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6TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2005

The House met at 2:04 p.m.

Introductions by Members

Hon. L. Reid: I recently had the enormous privilege of co-chairing the Women's Campaign School as part of the Canadian Women Voters Congress, an enormous opportunity for women across the land — and certainly we had delegates from all across Canada — to learn whether or not they would wish to be a candidate in an upcoming election, whether that be a trustee, municipal, provincial or federal.

We have two lovely graduates of our school with us today: Suzanne Scott, a recent grad of the campaign school from the Premier's riding, accompanied by Lori Ackerman, another member of the campaign school, from the hon. Minister of Energy's riding. I ask the House to please make them welcome.

[1405]

G. Trumper: In the gallery today we have grade 5 students from Qualicum Beach Elementary School, with their teachers Ms. Bobbi Coleman and Ms. Laura Bonnor. Would the House please make them welcome.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

CROWN COUNSEL AGREEMENT CONTINUATION ACT

Hon. G. Bruce presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intituled Crown Counsel Agreement Continuation Act.

Hon. G. Bruce: I move that Bill 21 be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Bruce: Today I introduce Bill 21, Crown Counsel Agreement Continuation Act. This bill extends the Crown counsel agreement until March 31, 2007, and respects the governmentwide wage mandate under which we've now concluded 81 agreements. It also provides for a salary increase of approximately 13 per cent starting April 1, 2006. This means that Crown counsel will see an approximate salary range of between \$56,000 and \$140,000 annually. While this bill sets aside the arbitration award as laid out by Taylor and Jones, it is in keeping with the salary component of that award.

The Crown Counsel Agreement Continuation Act also allows for the appointment of a commission to look into the structures, practices and procedures for prosecutors in British Columbia.

I move this be placed on the orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting after today.

Bill 21 introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE

R. Hawes: The solution to the crystal meth problem now plaguing many of our communities is multifaceted. Sentencing within our court system and establishing proper deterrents is just a part of the problem. By way of illustration, I would offer the following.

In January the RCMP, armed with a search warrant, took down a grow op at a home in Mission. They knocked on the front door, waited a few seconds and then kicked the door in, finding the grow op inside run on stolen hydro. Last week in court a judge dismissed all of the charges against the operators because the police did not wait long enough after knocking before kicking in the door. Extra time may mean destruction of evidence or, worse, time for the criminals to pick up weapons, thus putting the police at increased risk.

This is the kind of justice that frustrates communities, police and prosecutors. It provides a blanket of protection to the criminal element that's now being extended to the worst of the drug manufacturers and distributors. The crystal meth epidemic now destroying so many of our kids is fuelled by criminal manufacturers and pushers who don't care about wrecking lives, killing people or destroying communities. These are conscienceless monsters whose sole motivation is money. They've unleashed the worst and most addictive poison ever seen and are now mixing it with other, less addictive drugs to create even more addicted customers.

Their manufacturing labs create a huge danger of explosion and fire in neighbourhoods all over British Columbia and can be set up and run in an area smaller than a bathtub. When our police are successful in busting one of these labs, too often the slap on the wrist delivered by the courts allows these criminals to be back in business before the paperwork is completed at the courthouse. There's a sense that these criminals now have more rights than police or communities.

The public is now crying out for our communities to be protected from those who would prey upon our kids. I implore the judiciary to listen.

HOUSING FOR SENIORS

B. Suffredine: The opposition recently raised issues about long-term care in British Columbia. In 2001 the system dictated a move from home to hospital in one step if aging caused any loss of independence. Big Brother had decided that if you needed help with daily living, you must be institutionalized.

[1410]

To get in, you went on the list, and you waited two years. When space became available, you took it, or

you went to the bottom. What an awful dilemma for seniors.

A realistic response to the needs of the elderly was needed, so we developed a plan to build accommodation to give seniors choices with independence, dignity and respect. Today in Nelson-Creston, new accommodation is under construction to give seniors an option they didn't have before: independent living and supportive housing. The change from tunnel vision is here.

There is one more benefit. On the weekend I was honoured to be able to announce that Pioneer Villa is being given back to the community. This facility, built by community volunteers as a residence where seniors could live, was taken away by government in the 1990s to meet its desire to create more institutions. It was never suited to provide medical care, but it was pressed into service. Now Pioneer Villa is being returned so it can provide community-based, low-cost accommodation.

The new Crest View Village will soon provide 50 independent living and supportive housing units. Newly renovated units at Swan Valley Lodge will provide the highest standard of extended care. For the first time, Creston will have facilities to meet the full range of seniors' needs in a way that respects their right to dignity.

The former capacity has in this short time been increased by about 50 percent in a way that meets the needs of seniors. We aren't finished yet. We have a plan for seniors, and in Nelson-Creston, that plan is working.

COLLECTION OF PARK FINES

B. Penner: Years ago, when I worked as a B.C. park ranger, my job was to protect the park and the people in it. With enforcement officer status we were authorized to write tickets for infractions under various provincial statutes, like the Park Act, the Wildlife Act and the Litter Act. However, we discovered that some people didn't take the fines or the offences seriously because there was no effective way to enforce payment.

According to the most recent figures I've been able to acquire from the Ministry of Provincial Revenue, almost 70 percent of these fines go unpaid. This undermines the deterrent effect of enforcement activities and the laws themselves. In contrast, tickets for Motor Vehicle Act offences have a collection rate of almost 90 percent. That's because the fines must be paid before drivers' licences will be renewed. Since almost everyone wants a driver's licence, people are compelled to pay for their wrongdoing.

This got me, along with other park rangers and conservation officers, thinking that maybe the same concept should be applied to other provincial statute offences. Along the Chilliwack River there are increasing problems with people using the river area as a dumping ground for old tires, mattresses and washing machines. Conservation officers have told me that even if they catch people in the act, many of the perpetrators know there will be little or no consequence. This is bad

for the morale of the conservation officers. It diminishes the deterrent effect of provincial laws, and ultimately, it is bad for the environment.

I applaud the announcement in the recent B.C. budget to hire an additional 50 park rangers and conservation officers. I think it would be terrific if we could give law enforcement agencies another tool to protect our streams from litterbugs and other scoundrels.

I have worked on a private member's bill entitled environmental ticket enforcement act, which is meant to crack down on thoughtless people who treat our parks and waterways like garbage dumps. People would still have their day in court to contest a ticket if they wanted to, but if convicted, they would now be unable to renew their driver's licence until their fines were paid.

This same concept is being applied to tickets issued under the liquor act, thanks to recent changes sponsored by the Solicitor General. Let's give environmental tickets some extra teeth as well.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Oral Questions

LONG-TERM CARE BEDS IN INTERIOR B.C.

J. MacPhail: Last week we learned that the Minister of Health and her predecessor ignored several reports from the Fraser health authority that crisis was imminent at Surrey Memorial Hospital. Of course, her response was: ignore the reports, fire the CEO.

It's time that this government owns up to its mess that they themselves created. They were the ones that shut down the emergency room at Delta Hospital. They were the ones that closed St. Mary's Hospital. They reduced emergency care at Burnaby Hospital. They downgraded Mission hospital. They broke their promise to build 5,000 new long-term care beds.

To the Minister of Health: is she going to fire a CEO every time her incompetence results in a crisis in any hospital around British Columbia?

[1415]

Hon. S. Bond: First of all, the board of the Fraser health authority made a decision that it was time to change the management and leadership of their particular health authority. We concurred with that decision.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has actually invested, by the year 2007-08, \$3.8 billion in additional dollars to health care in the province. In fact, we have a plan. We are going to continue to deliver on that plan. We're going to make sure that we deliver high-quality health care around the province.

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

J. MacPhail: Let's be clear. Thank God for Ottawa, because the vast majority of those dollars flowed right

from Ottawa, and this government has no choice but to spend it on health care. Once again...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, hon. members. Let us hear the question.

J. MacPhail: ...we hear the Minister of Health stand up and blame everyone else. This time I guess they had an emergency board meeting after months of crisis, and poof, they fired the CEO.

Last week we learned that surgeries were cancelled at Penticton Regional Hospital because 30 acute care beds were occupied by seniors waiting for long-term care placements. The government has closed over 1,300 long-term care beds in the interior health region. In fact, there are fewer long-term care beds in the interior health region now than three years ago.

To the Minister of Health: has her broken promise and incompetence put another CEO's job on the line? Is she going to look for another scapegoat? Should the CEO for the interior health region be packing his bags?

Hon. S. Bond: Actually, I think it's time the member for Vancouver-Hastings looked in the mirror and looked at the job they did in terms of long-term care in the decade that they were here. Let's just look at what we've done in terms of long-term care in the province. We're creating a system that's responding to the needs of seniors.

We've said very clearly that it is going to take us longer, because we inherited a system that we simply were not prepared to accept for the seniors of British Columbia. Perhaps the members opposite are prepared to put seniors in housing that's less than adequate. We simply are not.

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

J. MacPhail: The minister refuses to live up to the accountability demanded by her post. My colleagues and I met with seniors last week. They can't afford the privatized long-term care that this government is now turning to. They can't afford the changes that this government has made that put seniors at risk. By the way, this government refused to meet with those very same seniors.

In the interior health region, emergency rooms are overcrowded, surgeries are being cancelled, beds have been closed, and services have been reduced. Emergency services in Nelson were reduced, and a man lost his life. The situation in the interior is the same as the crisis in Surrey.

To the minister: she tried a quick political fix in Surrey. It ain't working. What's she going to do this time to save her government's political hide in the interior and start trying to save some lives as well?

Hon. S. Bond: Let's look at the record of the member opposite. You know, it's just not acceptable to con-

tinue to point across the aisle and absolve themselves of responsibility for a decade of decline in the province of British Columbia — just not acceptable.

Let's look at the record in terms of long-term care. The members opposite managed to add 1,400 beds — listen, Mr. Speaker — in ten years. In fact, it's not a surprise that we have an aging population.

What are we going to do? We are going to continue to build a plan.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: At least we have a plan. We're going to continue to execute that plan.

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: In fact, we have added over 4,000 units to the system already.

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[1420]

CAPITAL FUNDING FOR HEALTH CARE FACILITIES IN VICTORIA

J. Brar: This government has only itself to blame for the problems in Surrey and Penticton. Here in Victoria, the capital of the province, hospitals face the same crisis. Just as in Surrey, there's a report that came out on November 17 calling for action which the Minister of Health has chosen to ignore. Much-needed hospital expansion has been put on hold because the government is ignoring the needs.

To the Minister of Health: she ignored the report about the crisis in Surrey. Is she ignoring the capital regional district report on the state of health care in Victoria too?

Hon. S. Bond: The health authorities across the province continue to develop plans to meet the needs of the people where they live. We actually believe that they're going to strategically look at how they approach the needs of both seniors and others here on Vancouver Island. We've made a commitment that we will reach the target of 5,000 long-term care beds. It is going to take us a little bit longer than we expected, but we will meet that target.

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

J. Brar: We're not getting the straight answers. The answer I got is very, very similar to the one I was getting for Surrey Memorial Hospital. The minister is in

denial. The capital regional district knows who created the crisis in health care. It was this government that cancelled capital grants. This report states: "Termination of provincial capital grants for major projects has essentially put them on hold."

Interjections.

J. Brar: We have lots of them.

To the Minister of Health: she has forced the capital region to abandon much-needed facility expansions, just as she did in Surrey. Who is she planning to fire this time?

Hon. S. Bond: Let's talk about another report. I think one of the things that's important for members is that they actually do their homework. Let's talk about a report from the NDP think tank, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives — you know, the one that was provided a \$100,000 parting gift from taxpayers. Let's look at what they had to say in a November 2000 report. Let's talk about the history of this problem. Let's listen to the quote: "Between 1993 and 1999, there was an 18 percent drop in capacity in residential care beds in B.C."

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members, order. Let's hear the answer.

Hon. S. Bond: Let's finish the quote. "Thousands of new residential care beds are needed, and existing facilities over 30 years old require upgrades or replacements." That was a report presented to the previous government in the years past.

J. Kwan: Here we go again. Blame someone else, refuse to take responsibility, and refuse to deal with the problems that this minister and this government have created.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, order. Let's hear the question.

J. Kwan: Here is another quote from the capital regional district: "A backlog of major projects existed before 2001 but has become much larger and more expensive over the last three years." It was this government that cancelled the capital grants.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Quiet, please.

[1425]

J. Kwan: It was this government that failed to deliver long-term care beds, and it is this government that is failing the people of British Columbia. Again to the

Minister of Health: when is she going to stop hiding behind the fired CEO and take action and fix the problems that her government has created?

Hon. S. Bond: Let's talk about who's not willing to take responsibility. There were....

Interjections.

Hon. S. Bond: Excuse me?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Go ahead.

J. MacPhail: That's six weeks ago.

Hon. S. Bond: We inherited.... We're talking about six weeks. We're talking about a decade where a government actually knew there was a growing problem and did not have a single plan — not one person responsible for planning in that member's government.

We are working aggressively on a problem that has been created over decades. In fact, we had facilities that were over 30 years old, wheelchairs that would not fit in washrooms. That may be acceptable to the members opposite; it is not to this government.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has a supplementary.

J. Kwan: The minister likes to talk about planning. But that talk sure has not helped Surrey get the ER expansion that it desperately needed, and it certainly has not helped Victoria or Penticton. The capital regional district has deferred essential expansions because of this government's refusal to fund them.

Even worse is that there is no complete planning for them. This government has not done the planning, and where there is planning, they shelved the plans.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has the floor.

J. Kwan: Rather than fire health authority CEOs, why doesn't the minister just do the right thing and resign?

Hon. S. Bond: You know, it's absolutely unbelievable — the hypocrisy coming from across the table.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: Let's talk about a lack of planning. At a time when the population of British Columbia was doubling, the members opposite decided it wasn't necessary to train more physicians in the province of British Columbia. Let's talk about a lack of planning.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: No new physicians, not enough nurses, a system for seniors that was decrepit and inadequate. I'm sure the members opposite don't even begin to know the definition of planning in British Columbia.

ADDICTION TREATMENT SERVICES AND NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

E. Brenzinger: Under this government we have seen drug addiction and homelessness grow. This government created the Ministry of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services, but was it to do something or just to appease the public with a name? We seem to be living in a society where the ragged homeless, the addicted and the sick of our urban streets are reminiscent of a Charles Dickens scene.

To the Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services: when can we expect an increase in beds for addiction care, and when will there be sufficient funding for needle exchanges so that our parks and school yards are not littered with dirty needles, spreading disease and its ultimate cost to the health care system?

Hon. B. Locke: Our government has made mental health a priority. We are leading the country in developing new programs and strategies to improve education, early diagnosis and treatment for people with mental illness. Under this government, Canada's first comprehensive child and youth mental health plan was released and implemented. We produced for primary care physicians the first comprehensive clinical practice guidelines on depression — another Canadian first. We are spending \$138 million to build modern homelike mental health facilities right across the province to replace the ones in Riverview. I am the only minister in Canada who is solely responsible for mental health issues.

[End of question period.]

[1430]

Orders of the Day

Supplementary Estimates

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: supplementary es-

timates (No. 9) 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 2:33 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF SMALL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

On vote 34(S): ministry operations, \$40,000,000.

J. MacPhail: I will be debating this for quite a while. Could the minister walk me through what this is about, please.

[1435]

Hon. J. Les: In response to the member opposite, this is about \$40 million, \$30 million of which is a prepayment on the Richmond speed skating oval, one of the Olympic venues that will be required for 2010. And \$10 million of that amount is for the Own the Podium program, which is a provincial contribution to the program sponsored by the Canadian Olympic Committee.

J. MacPhail: I want to actually figure out what the budget is for the Olympics. I'm going to spend a little bit of time on this. I went through my estimates debate with the former Minister of Finance on March 23, 2004, where we discussed the....

Perhaps, first of all, the minister could introduce his staff.

Hon. J. Les: Certainly, I'd be happy to do that. To my right is our Deputy Minister, Andrew Wilkinson. To my left is Jeff Garrad, and behind me is Charles Parkinson.

J. MacPhail: I went back to my debate with the various ministers responsible for the Olympics in my '04-05 debate in this chamber last spring. Then I also looked again at the budget document for '04-05. I'm looking at pages 5, 13, 25 and 26 of the '04-05 budget document. I'm comparing it to the '05-06 budget document. I'm trying to figure out what the actual budget is for the Olympics as of today.

I'm looking at an '05-06 fiscal plan from page 25 of the '04-05 budget. Here's what they say. It's table 1.11, "2010 Olympics Funding." It has the total contribution of the provincial commitment as \$235 million, and that's because the government did a \$72 million sup-

plemental estimate last year in prepaying the Olympics.

This year table 1.12 of the 2010 Olympics funding has a total contribution of \$328 million. That's after this \$40 million supplemental today that we're passing, the \$72 million supplemental of last year — and we're still left with a contribution of \$328 million. That's a \$103 million more year-to-year than the estimate of last year. Could the minister please explain this?

[1440]

Hon. J. Les: We're having some difficulty understanding the question. Perhaps, for the member's assurance, I can say this. The budget for venues has absolutely not changed. It is still \$600 million, as it always has been. The provincial commitment to that remains \$328 million. I suspect there might be.... It's interesting that those two numbers match. That was a number that the member opposite alluded to earlier. There is absolutely no change to the overall budget over a number of years in terms of the provincial commitment.

Simply, what we're doing here, with the supplementary estimates, is bringing forward some of those expenditures, which we're of course able to do because our economy is strong at the moment and it's producing additional revenues that we can put towards these expenditures on an expedited basis.

J. MacPhail: That's not a good enough answer. We're here to discuss spending \$40 million, and somehow the minister doesn't understand my questions. Well, perhaps he could have done his homework.

Interjection.

J. MacPhail: I was very clear. There was supplemental estimate (No. 4) from the '03-04 budget. We debated that on March 23, 2004. Here's what the minister of the day said then on the supplemental estimate to the '03-04 budget: "There is \$72 million being requested in this supplementary estimate in order to fund a portion of the venues going forward for the Olympics, since we transferred to the Olympic authority, as well as fully fund the endowment that will continue to maintain those facilities in the years post-Olympics."

The minister then went on to explain to me why they needed to do that — because there was going to be an independent authority. The OCOG, the organizing committee.... I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. Every year I forget what "OCOG" means. He needed to transfer the money and prefund. There it is at page 9582 of the *Hansard* debate. That would be it. He then went on to explain later that all of that prefunding was demonstrated at page 25 in the '04-05 fiscal plan, table 1.11 — I'm just quoting straight out of the *Hansard* — 2010 Olympic funding and how the total now would be \$235 million because of the prefunding last year of \$72 million.

[1445]

The reason why I'm iterating this is because at the time I was questioning the minister whether he was

going to be on budget, etc., and he pointed me to that chart to say: "Yes, yes, the prefunding has occurred, but the budget has now been reduced. It's now \$235 million. Oh, by the way, the Olympics, the OCOG, is an independent authority. They're in charge. They manage their own money now."

Here we see 40 million bucks. Let's not deal with the \$10 million; let's deal with the \$30 million. We see more prefunding, and oops, in the '05-06 budget the new chart for the Olympic funding is back up to \$328 million once again. The minister can't explain to me why. I would have thought that that would have been the nub of this discussion.

Well, let's take it with baby steps. The \$72 million that was a supplemental estimate for last year was going to be spent on several projects. The minister can tell me what it was spent on, and I will check to see whether that was what we were promised.

Hon. J. Les: We came prepared to discuss the supplemental estimates that are part of this vote. The details of what was discussed and what was authorized by the House last year — we will get that information for the member, but we don't have it here.

J. MacPhail: Mr. Chair, I'm getting really tired of ministers. They won't let us have a budget debate about this year's budget. That's not on. To even ask questions about the tens of millions of dollars that they're spending now, that they had no planning for — they've got no information. This is the third minister — the Minister of Forests, the Minister of Transportation and now this minister — who has no information. What are we supposed to do? Just sit here docilely and say: "Oh, my goodness. Aren't you wonderful guys, spending \$40 million of our tax money? And don't worry your pretty little head" — well, they wouldn't say pretty little head, believe you me, Mr. Chair — "about the details"?

Well, I'm asking for the details because last year when they brought in a similar supplemental, the Finance minister swore to me that they were on budget, weren't prepaying in order to avoid scrutiny about the rising cost of the Olympics. He outlined specific projects that the money was going to be spent on. Now I'm checking, and this minister has no answers — no answers whatsoever. He can't explain to me why the budget has gone back up again for the Olympics. It would make me suspicious, Mr. Chair, let alone those who care about their tax dollars, that maybe they're out of control in their budget of the Olympics. Maybe each year they bring in supplemental estimates because they're overspending on their Olympic budget.

Hey, we're all supportive of the Olympics — all supportive. It was my administration that started the Olympics. This government, in that terrible decade of decline.... Canada awarded the choice for the 2010 Olympics to B.C. in 1998. Who was in power in 1998? Let's see. Hmm. It certainly wasn't a Liberal idea. But then this Liberal government comes in and they say, "Oh, we're going to be on budget," etc.

[1450]

Well, this is the second supplemental, and the minister can't explain to me what's going on. Okay, let me just ask this question, then. I was told last year by the previous Finance minister that the Vancouver Olympic organizing committee was an independent authority now and that there would be no dealings with the government anymore. They would have their budget and would have to live within it. So what's today about?

Hon. J. Les: Today is about an additional \$40 million being included in the 2004-05 budget, \$30 million of which will be allocated to the speed skating oval that is to be built in Richmond and \$10 million of which will be allocated to the Own the Podium program. The overall budget for the venues and the provincial contribution for the venues does not change as a result of that.

The provincial contribution was \$235 million. It is still \$235 million today. Nothing has changed. Nothing is out of control. It's simply, as I've said earlier, a case of where we have surplus money. The economy in British Columbia is strong. We're able to do this. We're able to prepay some of the contributions we committed ourselves to several years ago when we were successful in being awarded the Olympics.

J. MacPhail: Believe you me: why would I take this minister's word for it? He has got no evidence of that whatsoever — absolutely none. He can't even figure out what the numbers mean. If the contribution is still \$235 million, as he said, could he explain why, on page 29 of this year's document, the total contribution is listed at \$328 million?

Hon. J. Les: I believe the member is on page 29 of this year's budget document, and that's where she's quoting from. If she looks across there from 2003-04 to 2007-08, the total venues spending projected is \$226 million. That would be \$226 million out of the \$235 million. That column on the far right then goes on to include things like venues endowment, medical and security, first nations and municipal legacies, each for their specific amounts. This then comes to a total contribution to the provincial commitment to that point of \$328 million.

Those have always been the budget numbers. There's nothing new here. The \$328 million does not all relate to venues.

J. MacPhail: Would the minister mind...? Let's have a debate, apples to apples. Could he please get page 25 of the '04-05 budget document, and we'll compare it to page 29 of the '05-06 document, both of which are 2010 Olympics funding tables for the various years. Does the minister have that with him?

Hon. J. Les: No, we don't.

J. MacPhail: I'll wait, then.

G. Trumper: I seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

G. Trumper: In the gallery today we have the other half of the grade 5 class from the Qualicum Beach Elementary School with their teachers, Mrs. Coleman and Mrs. Bonnor. Would the House please make them welcome.

D. MacKay: I seek leave to file a petition.

The Chair: Hon. member, it's not the correct time to file a petition.

Debate Continued

J. MacPhail: Mr. Chair, I'll await the minister getting this information, because it's key. It's the nub of the issue.

[1455-1500]

Hon. J. Les: We've had a brief chance to look at and compare the two documents, '04-05 and '05-06, and it's pretty clear what's happening here. As we bring forward spending that is being directed to the venues, clearly the numbers for the out years change as well, because that, too, is being brought forward.

I can assure the member, though, that as a result of having done that, nothing changes at the end of the day. Once all of the venues are constructed, the allocations that were contemplated from the very beginning will hold. We've already demonstrated, I think quite clearly, our commitment to holding the line on venue construction budgets.

I can assure the member that there are no changes in terms of the absolute numbers as a result of this. How those numbers are rolled out year after year and how those dollars are deployed within that changes somewhat, but the end result is the same: the venues are constructed and no additional dollars are required.

J. MacPhail: Gee, I have a tough time figuring that out. Here's the chart from '04-05 that says \$235 million will be paid. That's the total contribution of the provincial government to the Olympics between '03-04 and '06-07.

Even if you look at it here in the '05-06 budget, the total contribution between '03-04 and '06-07 is \$301 million. That includes both this estimate and the \$72 million supplemental estimate of the previous year. So that argument doesn't hold water at all — not at all. Then, of course, we have added this year in the '05-06 budget another \$27 million that puts the spending much over what was predicted.

I guess the minister thinks that if you juggle enough peas under enough cups, the public won't figure it out. Here I am asking the minister what projects were used for the \$72 million for the pea under the cup of last year, and he doesn't have that information. Maybe he has that information now for me. Does he?

Hon. J. Les: As I indicated to the member earlier, we will get her the details of last year's debate and what those expenditures were all about.

I would point again to page 29 in the current fiscal plan. It indicates clearly that by the end of March 2008 the province will be spending \$226 million. As we've already indicated many times in the past, that is about the time that venue construction is complete. We remain totally comfortable with the fact that the budget projections from the very outset still hold true today and will not be exceeded.

[1505]

J. MacPhail: Here's what the minister said last year. I'll just quote it and see who's telling the truth. Maybe he could just confirm it. It was a \$72 million supplemental estimate. The minister will see the relevance of my questions in a moment.

I'm quoting from page 9584 of *Hansard* of March 23, 2004. It was Gary Collins.

"The supplemental estimate does the following. There is an additional \$15 million for the athletes village. There was \$15 million, and we've added another \$15 million. There's \$55 million for the endowment fund and \$2 million additional for the first nations legacy agreement. The \$15 million additional for the athletes village, the \$55 million for the endowment fund and the \$2 million for the first nations legacy agreement come to \$72 million." What happened?

Hon. J. Les: The member's question was around the \$72 million and what happened to that supplemental estimate from last year. Very simply, those moneys were paid out as per the commitments that were authorized by the House last year.

J. MacPhail: So the government has spent \$30 million on the athletes village. Where?

Hon. J. Les: That money is being held in trust by the Vancouver organizing committee.

J. MacPhail: Yeah, it hasn't been spent. Of course, we all know it hasn't been spent. There's not even an orange mark on the ground, let alone a shovel in the ground. VANOC's got a nice little wad of cash there that we advanced last year. That was supposed to be to prepay.

What about the \$55 million endowment fund? What's that been used for?

[1510]

Hon. J. Les: The \$55 million is half of the venue endowment fund, with the other half to come from the federal government. In other words, the province has paid in its entire \$55 million share. It is being held in trust by the board of trustees.

J. MacPhail: One of the reasons why I'm very suspicious about this government prepaying to the Olympic committee, when the Olympic committee isn't doing anything with the money yet, is because the Olym-

pic committee isn't subject to freedom-of-information legislation. Or has that changed?

Hon. J. Les: No.

J. MacPhail: Here we are — another secret organization set up by this government.

W. Cobb: Secret.

J. MacPhail: Yeah, secret.

There's no freedom-of-information access to this. The auditor general can't get access to it. Does the Auditor General Act cover the Vancouver organizing committee?

Hon. J. Les: The affairs of VANOC are not subject to review by the auditor general, but they are subject to full audit by an internationally recognized accounting firm.

J. MacPhail: Yeah, it was very interesting, the way that firm was chosen — very interesting. Poof! The firm was chosen.

The auditor general doesn't get to examine the books. There's no freedom of information, and somehow the Liberal MLAs go: "No, you're just fearmongering, saying it's a secret organization." Of course it's a secret organization, and this government keeps putting more and more money into it, prepaying money to it so that we don't get to examine it. We don't get to examine the fiscal realities of the province because, of course, this government won't allow us to debate the estimates of the overall budget. There's some more money squirreled away, not being used, and it's now in a secret fund for the Olympics — a completely secret fund.

What's the endowment fund for? What is it being held in trust for? When is the federal government going to match the funds for the athletes village? There was a terribly troubling story on the front page of the *Sun* about that on Saturday. When are they going to give the money for the endowment fund?

Hon. J. Les: I'm somewhat surprised by the member casting aspersions on the Vancouver organizing committee. As far as I'm concerned, and as far as many other people are concerned, they are doing an exemplary job of managing our way towards the Olympics. As recently as three or four weeks ago the president of the IOC was here and commented very favourably on the work that has been done to date.

As far as what the endowment is all about, it is simply to operate facilities that will be left before and after the Olympic event itself has been held. It is my understanding that the federal contribution to the endowment — in other words, the \$55 million — will be in place before the end of the coming fiscal year.

J. MacPhail: What's the minister's understanding on that? He also didn't answer my questions about the athletes village.

[1515]

Hon. J. Les: As far as the commitments that have been made by the federal government towards Olympic venue construction and various programs related to the Olympics, we expect them to fulfil their commitments. We will do everything we can to make sure that they do, in fact, fulfil all of the commitments they have made to the 2010 games.

J. MacPhail: Well, that's a weaker response than the minister's first response, which was that he expected it by the end of the fiscal year. Was there anything in the federal budget about this?

Hon. J. Les: Nothing has changed in my answer. The first question was specifically around the \$55 million contribution to the endowment. It is my understanding that that \$55 million will be in place by the end of the coming fiscal year.

There is, perhaps, less clarity in terms of when the federal government intends to fulfil its obligations around the housing component, the Olympic village, but as I indicated to the minister, we expect that the federal government will make good on all of its commitments. We will continue to pressure them to do so.

J. MacPhail: Was there anything in the federal budget of last week funding the \$55 million federal portion of the endowment fund?

Hon. J. Les: I have not made a study of the federal government budget. We're not here to debate that budget either. Again, I reiterate: we expect the \$55 million to be in place by the end of the next fiscal year. We intend to ensure that the federal government maintains its commitment to the 2010 games.

J. MacPhail: You mean to say the minister responsible for the Olympics for British Columbians didn't look at the federal budget? This is an equal partner in this exercise, and he didn't look in the budget to see whether their money's there? Well, I find that hard to believe.

I expect that the real answer is that he looked and he didn't see anything, because there isn't anything there. There's no money there for the endowment fund, and there's no money there for the athletes village. That's why the minister is somehow saying that he didn't look.

It's actually an embarrassment either way. I understand that, but I guess it's better to waffle than admit that there's no money for British Columbia, on either of those fronts, for the Olympics.

Well, I still can't get it straight about what venues have been funded, prefunded, post-funded, upside-funded or inside-funded. I've got the list of venues here, right off the website of the minister. I'm going to go through them, and I'd like the budget for each of them, please, and what the provincial portion is. It's called "Venues." It's from the official site of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. I got it today.

Here we are. The first one is "Whistler Creekside, Whistler." It's the alpine skiing — downhill, super G, downhill combined. That's an existing one. Is there any budget from the venue budget to be spent on this facility at all?

[1520]

Hon. J. Les: I don't think it is appropriate that we go into a venue-by-venue discussion and an expenditure-by-expenditure discussion related to each one of those venues. I have said clearly, and I stand by that statement, that the contribution that the province is going to make to venue construction is as it always has been. There are no changes contemplated whatsoever. What we are debating today is to advance \$30 million that had been....

J. MacPhail: For what?

Hon. J. Les: Specifically, in that case, to go to the Richmond speed skating oval. That is what we are debating today.

That money is being advanced earlier than had been contemplated. As I said earlier, we find ourselves in the happy circumstance of having some surplus funds available in the '04-05 fiscal year, which enables us to bring forward some of those expenditures. In this case, that money is going to the Richmond speed skating oval, as the member knows.

The city of Richmond has come forward with a very innovative plan to incorporate various other facilities along with that as well. We think it's a very successful partnership arrangement that has emerged from that. That is what we're here to discuss today — the \$30 million to be applied to that facility.

J. MacPhail: I realize that very, very few people, if any, care about how secretive this government is — that they're not going to allow a line-by-line debate of the budget. The minister comes here, won't answer any questions except what he wants to answer about his \$30 million of expenditure, doesn't want to put it in context, can't jibe numbers from last year to this year and just says: "Trust me." He can't explain the difference in the numbers but says: "Trust me." Then he stands up and says: "Oh, I don't think I should have to answer questions about those other venues. We're just giving \$30 million to Richmond." Well, I want to know whether that's going to take away from the other venue budgets. That's why I want to go through it.

My question stands, Mr. Chair. How much money is budgeted from the venues budget of either '04-05 or '05-06, which we're debating right now? That's what this supplementary estimate is about: a change to the venues budget for the Olympics. How much is allocated to the Whistler Creekside site for alpine skiing, if any?

Hon. J. Les: I'll try this again. First of all, we are not making any changes with the supplemental estimates.

J. MacPhail: I'm not suggesting you are.

Hon. J. Les: The member just said that we were making changes to the budget. The overall budget over a number of years for Olympic venue construction remains the same. We are simply bringing forward expenditures that had been contemplated in '06-07 and '07-08 and bringing them forward into '04-05.

I have no idea how many dollars had been allocated to the specific facility the member opposite wishes to now inquire about in Whistler. What I am telling the member is that the \$30 million that we are talking about today is specifically going to the speed skating oval facility that's being constructed in Richmond. It was originally intended that that facility would take \$30 million as a provincial contribution, and I'm happy to say that is exactly what our provincial contribution will be — \$30 million, as contemplated all along.

J. MacPhail: I'm not asking whether there's been any change. I'm asking what the budget is. I cannot believe that the minister doesn't have this information. I want to know this information so I can figure out why the minister chose Richmond to prefund.

I'm not asking whether there's been any change in the budget. I want to know what the budget is. So give me that information. For each and every one of these venues, what is the budget?

[1525]

Hon. J. Les: We are debating whether or not we should advance \$30 million on an expedited basis to the facility that is about to be built in Richmond. There is no particular magic or no particular secret as to why it is that we are advancing this money towards the Richmond speed skating oval. It is, quite frankly, the proposal that is most advanced at this point.

As the member may know, there was a significant process that occurred mid- to late last year where the city of Richmond came forward and said: "We would like to be the host community for the speed skating oval." They came forward with a very innovative proposal. That agreement has been signed with the Vancouver organizing committee. The contribution coming from the province is \$30 million. It is capped at that level. It is not going to increase. We are extremely pleased with that. That is why — because that entire proposal is that far advanced — it is the appropriate place for us at this point in time to be placing these additional dollars.

J. MacPhail: Oh well, of course there's no particular reason other than that there's an election coming. That's the reason. Otherwise, the minister would just treat these like ordinary questions that he's required to answer for the taxpayers. They have a right to know, yet he won't answer them. We're supposed to sit here and go: "Oh, goody for Richmond, goody for Richmond." Gee, I wish Surrey was that lucky. I wish Surrey Memorial Hospital was as lucky as a speed skating oval in Richmond.

Well, the minister prefunded \$21 million for Hastings Park. How's that going? What's the budget for that? How much of that has been spent?

The Chair: Member, I just want to caution you that these questions are getting a bit broad-based here. I'd like you to refocus on this particular supplementary estimate.

Hon. J. Les: That money was advanced last year, as per the debate in the House last year, in the supplemental estimates. Again, as with other funds that are being advanced in that manner, the money is being held by the Vancouver organizing committee in trust.

J. MacPhail: Not a dime of it has been spent — not a dime. It's in my riding.

Let me ask this question, then. There's a \$236 million... I think it's called an economic development fund or something. We call it the slush fund. It's a line item in the budget that has no details attached to it. Will any money of that be used for any type of Olympic venue — training venue, housing venue, any type of Olympic-related venues?

Hon. J. Les: I think the question is completely beside the point, off-topic and irrelevant.

The Chair: Hon. member, you are getting a bit broad-based here. Refocus on the supplemental.

J. MacPhail: Let me just work through my logic.

We're talking about \$30 million going to a secret organization that's not subject to FOI, not subject to the auditor general. It's just before an election. Nobody will be able to find out any information. VANOC already has a record of having money advanced to it, and they haven't spent a cent of it. They haven't spent a cent on the athletes village. They haven't spent a cent on Hastings Park. It's all secret money. Now, just days before an election, we're going to turn over another \$30 million to a secret organization.

[1530]

That's the relevance of my question, Mr. Chair. I'm sorry I didn't make it clear, the link of the two. The budget looks like it's over budget in the Olympic venues — absolutely looks like it's over budget. If you look from last year's documents to this year's documents, the government is spending more.

The minister refuses to answer a question about whether his election fund of \$236 million will go toward any Olympic-related activities right now, because I would say: why are we advancing money to Richmond if you've got this \$236 million that you could just spend outright and we could question about? Why send it to a secret organization? That's the relevance of it.

Is the minister refusing to answer the question about any Olympic-related expenses coming out of that \$236 million economic development fund?

Hon. J. Les: We are debating today an allocation of \$30 million to be put towards the construction of the Richmond speed skating oval. I think it's very clear that's coming from surplus generated in '04-05. Again, I would have to say I am somewhat taken aback by the continued reference by the member opposite to the Vancouver organizing committee as a secret organization. I would point out again that the president of the IOC was here a few weeks ago and commented extremely favourably in terms of the work they are doing.

There is no indication at this point, on any count, that any of the venues are not going to be produced on time. By the end of 2008, in fact, most of the venues are anticipated to be complete. That is still the case. We are extremely confident and comfortable that we have no time pressures in that regard. As I've already pointed out today, if the member consults page 29 in the budget documents, it indicates clearly that by the end of March 2008 there is no spending pressure there whatsoever in terms of venue construction.

J. MacPhail: Perhaps the minister could explain that to me. How on that chart does he say there's no spending pressure?

Hon. J. Les: On page 29 in table 1.12 it indicates very clearly that as far as venues are concerned, at March of 2008 the total spending contemplated will be \$226 million.

J. MacPhail: But the minister doesn't put that in any context. The overall budget is \$328 million for this year, and last year, if you take off '07-08, it was \$235 million. The same period outlined in last year's budget has now gone up by \$103 million for the same period — apples to apples. The minister is somehow saying: "Oh, but have confidence, because we've added funding for the year '07-08." He won't tell me how much the venues cost. He won't tell me what the budget is for it. He won't tell me if he's going to fund any of it out of the election fund.

All those are irrelevant questions, but he points to one number there that's \$103 million. Well, if you subtract the added year, it's \$66 million higher from last year's budget. It was \$235 million for the same period last year, and now it's \$301 million. But he won't tell me the budgets to know whether that's moving forward, where they're allocated.... It's all just irrelevant and my questions are out of order, he would like to rule. They're not. I'm trying to match the numbers, the differences and the discrepancies between '04-05 and '05-06 reporting with the actual budgets of the venue, and he refuses to tell me.

Let me ask this: when does the minister think I would get to ask my questions about the \$236 million fund that his government has put in the '05-06 budget? Perhaps he could guide me and tell me when I get to ask those questions.

[1535]

Hon. J. Les: That question, I gather, Mr. Chair, would be out of order.

I just want to point out for the member as well.... She prefers, she says, to compare apples to apples, but she's tossing the odd lemon in there once in a while. The \$328 million figure referenced on page 29 actually is a portion of the provincial commitment to the Olympics generally, which, if you go a little higher up on that page, is \$600 million. That includes such things as medical and security and venues endowment and those kinds of issues, all of which are significant contributions as well — all of which, together with venues, total \$600 million. The \$328 million figure that the member references is a portion of the \$600 million.

J. MacPhail: Yes, but that same number last year, including all of those items, was \$235 million. Then if you add the \$27 million that the government added in the most recent budget documents for '07-08 to last year's documents, you've still got a honking shortfall between the two. So I am comparing apples to apples, and I'm trying to find out where the extra expenditure is coming from. But the minister won't tell me. He won't tell me what the venues budget is.

If you take out the newest year added in the '05-06 budget and just compare the years '03-04 to '06-07 in this coming year's budget document to last year's budget document, it's a figure of \$235 million from last year that has now been increased to \$301 million for this year — bottom line, total contribution to the provincial commitment.

Does the minister see that? That's what I'm talking about — that difference. He can't explain it. He won't explain it. Both of these numbers include the prefunding that we're debating right now as well. Maybe the minister could explain to me the difference.

Just look at table 1.12 on page 29 of the budget that's about to come up. If you just look at the line of total contribution to provincial commitment up to '06-07, that's a total of \$301 million. The chart 1.11 from the budget document '04-05, which covers exactly the same period — the line is labelled exactly the same, "Total contribution to provincial commitment" — is \$235 million. Both figures include the supplemental estimates. What's the difference?

[1540]

Hon. J. Les: It is very clear what is happening here. As I've explained to the member already, we have a total commitment toward funding for the 2010 Olympics of \$600 million. The \$328 million figure that she references is cumulative funding, in that case to the end of the '07-08 fiscal year. That number will continue to accumulate until it reaches our \$600 million commitment.

We can go through the minutiae of that, but that is, in principle, what is happening. Nothing mysterious about that. No increased funding contemplated. But as I said at the outset, we are in a position where we have some budgetary surplus. We can bring some of that

spending forward. It reduces our fiscal pressures in the out years, which I think is a prudent fiscal stance to adopt on behalf of the province. If that figure, \$328 million, is higher than it was last year at \$235 million, that is entirely to be expected, because it's not only the additional money that is being authorized here and authorized last year in the supplementary estimates. It is also other spending that is being shifted from out years to the '05-06 budget, for example.

[K. Stewart in the chair.]

J. MacPhail: I guess the minister just thinks: "Oh, trust me. Everything is fine." Even that explanation doesn't add up whatsoever. Let's just look at the two different....

He's prefunding 30 million bucks this year, '04-05, into the Olympic venues, while in last year's budget there was zero for venues in '04-05 — zero. So you'd think that the upcoming budget would then show the 30 million bucks for the Richmond oval. But we have a figure here for \$43 million for spending on venues in '04-05. No approval for \$43 million — none — neither from last year or this year.

[1545]

Whoops, there's a \$13 million gap, and the minister can't explain it. And we're not going to be allowed to debate it because he won't. But there it is: a venue cost for '04-05 of \$43 million. We're prefunding \$30 million here, and there was no funding last year for venues, according to last year's budget. Maybe the minister could just explain that discrepancy.

Hon. J. Les: I think it's relatively easy to understand what the \$43 million is about. As I said at the outset today, there's \$30 million for the Richmond speed skating oval, \$10 million for the Own the Podium program and \$3 million for the Olympic live sites program that's being brought forward. Again, spending that had been anticipated in '05-06 is being brought forward into '04-05. All of that equals \$43 million.

J. MacPhail: Walk me through it compared to the supplementary estimate we're doing right now, please — for \$40 million.

[1550]

Hon. J. Les: Referring to the bill on page 7, the member will see a reference there to the \$40 million, supplementary estimates No. 9. What might possibly be confusing her is the reference to the \$3 million which comes out of Ministry of Finance contingencies.

J. MacPhail: Oh, so \$3 million out of contingencies into venues. So, that would be \$3 million.... Will that be taken off the contingency allocation of \$140 million, then, that the ministry has budgeted for the Olympic Games?

Hon. J. Les: The \$3 million that the member refers to comes out of Ministry of Finance contingencies but

will be fully accounted for, as it already is, in the cumulative total — the \$600 million that I referred to earlier. I think that's pretty clear, but if I can assist the member further, I'd be happy to do that.

J. MacPhail: Of course it's not clear. Unless I was asking these questions, no one would know about it — no one. I want to turn to page 9 of the bill that we're debating now. The minister says: "Oh, the reason why there was no money allocated in last year's budget for venues for '04-05...." And all of a sudden, poof, there's \$43 million. He says: "Oh, that's just straightforward."

That's the \$30 million for Richmond and then \$10 million for the Own the Podium. But on page 9, Own the Podium, the \$10 million is allocated to the sport vote of his ministry. It's not allocated to the Olympics Games vote at all. So which is it? Why is the \$10 million in the line for venues at all in this upcoming budget when it's a sport allocation?

[1555]

Hon. J. Les: The \$10 million originally was earmarked to be a contribution toward venue construction. However, the specific proposal was not yet far enough advanced for us to be allocating any money toward it. In the interim, the Canadian Olympic Committee has developed the Own the Podium 2010 program, which we see as a very worthy initiative by the COC. We then subsequently made a decision to contribute the \$10 million towards the Own the Podium 2010 program.

J. MacPhail: Okay, so it's not a venue. I mean, Own the Podium 2010 can't be classified as a venue. Is that correct?

Hon. J. Les: That's correct.

J. MacPhail: Yet the minister is justifying its expenditure under "venues" in the '05-06 budget. Is that correct?

Hon. J. Les: We have to remember that we are discussing this specific bill. What the bill says at the end of the day is presumably what will be passed by the House. This makes it very clear that that \$10 million is going to the Own the Podium 2010 program. That is not venues-related.

As I explained earlier, the money was at one point going to be related to venue construction, but that is not far enough advanced at this point in time, so a change was made. We have, in fact, proposed that the \$10 million goes towards the Own the Podium 2010 program — I think a very supportable decision.

J. MacPhail: No one's arguing against the Own the Podium 2010 program. I'm just trying to figure out what peas-under-the-glass financing this government is doing about it. That's all.

Of course we have to look. I'm asking the minister to justify the revised '04-05 budget as it's listed in the

upcoming budget document that we're not going to be allowed to debate.

[H. Long in the chair.]

So it's insulting for him to say to me that that will be decided at a future time, because it won't be decided at a future time. This government is going to shut down this House before I have the opportunity to ask those questions.

[1600]

The minister has put the Own the Podium 2010 program under the "venues construction" column of the Olympic funding for '04-05. Where are the savings in venue construction coming from to make up for that?

Hon. J. Les: The venues construction budget remains the same. The money that is being contributed towards the Own the Podium program will not be taken from that budget.

J. MacPhail: Yes, it will. The minister just explained it to me. That's the explanation for why the venues budget for '04-05 has gone from zero to \$43 million. He just explained that to me.

It was zero last year for '04-05 for venue construction. It's \$43 million under the revised budget, which we're not going to be allowed to debate. He explained that it's \$30 million for the Richmond oval, \$10 million for the Own the Podium program and \$3 million for another item that have been budgeted against the venues budget. That means there's \$10 million less for construction. Where's that going to come from?

Hon. J. Les: I think I've been very consistent right from the very beginning today. I hope the member can agree with me. I've said from the very beginning that \$30 million of this additional appropriation for the '04-05 budget is venue-related; that is, the Richmond speed skating oval. The additional money beyond the \$30 million is not venue-related, and I don't think I've ever suggested it was.

J. MacPhail: Okay, last time, Mr. Chair, because he just did. Chart 1.12 of the upcoming budget, page 29 — the minister has referred me to this. I've discussed it. Compare it to chart 1.11 of last year's budget, the budget that we're just completing. The lines are identical. There's a line in each of them that says "Venues." Both these documents have the supplemental estimates included in them for the various years.

In the '04-05 budget, if you look at the line saying "Venues," it's got zero — zip, nada — for venue expenditure. If you look over here at this coming year's budget, the pre-election budget, and you go to the line "Venues," '04-05, there's \$43 million under "Venues." The minister explained to me — helpfully, I thought — that \$30 million of that under the venues line was for the Richmond oval, \$10 million was for the Own the Podium program, and \$3 million was for, I think, the

secretariat. That was going to come out of contingencies, we find now. That's why the supplemental estimate is only for \$40 million.

If the \$10 million for Own the Podium isn't part of that venues budget, show me where it is allocated, then.

[1605]

Hon. J. Les: It is important to remember that the bill is the definitive document we are working with. When the guide was published, we were still under the impression that the \$10 million was going to go towards venue construction. It is now not going to go to venue construction. It is now going to go to the Own the Podium program. I can't be much clearer than that. I think I have been consistent all the way through.

J. MacPhail: When the minister said that, I said: "Where is the minister going to make up the savings of \$10 million in venue construction that he has now taken out of that budget to allocate to the Own the Podium program?" What venue construction estimates have changed by \$10 million?

Hon. J. Les: The simple answer is that \$10 million is not being removed from the venue construction budget. The \$10 million is going to fund something that had not previously been contemplated. As the member is aware, the Own the Podium program is a fairly recent innovation, one we support and one we think will do some very beneficial things. In no way does that \$10 million compromise the \$600 million construction budget. There is simply no need to go out and find another \$10 million somewhere. The \$10 million, as the member is aware, comes from surplus this year.

J. MacPhail: That would all be very well and good if, indeed, the minister was saying that the \$600 million budget for the Olympics was wrong. Let me ask this, then: was the \$600 million for the budget for the Olympics over by \$10 million? Was it excessive by \$10 million?

Hon. J. Les: No.

J. MacPhail: If it wasn't excessive by \$10 million and if this is a new item — the Own the Podium \$10 million expenditure — that was not contemplated at the time the \$600 million budget was put together, where's the money coming from?

Hon. J. Les: Again, this is something I have covered several times today. We find ourselves in the happy circumstance of having a significant budget surplus in the '04-05 budget year, and we are taking some of that surplus and putting it into a program such as this.

J. MacPhail: No, Mr. Chair. The surplus for this year of the broad budget is irrelevant — absolutely irrelevant. The budget for the Olympics is the budget for the Olympics, regardless. That's what the Minister

of Finance told me over and over again. We would not go beyond the \$600 million, said he. What the heck does the surplus have to do with that \$600 million budget — anything?

The minister has admitted this: he has charged the Own the Podium program of \$10 million against the venue construction budget of the Olympics. That's what it says right here in the '05-06 budget documents. He said the Olympic budget for the provincial contribution is still \$600 million. There was no excess capacity in that \$600 million, he answered, to make up for the \$10 million. Is the Olympic budget now \$610 million?

[1610]

Hon. J. Les: The \$10 million contribution to the Own the Podium program is more properly seen as something that enhances, in this case, a sports program.

As the member will be aware, we have set some very ambitious goals here in British Columbia to, for example, make our jurisdiction the fittest ever to host an Olympics. We want to ensure that we give our athletes in British Columbia every possible chance to compete in a variety of world-class events, including the Olympics.

The Own the Podium program is not something that is necessarily and specifically related to the Olympics. We want to own the podium in all kinds of different venues starting, for example, in the world curling championship coming up in just a few weeks here in Victoria.

To answer the member's question specifically, the \$600 million Olympic venue budget does not change.

J. MacPhail: Oh my God, waffle, waffle, waffle. The minister knows full well that the Own the Podium program is about the 2010 Olympics — completely. That's why in the '05-06 budget document it is charged against the Olympic budget. Oh no, we won't be able to get to challenge anyone on that.

The Own the Podium program is a \$10 million program directly related to the Olympics. The Olympic budget is now \$610 million — minimum. The minister knows that. He's a complete stranger to the truth if he says anything else.

Then of course, we have the \$236 million pre-election fund that has no details to it. I'll bet you anything, Mr. Chair, that there will be lots of money allocated from that to Olympic events — Olympic charges.

I don't know why the minister doesn't come clean. His government is so gosh-darn proud of the Olympics. We're gosh-darn proud of the Olympics; we just would have done a better job than this minister. Why is he trying to hide the truth? Why is it that every time this government gets faced with a series of challenging questions about how they're spending, they try to hide the truth? That's what this minister is doing right here — or else the '05-06 budget document is a lie. Either he's not telling the truth or the Minister of Finance's budget documents are not telling the truth for '05-06.

I think it's shameful that the government likes to stand up and take all the credit for the Own the Podium program — a great program — and then the minute one measly person pokes at him to answer questions, they have to waffle, mislead and put at risk the Minister of Finance's '05-06 budget documents. His refusal to answer the questions on whether any of the \$236 million is allocated to Olympic-related events also puts at risk the Minister of Finance's '05-06 budget document. On that front I am very, very disappointed that the minister won't come clean.

What's so special about the \$30 million Richmond oval that requires the minister to prefund it? Let me tell you what the Minister of Finance said to me about pre-funding last year. Here's what he said: "What we have done" — that was Gary Collins — "is said that we have year-end savings this year, that we can accelerate the funding for venues...and try to take advantage of getting those done more quickly, reduce interest costs, etc., and reduce inflation risk." How does that apply to this pre-funding?

Hon. J. Les: In exactly the same way.

J. MacPhail: As we saw, it didn't do anything last year. None of the pre-funding from last year has been spent — nothing on Hastings Park, nothing on the athletes village. It hasn't been spent. It's sitting in trust — not for the taxpayer, not for British Columbians who may need a hospital here or a long-term care bed there. It's the Olympic committee that's got the money. They're not spending a cent of it. Who earns the interest?

[1615]

Hon. J. Les: It is clear that these facilities will not be built at the behest of the member opposite. They will be built when the Olympic committee decides that the appropriate time has arrived.

To her specific question about where the interest goes, it accrues to the Vancouver Organizing Committee.

J. MacPhail: We poured in an extra \$72 million last year to the Olympic committee. They're earning interest on \$72 million that perhaps the taxpayers could have taken advantage of. Now we're pouring in \$30 million into... Who does get the money? That's a private-public partnership, isn't it — the Richmond oval?

Hon. J. Les: The \$30 million will be lodged with the city of Richmond.

J. MacPhail: Is the Richmond oval.... I'm sorry; is it a skating oval? My apologies.

Interjection.

J. MacPhail: Thank you. It's a speed skating oval. Is it a private-public partnership?

Hon. J. Les: There may well be some private sector aspects to the development of that speed skating facility. However, it is clear that in return for the \$30 million Richmond is required to produce those facilities, required to be able to host the speed skating events in the 2010 games.

The \$30 million is a commitment to a facility that, as I understand it, will actually expand in scope to include something that will be worth about \$150 million on the waterfront in the city of Richmond. I think it's an excellent example of what partnership with other interests can do. I know that the people in the city of Richmond are extremely excited about this huge addition that they will have not only in terms of their sports infrastructure but also in terms of their ability to host trade shows and the like in the years going forward after the facility has been constructed.

J. MacPhail: We saw the wonderful aspects of the private-public partnership in building the Sea to Sky Highway — some private-public partnership. The private sector gets all the profit with no risk, and the taxpayer has to assume all the liability for the full amount of the debt. We saw that earlier on in supplemental estimates.

Is this just a gift to the city of Richmond?

[1620]

Hon. J. Les: The funding from the province to the city of Richmond flows when the city of Richmond has concluded an appropriate agreement with the Vancouver Organizing Committee. That agreement will set out exactly what Richmond is to supply by way of facilities so that VANOC will be able to use those facilities in the 2010 games for the purpose intended.

J. MacPhail: The minister just said the money goes directly to Richmond. What happens come March 31, 2005? Is this money that's left over then? I gather the agreement won't be ready by a month from now.

Hon. J. Les: I'm led to believe that the agreement will be in place well before the end of March and that the funding, therefore, will be able to flow as intended from the province to the city of Richmond.

J. MacPhail: What gives the minister such great hope? Perhaps he could update us on the progress of this agreement — the contents of the agreement, who's negotiating it and what's in the agreement. Is it a private-public partnership?

Hon. J. Les: I don't have the details of the ongoing discussions that are going on between VANOC and Richmond here, although I'm led to believe that those discussions have moved along very well. The bottom line for the provincial government is this: our contribution is going to be capped at \$30 million. Richmond is going to supply a facility to VANOC that will, in all respects, be appropriate to host the speed skating events in the 2010 games.

J. MacPhail: What does the minister mean, he doesn't have the details? That's what we're passing right now — \$30 million to go to Richmond on a speed skating oval.

The minister berated me because I was asking questions about something else. Now I'm asking questions about the very thing that we're passing. It's another: "Oh trust us. I think it's going fine." Who knows? Who's negotiating for the province on this deal?

Hon. J. Les: That discussion and those negotiations are occurring between the city of Richmond and the Vancouver Organizing Committee. The province is not a party to those discussions. We obviously will be interested in the product of those discussions, and as I have said, our \$30 million contribution is towards the speed skating oval. Our interest is to ensure that we have a facility there that is in every way more than capable of hosting the speed skating events in 2010.

J. MacPhail: How is the taxpayer protected in all of this?

[1625]

Hon. J. Les: First of all, that's what these discussions are all about. Secondly, we have made it very clear, and we're making it clear through this supplementary estimates process, that our contribution is capped at \$30 million. There will be no additional provincial funding flowing to that facility. We've made that very clear, and we are extremely pleased that folks seem to have understood that we are contributing no more than \$30 million to the speed skating facility. Our contribution will be capped. That is clear. That will be part of the agreement that is being worked out between VANOC and the city of Richmond, and that is what protects the taxpayers of British Columbia.

J. MacPhail: Is this the only speed skating oval that is being built in the province with a provincial contribution?

Hon. J. Les: This is the only speed skating facility that is being built as a games venue. There may well be other communities in the province that wish to build a similar facility, perhaps, or another ice facility of some description. Those, obviously, will not be Olympic-related facilities, although they might harbour some aspirations to host teams as we go through the years leading up to the Olympic events themselves.

J. MacPhail: Does British Columbia to date have a speed skating oval?

Hon. J. Les: Talking to my staff it would appear there are currently no dedicated speed skating facilities in British Columbia. What are sometimes used are some of the hockey rinks we have. They are adapted in some way to speed skating, but we don't have any dedicated venues at this point in time.

J. MacPhail: Let's say if British Columbia went from zero to two, for instance. That would be quite unbelievable. Let's say we had one in Richmond and then — oh, I don't know — one in Fort St. John. That would be quite amazing, yet the minister would like us to believe that it's unrelated to the Olympics if the second one is built. Boy, I'm not sure British Columbians would actually accept that.

The Richmond proposal came about as a replacement to a Simon Fraser University speed skating oval proposal. What was the provincial commitment allocated to fund the Simon Fraser speed skating oval proposal out of the \$600 million?

Hon. J. Les: That commitment was originally \$31,849,500.

If I might, Mr. Chair, could I ask for a two-minute recess?

The Chair: Is that acceptable to the members?
We'll take a two-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 4:30 p.m. to 4:32 p.m.

[H. Long in the chair.]

J. MacPhail: The original proposal for a speed skating oval at Simon Fraser University had a budget allocated to it of about \$31 million, the minister has just said. What happened to that money? Was the allocation of that funding transferred to the new proposal for a speed skating oval at Richmond?

Hon. J. Les: Yes, \$30 million of it was.

J. MacPhail: I'm a little bit confused then. If that's already in the VANOC budget, is this extra money? Is this an additional \$30 million for that same speed skating oval?

Hon. J. Les: It's \$30 million out of the original \$31.8 million that had been budgeted previously.

J. MacPhail: Yes, but what I'm saying is.... Okay; \$30 million — is that all the provincial contribution is toward the speed skating oval for Richmond?

Hon. J. Les: That's correct.

J. MacPhail: Were there any financial penalties or financial obligations that remained that the province owed to Simon Fraser University?

Hon. J. Les: None.

J. MacPhail: How much did Simon Fraser University spend on its proposal?

Hon. J. Les: We do not have that information. The member might want to refer to SFU if she wants that

information, but that's not anything that's germane to provincial government finances.

J. MacPhail: Well, of course it is. Of course it's germane to the provincial government. They told Simon Fraser University they'd probably get it. The only venue that went out to an RFP was this one. No one else had to bid on their own project. Hastings Park didn't have to submit itself to a bid with alternatives.

I think Simon Fraser University has done a great service, quite frankly, in not holding this government to account for its costs, because from what I hear, they had huge costs for the government reneging on their commitment. And believe you me, Mr. Chair, Simon Fraser University was subjected to a process that not one other venue sponsor was subjected to — not one.

[1635]

If the province's total provincial commitment is \$30 million to this speed skating oval, why is the province not at the negotiating table? I'm not quite sure I understand. The minister has said over and over again that this is part of a larger concept. What are the risk factors that VANOC — the Olympic organizing committee — is assuming with this being a different kind of project? What risk factors are they assuming, and what's the total cost of the venue — just the speed skating oval?

Hon. J. Les: With respect to SFU and their proposal originally, we certainly found it unfortunate that those discussions couldn't be successfully concluded. It did become clear, as those discussions were ongoing, that because of the terrain and other issues at SFU, a facility appropriate to host the speed skating events would have been considerably higher and would have meant a considerably greater cost exposure to the province.

We were grateful, in fact, when the city of Richmond came forward with their larger proposal which, as I understand it, is going to cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$150 million, with the speed skating oval being a \$30 million component of that \$150 million, therefore limiting the province's financial exposure at exactly \$30 million. That is the extent to which the provincial taxpayer is exposed.

The other risk and exposures will be borne, I am sure, pursuant to an agreement that is being negotiated between VANOC and the city of Richmond. I leave it to them to determine who is going to assume how much risk.

J. MacPhail: The British Columbia taxpayer is exposed to all of the risk of the overexpenditure of the Olympics. The provincial government took that on. They did that under our government, and this government continued that. Any risk is assumed by the provincial taxpayer — no one else.

[1640]

If the Richmond speed skating oval is an agreement between the city of Richmond and the Olympic organizing committee, who assumes the risk? Is there a different relationship, a different agreement on risk,

than for the rest of the Olympics where the taxpayer is on the hook?

Hon. J. Les: With respect to the whole notion of risk, as I indicated earlier, our risk in terms of construction costs is capped at \$30 million. It will be for VANOC and the city of Richmond to determine how much of the remaining risk is borne and by whom. I know for a fact that the city of Richmond will be bearing all of the construction costs.

In the context of the Olympics and the production of venues and possible overruns and those kinds of discussions, I think we also need to remember that while there is downside risk, there is also upside risk. The member points out that the province is the final guarantor. Frankly, I continue to feel very comfortable with that as well, in terms of the fact that we have had several sponsorships that have already been negotiated.

The broadcasting sponsorship for the United States, for example, was something where NBC was successful, and they committed \$800 million (U.S.). We're already familiar with Bell Canada and the \$200 million contribution they have made. Recently the Royal Bank came on board for \$110 million.

In each of those cases, they were far above and beyond anything that had been anticipated previously. So while we need to be very prudent and very careful in terms of the various expenditures — and we continue to be — as I indicated earlier, there are no particular concerns at this point. At the same time, though, when you're looking at the overall context, I think it's fair to say that we're seeing some significant upsides as well.

J. MacPhail: If the province is only at risk for \$30 million — that's a contribution, and then nothing else occurs — there must be a different agreement on the Richmond oval than on every other venue. So is the provincial taxpayer not the final guarantor on the Richmond oval?

[1645]

Hon. J. Les: The agreement — or the proposal, I should say — that was made by the city of Richmond is that the province would contribute \$30 million and Richmond would accept the balance of the risk. I would suggest that the risk to the province in terms of the construction of that venue is minimal.

As I indicated earlier, the agreement between VANOC and the city of Richmond is still being worked out. I should, again, underline to the member that Richmond is contemplating a facility that is much larger than just a speed skating facility, and they have various sources of funding for the production of that facility and have talked openly about some private sector involvement as well.

The member will probably recognize that the facility lies directly under the flight path of airplanes going to and coming from the Vancouver airport, so there are some terrific advertising facilities and opportunities, for example, that are available. I'm sure that the crea-

tive minds working with the city of Richmond are going to exploit all of those opportunities in a constructive way to produce something that is affordable to the taxpayers of Richmond as well. The way that this arrangement has unfolded will be something that is affordable for the taxpayers of British Columbia and affordable in a way that caps their risk at \$30 million.

J. MacPhail: The minister has just admitted that there is a different contingent liability arrangement for Richmond, so will they be making that agreement public?

Hon. J. Les: That would, of course, be up to the city of Richmond.

J. MacPhail: It doesn't work that well for the Minister of Health when she tries to blame everybody else, when you put out arm's-length arrangements as well. Eventually it comes back to the people who brought you to the party, and this government brought you to the party.

Is the minister saying we're supposed to trust him that there's been a different contingent liability arrangement between Richmond and VANOC than in every other case? Is he saying that? If that's the case, what proof does the taxpayer have?

Hon. J. Les: I underline again that the exposure for the taxpayers....

Interjection.

Hon. J. Les: Sure, go ahead.

I've forgotten the question that was posed by the member opposite.

[1650]

J. MacPhail: The minister is alleging, and I don't have any reason.... I'm trying to get him to confirm some substance to the allegation that there is a different contingent liability arrangement between the British Columbia taxpayer and the Richmond speed skating oval. In every other circumstance cost overruns are absorbed by the provincial taxpayer. The minister is now telling me that the arrangement between the Vancouver Olympic committee.... Richmond says that that isn't the case. That risk will be borne by someone other than the provincial taxpayer.

I'm asking for evidence. I'm asking for written confirmation of that. I'm asking for production of the agreement between the Vancouver organizing committee and Richmond to show that.

Hon. J. Les: The member is absolutely correct that at the outset the provincial government agreed to be the organization that assumed any risks of overruns. What we have then done — prudently, I would suggest — is we have looked for mechanisms through which we could limit the risk to the provincial government. The Richmond speed skating oval facility is an example

of where we have done exactly that. Our risk, as per the proposal that came from the city of Richmond, was to cap the exposure to the provincial taxpayer at \$30 million. That is what is going to unfold.

Now, the agreement that ensues between the Vancouver organizing committee and the city of Richmond will allocate risk between those two parties in some way. I would suggest, however, that the city of Richmond, given that they are responsible for construction, will assume the risks related to construction. There will be an Olympic Overlay, as it is called, required for the site, to make it appropriate for the hosting, specifically, of the Olympic events. I would assume there would be VANOC exposure to that.

In all of that, as I have said earlier, we have very deliberately gone out and looked for opportunities to limit the risks associated with the provincial contribution. We've successfully done that in this case. There will be no provincial contribution beyond the \$30 million.

J. MacPhail: Just to be very clear, the minister is suggesting that I have to FOI the agreement from the city of Richmond, because of course we know the Vancouver organizing committee isn't subject to freedom of information. Nobody will be able to get the information from that side. This government has outlawed the application of freedom of information requests to the Vancouver organizing committee. So is the minister suggesting I will have to get that information from Richmond?

Hon. J. Les: It is an agreement to which the province will not be a party. So even if FOI did apply, I suspect I would have to tell the member that I would not be able to produce that document in any event. I would not have any right to do that. I'm sure that when the agreement is negotiated, the city of Richmond would be more than happy to produce that document as, indeed, I suspect they're required to in any event.

J. MacPhail: Well, of course the province is party to the agreement through the Vancouver organizing committee. That's why we're here debating it. It's 30 million bucks of taxpayer money. Will any of the \$55 million...? If this is a private relationship between the city of Richmond and VANOC, does any of the venue's \$55 million of endowment money ever flow to this venue?

[1655]

Hon. J. Les: I believe the member's question was around the province's \$55 million contribution towards the endowment fund, and whether any of that money would flow to the Richmond speed skating oval.

There are more discussions going on in this House, Mr. Chair, and I'm having difficulty between the various discussions.

In any event, there would therefore be an endowment of \$110 million — \$55 million twice. The trustees of that fund would be able to allocate funding to the Richmond speed skating oval, but that would be at their discretion.

J. MacPhail: That's why I'm very curious about this Richmond arrangement. Tell me: is the Richmond speed skating oval funding arrangement unique?

Hon. J. Les: So far it certainly is, and it may well be unique forever. Every partnership arrangement is unique in its own right. This is a unique site; this is a unique opportunity. This is a unique proposal that has been brought forward by the city of Richmond. So yes, it's unique. I would suggest that that uniqueness is a testament to the innovative nature of the proposal as has been put forward by the city of Richmond.

J. MacPhail: There is no other venue that had to go out and have a second crack at bidding on it. That made Richmond unique.

SFU was the only one that had to go out after the original survey was done, plans published. Simon Fraser University had to subject itself to an RFP, request for proposals. Richmond won, and now it's saying...

Okay, let me ask this: is there any private money going into this Richmond proposal?

Hon. J. Les: I can't say definitively today whether there will be or not. But if there were, I think that would be a happy circumstance. I think we need to encourage partnership with the private sector where it makes sense to do so, because most often the result is a better facility for all concerned.

J. MacPhail: That's just Liberal spin again, because they haven't demonstrated that success at all. The Sea to Sky Highway has a private partner, and they're taking no risk. The auditor general has ruled that it's a capital lease, so the taxpayer is on the hook for all of the debt.

I'm curious as to why the minister is so vague on what the Richmond proposal is. Why was this venue selected to prepay out of all of the Vancouver organizing committee's venues?

Hon. J. Les: Simply because the Richmond facility was the most advanced at this point in time.

J. MacPhail: How so? Explain that to me. Compare it to other venues. Just give me the details of why it's more advanced.

[1700]

Hon. J. Les: The reason that facility can be funded at this time is simply because their discussions are in an advanced stage — way beyond any discussions that are ongoing around any other facility, some of which are simply not even in discussion yet. This one, as the member knows, was a proposal that was put forward and accepted by VANOC — I believe it's about eight months ago now — and discussions have been ongoing since. They are close to signing an agreement, and for that reason we can flow the funding.

There are a number of other facilities that are in various stages of contemplation and discussion, but

none are as advanced as the Richmond speed skating oval. That is why we can make funding available at this point.

J. MacPhail: First of all, that's troubling. But I'm not going to actually make the minister defend his own words — that some aren't even on the horizon or whatever he said, or even in the picture. That would be very troubling. I'll let that one go.

But tell me what is so advanced about the Richmond.... Have all the public consultations been done? Is all the financing in order for the partners? Who are the partners? Do the taxpayers of Richmond...? Have they voted on the fact that they are now the guarantor of all risk, as the minister has just said?

Hon. J. Les: First of all, let me clear up something that the member referenced — my statement that on some of the facilities there's been very little, if any, work done. I'm sure the member knows that some of the facilities need very little work. For example, if we're talking about General Motors Place, there's only a few million dollars' worth of work required there. Frankly, nobody has spent much time thinking about how exactly that is to be done.

The Richmond speed skating oval, on the other hand, is a major facility where construction will start later this year. They will need a couple of years of construction time before the facility is complete.

In terms of the process that has been engaged in by the city of Richmond, I am not a party to that. The province is not a party to that. Those are internal processes that are actually quite normal and not at all unusual in the context of a municipality. I am sure they will have no difficulty working their way through that. Anecdotally, I know the residents of Richmond were extremely pleased that they would have the addition of this wonderful facility to their community's recreational and exhibition infrastructure.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

J. Kwan: Earlier I heard my colleague canvassing questions on this issue with the minister around Richmond's skating oval development. The minister actually said that the information flowing from it in terms of the financial aspects of it, the contingency funds and so on, is not available and that he doesn't have that information. He had mentioned that it's actually Richmond's responsibility. However, as we know, under GAAP, which is the new accounting principle rules that apply, it makes virtually all initiatives that are funded by the provincial government their responsibility.

In that context, I'd like to get the minister to answer my colleague's question around the financial aspect of the Richmond skating oval. It's not good enough for the minister or for this government to just sort of say: "Hey, it's not me. It's somebody else's responsibility." I know the government tried that in the area of health. The now Minister of Finance, the former Minister of

Health, had admitted that even with the health authorities' decisions around capital projects, operating and so on, those health authorities are ultimately accountable to the government.

Because of the change in accounting rules, the government is now responsible. That's further added to and backed up by a court decision around that. So it's not that easy for the minister to sort of skate around — no pun intended here — to say: "Hey, it's not my responsibility." It is his responsibility, and I think British Columbians and the taxpayers have the right to know. So I'd like the minister to please answer the question.

[1705]

Hon. J. Les: As the former Minister of Municipal Affairs, as the member then was, she would know that municipalities are not captured within the provincial entity, even in terms of the generally accepted accounting principles. They're not.

As I've outlined earlier this afternoon already, the contribution by the province of \$30 million to the Richmond speed skating oval completes our obligation to the production of that venue. The risk therefore shifts to others, as arranged between VANOC and the city of Richmond, and I think the taxpayers of British Columbia will be saluting that arrangement.

J. Kwan: No, the minister can't get away with that. What I'm talking about are the provincial contributions — not the local government's contributions, but the provincial government's contributions — that taxpayers from British Columbia paid into this project. Is the minister saying on the contingency liability question that the province is completely off the hook, that the province has zero liability whatsoever and that all the liability falls at the feet of the city of Richmond?

Hon. J. Les: The facility, the entire \$150 million worth or so, will be owned by the city of Richmond. That alone brings with it, basically, an assumption of the risk. They have committed clearly that they will be responsible for the construction risk, which is a considerable risk — as the member, I am sure, will appreciate. That is being assumed by the city of Richmond. Now, there may be some residual risk associated with the hosting of the Olympic events within that facility, which VANOC may choose to share along with the city of Richmond at their discretion and according to the agreement that will be reached between Richmond and VANOC.

J. Kwan: Is there indemnification for this agreement for the province? Is the province going to be completely protected on this issue? Is that going to be part of the agreement that the minister is talking about, which he's going to get in writing?

Hon. J. Les: There is no indemnification. We have made it very, very clear that our contribution is going to be \$30 million — no more. That's it.

I'm sure the member is quite aware of, for example, infrastructure agreements or programs that have been carried out in the past with various municipalities, where a municipality will get a provincial grant and is then responsible for the production of the facility. If there are overruns — and there have been in the past — then it is the municipality that is responsible for dealing with that. In this case, similarly, we have made clear that our contribution is \$30 million — no more.

J. Kwan: Sorry, Mr. Chair. No. Because this venue is an Olympic venue, that makes it different from all the other infrastructure programs for which the minister would like to pretend the responsibility falls on the municipality.

[1710]

Because it's an Olympic venue, we need that venue to be up and fully functional by 2010, with a drop-dead date. If it is not, there is a problem, and that problem falls not on the city of Richmond but on the province, which is hosting the Olympic Games. That falls also on the municipality of Whistler and on Vancouver, with the exception of this. The province had indemnified the city of Vancouver on all Olympic costs...

J. MacPhail: And Whistler.

J. Kwan: ...and Whistler as well.

Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. The argument that the minister puts forward doesn't work, because the hook is on us — on the province of British Columbia — if the project is not on time and on budget. We have a problem. If the language of the agreement does not include a clause to indemnify the province, then there's a problem. There is no guarantee that the province won't be on the hook.

What happens when the project is going to be over the cost and the contingency liability? The city of Richmond says: "Jeez, we can't meet that. Sorry, I guess we can't build it out. We'll just slow-walk the thing or develop it with a longer time requirement and, therefore, not meet the targeted date for the 2010 Olympics."

Richmond will want to use that facility after the fact, but not for the Olympic Games. So at the end of the day, it's the province that would actually have a major problem on its hands. What is the contingency plan from the province from that point of view, or is there one?

Hon. J. Les: We can spend a lot of time here this afternoon and invent a series of worst-case, worst-possible scenarios which the member, I guess, has a bit of an appetite for. But frankly, I think some of the insinuations are insulting to the administration, for example, in the city of Richmond. The other member opposite certainly was casting aspersions earlier this afternoon on the administration of VANOC. I think it's inappropriate to do both.

Both of these organizations have, I think with great care, developed these proposals, and I am totally con-

fidant in their ability to produce these facilities as they've proposed. Just as a further insurance, for example, in the case of the Richmond speed skating oval, it's intended that the facility be complete in 2008 — fully two years before the facilities are required for the 2010 games. If there's any slippage required, there certainly is some available there.

Now, to hear the member this afternoon talking about, "Well, what if those facilities aren't finished?" and "What if they just slow-walk their way through construction...?" I think that is just inappropriate fear-mongering by the member opposite. I think, as I said before, it kind of casts aspersions on the ability of those very responsible agencies to get this done.

J. MacPhail: What poppycock. I'll tell you something, Mr. Chair. We're here defending the interests of the British Columbia taxpayer. No one else in this chamber is. Absolutely no one else in this chamber is. We're here defending the interests of the taxpayers. These questions are entirely appropriate, and the member should stop suggesting somehow that they're inappropriate.

There is a history around Olympic construction worldwide that needs to be taken into account. These questions cast aspersions on no one. What they do is defend the interests of the taxpayers, which absolutely no one in this government deems worthy to do — including the minister.

The minister doesn't have the agreement between the Vancouver organizing committee. He won't get it. He doesn't see any need to get it. How does he know what the agreement is or what the Vancouver organizing committee is committing on its own behalf, which eventually returns to a liability for the taxpayer? He doesn't know any of this, or if he does, he simply refused to get it, because I've asked him for it several times.

[1715]

We wish everybody well in a smooth implementation of the Olympics, but our job is to defend the taxpayer. This government takes great umbrage that anyone does that.

The minister says I should go to the city of Richmond to FOI the document. Oh, isn't that nice. He can't provide any time lines on why this was chosen over anyone else. He says construction is going to begin at the end of the year. I asked him about public consultation. He doesn't know. That's not his job. He's not supposed to know about any of that. Well, we will continue to ask these questions, and we will be forced to go and ask the city of Richmond for information about a provincial liability. How's that for weird? How's that for bizarre?

Vote 34(S) approved.

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

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:17 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolution.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. G. Bruce: Forthwith. I move that the report of resolution from the Committee of Supply on February 28, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Bruce: 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. 9)

Hon. G. Bruce presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intituled Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 9).

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

Motion approved.

[1720]

Hon. G. Bruce: 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 operation of government programs for the 2004-05 fiscal year as outlined in the supplementary estimates No. 9, 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 16 introduced, read a first time and ordered to proceed to second reading forthwith.

Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 9)

Hon. G. Bruce: I move that Bill 16 now be read a second time.

Motion approved.

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

Bill 16, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 9), 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. 9)

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 16; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 5:22 p.m.

Sections 1 and 2 approved.

Schedule approved.

Preamble approved.

Title approved.

Hon. G. Bruce: I move that the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:23 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

Bill 16, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 9), reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Hon. G. Bruce moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.