to go through the characters of people.

Interjection.

J. MacPhail: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I certainly will.

But it certainly isn't out of line at all, just for the minister's benefit. I'm just actually reiterating the facts that are on the record in *Hansard*. I do see that they're troublesome. The facts are troubling to the Minister of Transportation, and I can understand why.

The government argues that building the bridge will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. I asked the minister about that. He had no evidence of that whatsoever. He didn't even know whether that was part of his study when I asked him about that a few moments ago. But if you go to their climate change policy, they actually claim that the building of this bridge is part of their climate change policy. Whoa. There's a leap. It's not even a leap of faith.

Increasing highway capacity will actually encourage more cars into the system, fewer transit trips — despite what the minister alleges, and for which he has no evidence whatsoever — fewer walking trips, fewer trips that actually encourage anything other than the use of the car.

My question is this: what evidence does the government have that tells us that we're actually going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through going ahead with the gateway program? That's what their website says.

Hon. K. Falcon: First of all, let me preface my comment by reminding the member that again she's

wrong. I have lost count of how many times she's been wrong. That member actually rammed through the millennium project over her own environmental assessment policies of her government of the day — a shameful display of government arrogance and brutality on the people who were concerned about those issues.

What I will say regarding greenhouse gas emissions...What the member should know is that actually having traffic idling 16 hours a day in traffic isn't really good for the environment. That might be news to the member, but it actually is not helpful to have cars sitting there three and four hours a day, each way, trying to get through a traffic corridor. That's bad for the environment.

[1615]

Part of the great thing about the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge is that we now have additional options to consider — options like, for example, public transit corridors, bicycle paths, new HOV lanes, the consideration of dedicated commercial lanes — ways that we can continue, through demand management models, to actually improve the environmental impact while at the same time freeing up the most congested corridor in the province. That's exactly what we're going to do.

J. MacPhail: Is that part of the business plan — each and every one of those?

Hon. K. Falcon: Yes. Again, it is part of the preliminary business plan that we're working on. It will go to public consultation in the fall to ensure we get full input, because we may get some more good ideas out of the public consultation process. But yes, that is part of it.

J. MacPhail: Boy, it seems that everything we ask is part of the business plan. It seems to be pretty fully shaped. Why is the government hiding it?

The minister doesn't want to answer. Interesting. No wonder this government wants to shut down this Legislature: they actually don't want to answer the questions. So we're supposed to trust the government that all of these greenhouse gas-reducing ideas are included.

When I asked the minister just moments ago whether he could even tell me whether that was part of the study, he didn't know. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He said: "Oh, I have no idea." He says: "I don't know. I'll get you that information." Now it turns out that, oh, they're a model of it. Let me see who they trust — British Columbians.

Well, let me ask this to the minister: what study has he done to show that congestion will be reduced and that cars will idle less? What exact studies has he done?

Hon. K. Falcon: Again, as I have said to the member many times, these are the preliminary results we have, based on the information that we've done to date. We continue to work on that and gather that informa-

tion. During the public consultative process in the fall we will fully and completely work through that information as we get more input from stakeholders and members of the public.

J. MacPhail: I don't think the public is going to do a study on reducing congestion. The government presents to the public their studies on how this is going to reduce congestion.

My gosh. This is pretty basic stuff: what studies will the government present to the public to show that their gateway project reduces congestion, and what will that study demonstrate?

Hon. K. Falcon: That will be included in the information we bring forward in the fall and share with the public for public input.

J. MacPhail: Is the study being done right now? Who's doing it? How much is it costing?

Hon. K. Falcon: The work is part of the work being undertaken by the dedicated project team we have on the gateway project. They will continue to do that work, as they will continue all the other preliminary work that is underway in terms of environmental assessment work, engineering scope, etc. Once we enter into the public consultative process in the fall, all that work will be shared with all members of the public and all stakeholders.

J. MacPhail: I need more specifics than that. Surely, the study has already been set up, because a congestion study has to be done over a period of time — on a monthly basis; also on a daily basis and an hourly basis.

Who's doing the congestion study? Over what period of time? When will it be completed? And how much does it cost? The gateway project team can tell me that.

[1620]

Hon. K. Falcon: I've answered this multiple times. I'll try one more time. This is part of the work that the project team is undertaking. The project team is undertaking a whole range of work associated with this project. They will have all of that information available as the consultative process begins in the fall. All the stakeholders, including that interested member, will have every opportunity to have input once the information is shared in the fall.

J. MacPhail: Maybe the minister could tell me the terms of reference for the congestion study that the gateway project is undertaking.

Hon. K. Falcon: As part of the business plan, all of these areas get fully explored. In the fall in the public consultation phase of this project, all of the information will be shared with interested stakeholders, members of the public and, of course, the member opposite.

J. MacPhail: Well, maybe I could then take it one step back. Are there terms of reference for a congestion study? I won't even ask the minister to reveal what they are. Are there terms of reference?

Hon. K. Falcon: There are terms of reference for all technical studies that we undertake in respect to the project.

J. MacPhail: Could the minister name the technical studies, please?

Hon. K. Falcon: They're on a whole range of issues. I don't have them at my fingertips, but they're on a whole range of issues the project team is undertaking that will, again, be made fully available in the fall public consultative process.

J. MacPhail: I can hardly wait. Everybody's going to be real busy.

Tell me how big the gateway project team is that is doing all of these studies the minister keeps referring to. How many people are dedicated to this?

Hon. K. Falcon: The core team is about 24 individuals. They in turn, of course, will engage and utilize consultants.

J. MacPhail: It's ridiculous to suggest that a team of 24 can do all of these studies. The minister knows that, and the staff knows that. No wonder the public is cynical about these pre-election and election announcements that this minister makes. He's got nothing to back it up.

Will the congestion study include the level of greenhouse gas emissions and the effect of the project on greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. K. Falcon: Part of the analysis will include that. Again, that will be part of the information that comes forward in the public consultative process.

J. MacPhail: What is the link between the congestion study and the study on determination of the level of the greenhouse gas emissions? Is this a model that the government itself is making up starting from scratch, or are they models that they've examined and that they'll be replicating?

[1625]

Hon. K. Falcon: Those are technical details that I'm not aware of and I don't have at my fingertips, but I can assure the member that that is part of what the project team is undertaking. The project team, of course, once they conclude and gather all that information, will share that with the public during the public consultative process in the fall, which all stakeholders, the public and the member opposite will have an opportunity to be part of.

J. MacPhail: Well, I guess all the government members just want to say "aye, aye" to a \$200 million

expenditure and that it's ridiculous that the opposition would ask for this technical information, because the minister doesn't have it with him.

Yesterday the Minister of Forests didn't have his information with him. I still haven't received it. Today the Minister of Transportation says: "Trust us. Give us the money. We don't have any of the studies. You can't have access to them. They're not done; they're not public. I can't give you the terms of reference. I don't have any studies elsewhere to show that what we're doing is the right thing to do."

Here's what every other study showed. Every other study showed that when you add capacity, congestion is either the same or worse, and greenhouse gas emissions go up. I've named the studies where that's demonstrated.

This government seems to think that although the minister can provide me no evidence whatsoever, all of their studies — which we have no details on — will prove exactly the opposite. He can't name the terms of reference. He can't name the range of studies. He can't name the time line. He can't tell me who's doing them, and he can't tell me what the budget is for them. But, oh, we're supposed to trust this government that their studies will show what no other jurisdiction has ever achieved.

Well, I'd like to say gee, if you believe that, I've got a bridge for you to buy. But unfortunately, in this case it's true. British Columbians are going to have to buy a bridge, to the tune of \$800 million. This government can't.... I should say, actually, that this minister can't demonstrate one single, solid, factual basis upon which we should invest in that bridge — not one. He's got no construction time line. He's going to leave it up to the people to decide the construction time line. He has no plan for consultation. That'll roll out. He's got no budget. He's got no technical studies. This is the equivalent of asking people to buy a pig in a poke. It is shameful that these Liberal MLAs sit here and allow this to happen.

Vote 37(S) approved.

Hon. K. Falcon: I move that the committee rise and report resolution.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:28 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

[1630]

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. K. Falcon: Forthwith. I move that the report of resolution from the Committee of Supply on February 22, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. K. Falcon: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$550 million. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 1 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted by Her Majesty towards defraying the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Motion approved.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 5)

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intituled Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 5).

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the bill be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: The use of supplementary estimates is consistent with the spirit of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. This supply bill is introduced to provide supply for the operations of programs for the 2004-05 fiscal year, as outlined in the supplementary estimates (No. 5) tabled earlier. The bill will provide the additional funds required to defray the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005. In accordance with established practice, the government seeks to move this bill through all stages this day.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, in keeping with the practice of this House, the bill will be permitted to advance through all stages in one sitting.

Bill 12 introduced, read a first time and ordered to proceed to second reading forthwith.

Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 5)

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that Bill 12 be now read a second time.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move the bill be now referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Bill 12, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 5), read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Committee of the Whole House

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 5)

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 12; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:35 p.m.

Sections 1 and 2 approved.

Schedule approved.

Preamble approved.

Title approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:35 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

Bill 12, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 5), reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Supplementary Estimates

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: supplementary estimates (No. 6) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Hon. C. Hansen moved that the said message and the estimates accompanying the same be referred to Committee of Supply.

Motion approved.

Committee of Supply

The House in Committee of Supply; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:39 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:
OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

Vote 4-D(S): Elections B.C., \$545,000 — approved.

[1640]

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that we rise, report resolution and ask leave to sit again.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:41 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall it be considered as read?

Hon. C. Hansen: Forthwith. I move the report of resolution from the Committee of Supply on February 22, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$545,000. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 2 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted by Her Majesty to defray the capital expenditures requirements of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I call Committee of Supply for the consideration of vote 5(S) regarding the information and privacy commissioner.

Committee of Supply

The House in Committee of Supply; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:44 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES: OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

Vote 5(S): information and privacy commissioner, \$115,000 — approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the committee rise and report resolution.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:45 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. C. Hansen: Forthwith. I move that the report of resolution from the Committee of Supply on February 22, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$115,000. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 1 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted by Her Majesty to defray the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I call Committee of Supply to consider vote 6(S) regarding the budget for the ombudsman's office.

Committee of Supply

The House in Committee of Supply; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:47 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES: OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

Vote 6(S): ombudsman, \$20,000 — approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that we rise and report resolution.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:48 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. C. Hansen: Forthwith. I move that the report of resolution from the Committee of Supply on February 22, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$20,000. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 1 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted by Her Majesty to defray the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I call Committee of Supply to consider vote 7(S) regarding the budget for the police complaint commissioner.

Committee of Supply

The House in Committee of Supply; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:49 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES: OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

Vote 7(S): police complaint commissioner, \$105,000 — approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the committee rise and report resolution.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:50 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. C. Hansen: Forthwith. I move that the report of resolution from the Committee of Supply on February 22, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$105,000. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 1 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted to Her Majesty towards defraying the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Motion approved.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005 (SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 6)

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intitled Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 6).

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the bill be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: Mr. Speaker, the use of supplementary estimates is consistent with the spirit of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. This supply bill is introduced to provide supply for the operations of government programs for the 2004-05 fiscal year, as outlined in the supplementary estimates (No. 6) tabled earlier. The bill will provide the additional funds required to defray the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005. In accordance with established practice, the government seeks to move this bill through all stages this day.

Mr. Speaker: We'll pause for a moment while we distribute the bill.

Hon. members, in keeping with the practice of this House, the bill will be permitted to advance through all stages in one sitting.

Bill 13 introduced, read a first time and ordered to proceed to second reading forthwith.

Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005 (SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 6)

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that Bill 13 be now read a second time.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the bill be now referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Bill 13, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 6), read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Committee of the Whole House

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005 (SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 6)

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 13; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:55 p.m.

Sections 1 to 3 inclusive approved.

Schedules 1 and 2 approved.

Preamble approved.

Title approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:56 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

Bill 13, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 6), reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Supplementary Estimates

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: supplementary estimates (No. 7) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Hon. C. Hansen moved that the said message and the estimates accompanying the same be referred to Committee of Supply.

Motion approved.

Committee of Supply

The House in Committee of Supply; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 5 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY, ABORIGINAL AND WOMEN'S SERVICES

On vote 17(S): ministry operations, \$40,000,000.

Hon. M. Coell: Mr. Speaker, if I can just take a moment to outline why I'm requesting this. In February the province started negotiations with the Peace River regional district and its member municipalities to renew the MOU on oil and gas revenue allocation. The oil and gas sector is spread widely over the rural territory, and these local governments do not have adequate industrial tax base support. As a result, historical infrastructure deficits have arisen in some municipalities in the Peace River and Northern Rockies regional districts.

These deficits are principally in the formerly rural subdivisions that were originally developed with low service standards in specific areas around Fort St. John. The \$40 million will address these deficits. Under the proposed MOU the Peace River regional district will continue to compensate in lieu of access to the rural tax base.

It is proposed that an unconditional grant in lieu of taxes for the region also be increased by \$8 million. That was \$12 million in the previous year and will go to \$20 million effective April 1, 2005. The \$20 million, when added to the existing municipal infrastructure tax proceeds in the Peace River district, brings the total

annual proceeds from industry in the region to about \$29 million in total. The \$40 million is a one-time cash payment to open and close, I guess, the new MOU. I think it's very good news for the northeast, and they'll put that money to good use for infrastructure throughout the area.

I might add that the Fair Share agreement dates back to 1989, when the provincial government and the Peace River regional district reached an agreement where the province would transfer \$12 million per year until the fiscal year 2007-08. There was a reopener clause in that MOU, and that could be triggered after five years. That had begun.

In April 2004 the provincial government provided a one-time payment of \$6 million to the communities in the PRRD in recognition that two years would pass before the mid-term negotiations could be expected to conclude. I'm very pleased that the negotiations have been successful. I look forward to questions from members in the Legislature.

J. Kwan: The government had put out a press release on budget day announcing this spending. Why did the government wait until budget day of 2005 to announce this 2004 spending?

Hon. M. Coell: The negotiations had just reached a point where we could do that, and it seemed an appropriate time.

J. Kwan: So it has nothing really to do with the pre-election goodies that the government wants to announce three months in advance of the election.

Maybe the minister could tell me where the \$40 million came from with the existing budget. Is it unspent dollars within the ministry, or is it new money that came from contingency? Where did the moneys come from for this 2004 line item?

Hon. M. Coell: It's beyond the budget. It would be coming from new growth in the economy and new funds into this ministry.

J. Kwan: We understand that the northeast communities have been lobbying for \$80 million as opposed to \$40 million. Is another \$40 million built into the 2005 budget?

Hon. M. Coell: No. This is the offer that was made, and the \$40 million is what we hope would be the only payment.

[1705]

J. Kwan: This is locked in for how many years? Is there another reopener in terms of potential negotiations for the MOU in the future?

Hon. M. Coell: There is a proposed escalator in the yearly budget, but the MOU hasn't been finalized yet, so I can't say whether there will be a reopener at some point in the future.

J. Kwan: The February 15 news release states, "Allocation of the \$40 million will be determined by discussion with the local governments in the region and the province. Negotiations continue toward finalizing a new memorandum of understanding before the end of the month," which the minister just acknowledged that he has not yet completed. Who is doing the negotiations at the moment?

Hon. M. Coell: Mr. Vince Collins, on behalf of the government, is the negotiator.

J. Kwan: What will the total amount be now — the total investment dollars in the northeast part of British Columbia for the last fiscal year — with this additional \$40 million?

Hon. M. Coell: The total would be the \$12 million that was in the budget and allocated, plus this \$40 million one-time funding.

J. Kwan: This is one-time money, so with the negotiations that are coming — or that will be finalized — it is not anticipated that there will be any more additional dollars. This is not ongoing over a period of time?

Hon. M. Coell: The total dollars would be the one-time funding of \$40 million, and then we've added or offered \$8 million on top of the \$12 million for \$20 million a year consistently after that. There would be an escalator cost added to that \$20 million, as well, over the years to come.

J. Kwan: The February 15 release also refers to the annual funding of \$20 million. Is that spending in the 2005 budget then — that \$20 million?

Hon. M. Coell: That will be in the 2005-06 budget, the \$20 million.

J. Kwan: Does this have anything to do with the \$135 million northern trust initiative that was announced several times last year?

Hon. M. Coell: No, they are not directly related.

J. Kwan: Is there any relationship with this year's budget that includes \$366 million invested in the northern forestry and the energy and mining area? Does this have anything to do with that budget item, or is that completely separate also?

[J. Weisbeck in the chair]

Hon. M. Coell: Yes, it's separate as well. This is really to do with the Fair Share agreement that dates back to 1998 and had the reopener clause in it. I think what the communities in the northeast were hoping for is that when it got to this stage, when they reopened, there would be a lump sum payment and then an increase in the yearly funding to cover infrastructure. It's

really a stand-alone amount of money dating back to the Fair Share agreement.

J. Kwan: Yes, I remember the Fair Share agreement, because at the time I was actually the minister who was responsible. I worked with my colleagues at the different levels of government to come together with this. I remember the member, who was then the mayor from Peace River....

B. Lekstrom: Dawson Creek.

[1710]

J. Kwan: Dawson Creek — sorry. The mayor of Dawson Creek, who is now the member for Peace River North, was at the table at the time, and he was thrilled with that negotiation. So I do know that this is part of the continuation, if you will, of the Fair Share negotiations.

Now, according to the *Budget and Fiscal Plan* — this document, pages 131 to 134 — there is an additional \$26 million to be approved at supplementary estimates that is part of the Canada-British Columbia infrastructure program. Could the minister please tell this House when these supplementary estimates for this additional \$26 million will be introduced? Is the government waiting for the federal budget? Is that what's holding it up?

Hon. M. Coell: I believe that is scheduled to be introduced sometime later this week.

J. Kwan: Is the minister waiting for the federal budget to be dropped tomorrow?

Hon. M. Coell: No, we're not. I believe it's scheduled to be introduced before the end of the week.

J. Kwan: What projects will this money be funding or directed towards? Are there any in the northeast sector, for example? Does the minister know what the programs or initiatives are under this funding?

Hon. M. Coell: The \$40 million and the \$20 million are to be decided by the regional district and the local communities in the northeast. They will have very much of a free hand on how they want to spend that. The expectation is that the vast majority of that will be on infrastructure, and the original agreement was, as the member would know, to address infrastructure deficits. The communities still feel there are many deficits that need to be upgraded. So I think that you'll find that the vast majority of both the \$40 million and the \$20 million goes to upgrading infrastructure on an ongoing basis.

J. Kwan: And the \$26 million that would be introduced later this week, I think the minister said.... Are there any programs associated with it that are already planned for the 26 million bucks?

Hon. M. Coell: There may be. The \$26 million — and we'll hopefully get into a good discussion on that

later — is infrastructure-related as well. Municipalities or regional districts could apply for those grants as they come forward, similar to the Canada-B.C. local government infrastructure programs that are there in the first place. It's actually to pay down some debt on projects that have been completed.

J. Kwan: Could the minister quickly advise this House on the approval process for these infrastructure initiatives? Is it the case that the federal government has to sign off on it, the provincial government has to sign off on it and then it's announced to the local community? Is that still the process...?

Hon. M. Coell: The member is correct. The process for the federal-provincial grant program is that the municipality or district applies. There's a process that has federal and provincial representatives on it. We also initiated having the UBCM president in an advisory role. These projects in this supplementary letters patent won't need to go through that process, because they'll be in the hands of local government and the regional district in the northeast. They may have a different method of allocating them from within their councils as well.

B. Lekstrom: It's my understanding that this \$40 million we're dealing with under this supplementary estimate today deals with an infrastructure backlog in the northeast. It mainly dealt with the issues of classes 2, 4 and 5 under assessment that, I think, in most areas of the province, falls within municipalities which are allowed the taxation ability to access that to then fund infrastructure projects and carry their tax base within their city to develop the communities that deliver that service.

[1715]

With that in mind — I know this has been going on for many years; I've been involved personally for over ten years now — I want to take this opportunity to thank the minister for the work that's been done on this project.

With the \$40 million that we're talking about, which is separate from the \$20 million fund, from the annual Fair Share that will be indexed.... With this funding, the \$40 million, it's my understanding — if you could please enlighten me on the issue — it will be put forward to the Peace River regional district. Those local area governments that are represented at the regional district board will then decide how that is allocated out to those member municipalities and members of the regional district.

Hon. M. Coell: That's correct. I thought the member was actually going to ask for more money. But he's correct, and that goes back to the original signing of the agreement. There was a lot of autonomy in this program, and there still is. The people in the northeast have said very clearly to Victoria, no matter which government was in power, that they knew best what to do with funds for infrastructure. A number of govern-

ments have acquiesced to that, and I think that's worked out very well, actually.

B. Lekstrom: That's correct. I mean, there is great recognition that there were huge discrepancies in availability to access tax bases, particularly in the northeast. The oil and gas industry is a unique industry in that you may have a thousand wellheads spread out across.... Certainly, satellite incorporation isn't an issue or something that one would want to pursue.

But just so that I'm very clear — and probably to make it clear for the members of this Legislature and the public — there are three distinct funds that I've heard talked about here. There's the \$40 million that we're dealing with under this supplementary estimate, which is a one-time fund and comes out of the '05 budget to the region. The \$20 million that was touched on previously by the speaker is an ongoing annual allotment that we'll discuss, I'm sure, at a future date. The \$26 million that was touched on is completely separate and has nothing to do with the Fair Share agreement but deals with the Canada-B.C. infrastructure grant. Is that correct — so that we're all on the same page?

Hon. M. Coell: That's correct.

B. Lekstrom: Just in closing, the opportunity was given to ask for more money. I wouldn't want to let my constituents down by not letting them know that we have worked very closely with you, Mr. Minister, on this. I do want to offer my thanks, on behalf of the people of Peace River South and I'm sure on behalf of my colleague from Peace River North and his constituents as well. This is something that helps not only the people of Peace River North and Peace River South but the entire province, which helps drive the economy of this great province. So I thank you on behalf of our constituents.

Vote 17(S) approved.

Hon. M. Coell: I thank the members for their comments and questions.

I would move that the committee rise and report resolution.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:18 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the vote be considered?

Hon. M. Coell: Forthwith. I move that the report of resolution from the Committee of Supply be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

[1720]

Hon. M. Coell: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$40 million. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 1 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted by Her Majesty towards defraying the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Motion approved.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 7)

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intituled Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 7).

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the bill be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: The use of supplementary estimates is consistent with the spirit of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. This supply bill is introduced to provide supply for the operations of government programs for the 2004-05 fiscal year, as outlined in the supplementary estimates (No. 7) tabled earlier.

The bill will provide the additional funds required to defray the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the year ending March 31, 2005.

In accordance with established practice, the government seeks to move this bill through all stages this day.

Mr. Speaker: We'll just pause for a moment while we have the bill distributed.

In keeping with the practice of this House, the bill will be permitted to advance through all stages in one sitting.

Bill 14 introduced, read a first time and ordered to proceed to second reading forthwith.

Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 7)

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that Bill 14 be now read a second time.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the bill be now referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Bill 14, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 7), read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Committee of the Whole House

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 7)

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 14; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 5:24 p.m.

Sections 1 and 2 approved.

Schedule approved.

Preamble approved.

Title approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:25 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

Bill 14, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 7), reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Supplementary Estimates

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: supplementary estimates (No. 8) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Hon. C. Hansen moved that the said message and the estimates accompanying the same be referred to Committee of Supply.

Motion approved.

Committee of Supply

The House in Committee of Supply; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 5:26 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:
MINISTRY OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

On vote 9(S): ministry operations, \$10,000,000.

Hon. I. Chong: Just to provide some opening remarks regarding the supplementary estimates.... Firstly, these supplementary estimates are to provide \$10 million in additional funding from the consolidated revenue fund. In general terms, the purpose of this funding is described in the main estimates, vote 9, Ministry of Advanced Education, subvote: Educational Institutions and Organizations.

This \$10 million represents government's contributions towards the establishment of an institute of mental health research at the University of British Columbia. A private donor who wishes to remain anonymous has come forward with a generous donation of \$10 million to this initiative. The donation is the largest private gift ever received for mental health research in Canada.

With matching funds from the government of British Columbia, the \$20 million will be placed in an endowment at UBC and will enable the establishment of the UBC institute of mental health, including three research chairs in the fields of child and adolescent psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, depression and psychotherapy. These three areas were chosen because of the significance of prevention, early detection and intervention, the rising needs of an aging population, and the importance of psychotherapeutic approaches to the treatment of mental illness.

The \$20 million total endowment will generate projected annual interest of \$1 million. Of this interest, \$750,000 will be used to support the salaries and research of the three chairs. The remaining projected interest of \$250,000 annually will be used for fellowships, junior faculty positions, and further supporting the institute's role in training and communicating research and clinical findings.

[1730]

The institute will be a centre of excellence in mental health research, one of just three in Canada. It will be a forum in which the chairs, other scientists and clinicians will work together on mental health issues. It will help to bring outstanding clinicians and scientists to the province from around the world. Such world-class researchers will train and mentor many others, ensuring British Columbia's leadership in this very important area.

Hon. Chair, I would be pleased to take questions at this time.

J. Kwan: Could the minister please explain where the \$10 million came from? Did it come from unspent dollars, for example, in the area of mental health services in the Ministry of Health? Or is it new contingency funding? Could the minister please advise? Give us the reassurance that this \$10 million did not come

from existing programs or unspent dollars from other ministries.

Hon. I. Chong: The \$10 million that we received was from a private donor, an anonymous donor. What we're requesting in these supplementary estimates is to match that \$10 million. We're requesting it from the consolidated revenue fund, not from ministry dollars within the ministry itself.

J. Kwan: Based on the minister's answer then, the \$10 million is completely within the Ministry of Advanced Education. The dollars did not come from other existing programs — from mental health or mental health care workers, for example; from the downsizing from those ministry areas, for example, for dual diagnosis; or from the closing down of living rooms for people with mental illness. I just want to get that clear reassurance that the money was not taken from existing programs or downsizing of programs from other ministries. In other words, the government is not stealing money from Peter to pay Paul for this announcement — this \$10 million that the government is contributing, not the donation.

Hon. I. Chong: This request is in addition to the Ministry of Advanced Education budget. This is the reason why we're asking for the supplementary estimates.

J. Kwan: I didn't hear the reassurance from the minister that this money didn't come, for example, from existing programs in, let's say, the ministry of state for mental health and addictions — that it didn't come from downsizing those kinds of programs to fund this. That's the answer I'm looking for in terms of reassurance.

I know that through the supplementary process here, the minister is seeking an additional \$10 million for this initiative, but what I'm asking is.... I want to make sure that the money didn't come from existing programs that the government has taken away from so they could make this announcement of \$10 million for research.

Hon. I. Chong: Again, this \$10 million we're requesting is from the consolidated revenue fund. I'm only able to speak to the dollars within our ministry, and I can say that there have been no cuts to programs in our ministry.

J. Kwan: Then I would venture to say that there have been significant cuts in programs in other ministries, and perhaps that's where those dollars came from with this \$10 million. So there is an element of robbing Peter to pay Paul with this announcement that the government has just put out. When did the government first promise the money?

Hon. I. Chong: The request came to the ministry's attention about a month ago. We stated we would seek

legislative approval to seek \$10 million in additional funding from the consolidated revenue fund.

[1735]

J. Kwan: Where did the request come from?

Hon. I. Chong: The request came from the University of British Columbia. As I indicated in my opening remarks, the amount was received as the consequence of a private, anonymous donor. So the University of British Columbia came forward and asked us for the additional \$10 million for this request.

J. Kwan: I have actually spoken with some of the folks at UBC, and there's a bit of an issue around the clarity of the funding. Some of the folks I talked to said that they have not heard of the plans to set up an institute for mental health. They're unsure as to how the money will be spent and who will actually get the funds. For example, does it stay at UBC? Also, who will be the head of the institute, and will it be affiliated with UBC? These are just some of the questions I've heard from the folks at UBC arising from yesterday's announcement.

I'd like to ask the minister those questions, and I wonder if she could provide answers to me for the people who are wondering out there.

Hon. I. Chong: Due to the nature of the request — as I indicated, it's from a private donor who wished to remain anonymous — it had been, I guess, kept rather quiet, in the sense that they wanted to have the request proceed in that particular manner.

As I indicated in my opening remarks, with the \$10 million from the private donor and the additional \$10 million in matching funds from the government, there will be a \$20 million endowment, of which \$5 million will be endowed for each of three specific chairs — those chairs being in the areas of child and adolescent psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry–depression and psychotherapy.

The remaining amount, I believe I had indicated, would go towards the project and be endowed to allow us to earn some annual interest. Again, as I believe I had stated, of that, \$750,000 would be used to support the salaries and research of the three chairs, and \$250,000 is for fellowships, junior faculty positions and furthering the work of the institute's role. That \$5 million would be endowed to collect interest of approximately \$1 million, which is how the \$750,000 and the \$250,000 break down, as I've indicated.

J. Kwan: In whose name is the endowment fund? Does it stay with the province, or does it go to UBC? Is there a new society or a new institute that's been set up?

Hon. I. Chong: The \$20 million will be placed in an endowment at UBC.

J. Kwan: Will the head of the institute be affiliated with UBC?

Hon. I. Chong: Firstly, I would like to advise that the chairs would be chosen through a review process that ensures that the highest calibre of individuals would be found to fill those important roles. The UBC institute of mental health will reside, in fact, at UBC in the faculty of medicine, department of psychiatry.

[1740]

J. Kwan: Is the \$10 million just a one-time funding from the government, or will there be government contributions year over year? Let me ask that question first.

Hon. I. Chong: It is a one-time amount because of the endowment aspects of this.

J. Kwan: The amount of dollars that UBC, through the endowment, could use for this work is the interest portion — the \$5 million and the \$750,000 interest portion. Is that correct? Is there a requirement by which the rest of the funds then stay in this account, with the purpose to continue to earn interest? Is there a limitation, in other words, on how much could be spent?

Hon. I. Chong: If I haven't been clear, then I'll try to clarify it at this time. The \$20 million will be set aside as an endowment. Of the \$20 million, we will see \$5 million to be established for each chair. With each of those amounts, it is anticipated that about \$250,000 in annual interest would be available, which would go toward supporting the salaries and research of the three chairs.

The remaining \$5 million that's not used to establish one of the chairs will also generate projected annual interest of \$250,000, and that will be used specifically in providing for fellowships and junior faculty positions and for further supporting the institute's role in training. I hope that has been more clear for the member.

J. Kwan: Sorry. I just reread the press release, and I didn't hear the minister say that there would be three \$5 million endowments to support the research chairs. I thought it was one \$5 million endowment fund, so I was therefore missing some dollars. Anyway, I just read the press release, and it says it will create three \$5 million endowments to support the research chairs in child and adolescent psychiatry, and so on. Thank you, through the Chair, for that.

I know the L-G is probably in the precincts and ready to come in at any moment now, so my last question is this. There is going to be a process for the hiring for these individuals. Is the UBC board right now responsible for the maintenance of this fund and the expenditures of it? Are they the people that are authorized to expend the dollars within the endowment, or will there be a separate board that will be set up at a later time?

Hon. I. Chong: Currently, UBC has an endowment fund that is managed by a board. They will be the ones taking care of these funds.

Interjection.

Hon. I. Chong: That's correct.

Vote 9(S) approved.

Hon. I. Chong: I move that the committee rise and report resolution.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:45 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. C. Hansen: Forthwith. I move that the report of the resolution from the Committee of Supply on February 22, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund a sum of \$10 million. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 1 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted to Her Majesty towards defraying the charges and expenses of the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

Motion approved.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 8)

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intituled Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 8).

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the bill be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: The use of supplementary estimates is consistent with the spirit of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. This supply bill is introduced to provide supply for the operations of government programs for the 2004-05 fiscal year, as is outlined in the supplementary estimates (No. 8) tabled earlier.

The bill will provide the additional funds required to defray the charges and expenses of the public service

of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

In accordance with established practice, the government seeks to move this bill through all stages this day.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, in keeping with the practice of this House, the bill will be permitted to advance through all stages in one sitting.

Bill 15 introduced, read a first time and ordered to proceed to second reading forthwith.

Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 8)

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that Bill 15 be now read a second time.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the bill be now referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Bill 15, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 8), read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration forthwith.

Committee of the Whole House

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 8)

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 15; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 5:48 p.m.

Sections 1 and 2 approved.

Schedule approved.

Preamble approved.

Title approved.

Hon. I. Chong: Hon. Chair, I move that the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:49 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

**Report and
Third Reading of Bills**

Bill 15, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 8), reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

[1750]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, the Lieutenant-Governor is in the precinct, so I would ask everyone to please remain in their seats for a few moments.

Royal Assent to Bills

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor entered the chamber and took her place in the chair.

Clerk Assistant:

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Attorney General Statutes Amendment Act, 2005
In Her Majesty's name, Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor doth assent to these acts.

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor retired from the chamber.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Hon. G. Bruce moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: The House is adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:53 p.m.