



6th Session, 37th Parliament

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
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Her Honour the Honourable Iona V. Campagnolo, CM, OBC

**6TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT**

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Morning Sitting

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TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2005

The House met at 10:04 a.m.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

Prayers.

### Orders of the Day

**Hon. P. Bell:** I call continuation of budget debate.  
[1005]

### Budget Debate (continued)

**K. Krueger:** I was in the gym recently on a treadmill. Being on a treadmill always reminds me of the years of suffering under an NDP government here in British Columbia, where you work and you sweat and you never get anywhere, and you never really feel like anything is being accomplished.

Interjection.

**K. Krueger:** My colleague says if you slow down, you go backwards. A lot of people did that. At best, you get nowhere.

Although I don't usually watch music videos, the gym had a clicker on the TV. I was looking for some news. I came across Shania Twain, which always stops the clicker for me. I'm quite a Shania fan. She was singing a song that I hadn't heard before. The refrain of it was "No one needs to know right now." I thought that could be the NDP platform theme right now. We just can't get much out of the wannabe party that would like to once again manage British Columbia, presumably with the same sort of results that they got for us in the 1990s. They've got this strange reluctance to disclose their platform, and people are really starting to wonder about that. Do they have a platform?

Ms. James, out in various parts of the province, says she's opposed to aquaculture. We think she'd probably shut it down. When she's up the coast, where people's livelihoods depend on aquaculture, she's a little more iffy about that — curiously vacillating positions from that party, that leader and its unofficial leader, Jim Sinclair, who is conducting this sort of strange parallel campaign but not always the same things as what Ms. James, the official leader, is doing.

For example, she had an embarrassment in Kamloops last week where she came up to do a little publicity stunt in front of the liquor store about privatization initiatives. Apparently, she either forgot to tell Mr. Sinclair she was going to do that, or she was boycotted by him in a B.C. Federation of Labour move to show who's really boss. Fewer than ten people showed up with her. It was a pretty devastating embarrassment for her.

They're beginning to respond to pressure from the public and the media and — maybe flattering ourselves

— from us, and beginning to reveal a little bit here and there of their intentions for British Columbia. It's sort of an NDP dance of the seven veils that's been going on between Mr. Sinclair and Ms. James. He did say recently that he wants to go back to 2001, and Ms. James followed up with a comment to the effect that they want to turn back the clock.

Those are pretty frightening statements for most British Columbians, because 2001, at the beginning, was not a happy time for British Columbians. We were a have-not province at the time. We'd gone rapidly from best-performing economy in Canada to worst-performing under the NDP, and we languished there throughout the richest decade in history, where jurisdictions everywhere were doing great economically.

In fact, in North America, everybody was eliminating their deficits, paying off debt, seeing their economies prosper and blossom — just not British Columbia. You had to go all the way to Chiapas, Mexico, to find another jurisdiction doing as badly as we were.

The NDP were pouring taxpayers' money into black holes like Skeena Cellulose, which absorbed about \$300 million. The fast ferries, of course, are still tied up at the foot of Lonsdale in North Vancouver like a monument to NDP incompetence and chicanery. There were a ton of broken promises.

Kamloops, for example, had been promised the interior cancer clinic. In fact, the Social Credit government at the beginning of the nineties had put a sign on the lawn of Royal Inland Hospital and made an announcement that we were going to have the cancer clinic in Kamloops. When the NDP ran and succeeded in becoming government in 1991, they had promised that they would follow through with that commitment of the outgoing government. But it was a lie. It never happened. The facility was built in Kelowna instead. I don't think Kamloops will ever forget that betrayal. It was a profound betrayal of that promise to Kamloops.

The NDP had also promised that the interior psychiatric unit would be built in Kamloops, but there was not a shovel in the ground and no reason to believe that they would ever fulfil that promise either. We've gone ahead and built the interior psychiatric clinic in Kamloops. That's over \$20 million in construction and a \$12.3 million operating budget for the rest of our lives for those of us who are living in Kamloops. It's spent in our local economy mainly on wages and all sorts of new health care professional jobs. They couldn't turn back the clock on that, surely, but they'd like to go back to 2001, they say.

[1010]

They had promised Royal Inland Hospital an upgrade to its emergency and radiology wards, the third-busiest trauma centre in British Columbia — long, long overdue. They'd given the local health authority in 1992 a budget letter saying they would be receiving a budget to upgrade the emergency ward, but they just never did it. We recently completed the \$20 million upgrade of Royal Inland Hospital's emergency ward and radiology, a brand-new MRI. It's been a totally different performance in three and a half years of B.C.

Liberal government than what we experienced in ten years with the NDP.

I want to challenge Ms. James on something that Kamloops really needs to know. We're so proud of Thompson Rivers University, which was brought into reality in this spring session of the Legislature with Bill 2, the very first bill that we acted on this spring. But Ms. James, back when we announced that we were going to create Thompson Rivers University, March 20, '04, was reported on the news wire as having said: "Instead of making announcements setting up new university campuses in Kamloops and Kelowna this week, the priority should be making spaces available for students." She was talking about a tuition freeze.

We all know the sorry record of the NDP tuition freeze in the nineties. It meant it took five years to get a four-year education. Students had to wait another year — postpone their earnings for another year. Classes had to be cancelled. Classes were too large because the institutions couldn't afford the professors or the extra classrooms, because they had nothing to replace the tuition they were not allowed to charge.

Ms. James has, in one of her few commitments on her platform so far, said they would freeze tuition again. That, hand in hand with this statement she made back when we created Thompson Rivers University, or announced we were going to, really makes me wonder. They could go back to 2001 on that issue, because although we've done the legislation, they could do other legislation. They could take us backwards on that whole initiative. That would be a calamity for Kamloops and for our region. We're just delighted with that announcement.

But they could well do that, and there are reasons why I think they might intend to do that. There has been some protest from the employees of the Open Learning Agency. Some people don't want to move to Kamloops — would rather stay in Burnaby, where they live now. I think that the B.C. Federation of Labour is sympathetic to that.

I'd like to know, and I publicly challenge Carole James and Jim Sinclair to tell the people of my constituency and the Speaker's constituency what they will do about Thompson Rivers University, and if they assure us they would leave things as we've created them, why would we ever believe them?

You couldn't believe them in the 1990s. There's a famous front-page picture in the Vancouver *Province* of an NDP cabinet minister who had just tabled a budget, and his quote was: "I don't expect you to believe me." They had run on an alleged balanced budget. They showed up here with Glen Clark as Premier in 1996, and one of the first things Mr. Clark said was: "We're going to need a little wriggle room." The budget, as it turned out, was a disaster. Mind you, so was the government, and that went on for ten years.

She can't unbuild the psych unit. She won't unbuild the emergency ward, but I'm concerned about what they would do about Thompson Rivers University.

In the nineties we had a problem with growing sedimentation in our water supply to Kamloops. For a

good part of the year we'd turn on our taps and brown water would come out. It looked awful. They said it was safe, because it was chlorinated brown water. It had to do with things that had been happening in the watersheds upstream of Kamloops for a long time. It wasn't clearing up. But the NDP wouldn't do anything about that.

We have. Together with Canada, British Columbia, under this B.C. Liberal government, came up with the largest grant thus far under the national infrastructure program. Using that and money that the municipality borrowed and put forward itself, we've built a brand-new, state-of-the-art, \$48 million water treatment facility — membrane filtration technology. It will take out giardia. It will take out cryptosporidium. Beautiful, clean water.

[1015]

The manufacturer of that technology, a company known as Zenon, sent its president to the opening. I was there and the Speaker was there. He said that they're building hundreds of those plants around the world, and that this was the best, the biggest and the one that he's proudest of. He would be bringing people from China and elsewhere around the world to tour it and also to have their technicians trained in our facility, because it's been built with classrooms for Thompson Rivers University, which has created a special program on water treatment technology.

So there's a partnership there that's very important to Kamloops and to our whole region and, indeed, to people from all around the world who want to come and learn at Thompson Rivers University. I don't think the NDP would have built us that water treatment facility. We have no reason to think they would, because for ten years they didn't do it for us. Would they reverse our ability to have that valuable partnership with Thompson Rivers University? A person has to wonder, because we know where their sympathies lie. Their sympathies always lie with the affiliates of the B.C. Federation of Labour, and specifically the big union bosses who have very much their own agenda, an agenda that was not a good one for British Columbians in the 1990s; an agenda that hurt British Columbians very badly; an agenda that doubled our debt — \$17 billion of additional debt.

B.C. governments had accumulated a debt of \$16.4 billion over 125 years. The NDP more than doubled it in ten years. We'll be paying the interest on that for a long, long time. We're tremendously proud of the fact that our government in this budget made the largest payback of debt in B.C.'s history: \$1.7 billion. But that is only 1/10 of the debt that the NDP ran up in ten years — one year's worth of new debt under the NDP. The fact that we paid off that colossal amount will save us \$125 million a year in carrying charges, interest charges, even at today's very low rate. That's quite an accomplishment, and we're really proud of it. Then you stop and think that we still have nine times that \$125 million interest to pay each year on the remaining debt that the NDP accumulated until we manage to pay it off. That's a discouraging thought, when you've made a

record payment on debt but it's only 1/10, and you've saved \$125 million, but you're still going to have to pay nine times a further \$125 million as long as you haven't got the debt completely paid off.

So I do challenge Ms. James. I want to know what she's going to do about Thompson Rivers University. Those comments were hers. So Carole James — what about Thompson Rivers University? Jim Sinclair — what about it?

Another plank that Ms. James recently disclosed, reluctantly, in her new platform is that she says they'll build 1,000 new extended care or intermediate care beds in their first year in office. Well, news flash to Ms. James and Mr. Sinclair: we've got 2,900 new beds underway that we expect to have done by sometime next year — some of them right in Kamloops. So she's promising 1,900 less than what is already underway. Is she going to cut back? Are they actually going to build fewer beds than what we have underway? Are they going to put the 1,900 beds on hold in order that they can freeze tuition or give money away to NDP pet projects elsewhere around the province, as happened all through the nineties?

I think we really need to know, but Carole James and Jim Sinclair say that no one needs to know right now. I think we need to know, and I challenge them to start coming clean with their plans. Even if we can't believe them, it would be nice to know what they say they're going to do.

I found it colossally hypocritical of them to reproach our government on the fact that although we've built or renovated over 4,000 new beds, they've only replaced beds that were unacceptable for seniors' living conditions in this day and age. They keep alleging that we've broken our promise. Well, we've been building the beds, or rebuilding them, at a frantic pace, but we found out that, just as in many other areas, we had inherited a deficit in this area of extended and intermediate care beds as well.

I remember the Finance minister, Gary Collins, before he left us saying that for the first couple of years literally every day a new swamp was discovered. Something else came up that nobody had expected that we would have to deal with — another financial mess left behind by the NDP. There were lots of different deficits, hidden deficits.

[1020]

I sit on the Legislative Assembly Management Committee, Mr. Speaker, as do you. One of the first things we had to do at our first LAMC meeting was write off \$600,000 in overpayment that the NDP had spent on their own caucus — \$600,000. They would just help themselves. They would do peculiar things, such as Harry Lali, who was an MLA for Yale-Lillooet at the time and wants to be again. He's actually their candidate. Harry Lali went to the NDP Speaker of the day and said: "I want you to move me to a more lucrative members' in-constituency travel allowance." So he did. The Speaker of the day just made him what is called a coastal remote MLA. Well, he was nowhere near the coast. He was much less remote than most of the prov-

ince. But Harry enjoyed more than double the entitlement he should have had. That entitlement just ended the day the NDP got turfed out of office. On the books, that riding was never coastal remote.

Harry is a bad guy from my point of view, and he's got a bad history. But he wants to be an MLA again, and he's on Carole James's platform. She had to ask him to apologize almost immediately after he was nominated, because of his racist comments and his attacks on one of our members. But old Harry is back at his old tricks.

She's got a number of these NDP retreads that want to get back into this House. What are they going to do? The NDP says that no one needs to know right now. They are just not going to tell us, but we have reason to be very concerned about what they'll do. When they're taking these hypocritical positions on things like seniors housing, it really worries me. During my five years in opposition to that government, seniors had it really tough.

They never built a single new extended or intermediate care bed in the whole Thompson health region in their whole sorry ten years in office — not one. We all knew not only that the population was aging rapidly but that they were way behind, and they should be building beds. So I would have seniors from Clearwater who were literally warehoused by the NDP down in the Fraser Canyon four hours away from their network, their loved ones, their spouses — if the roads are good, four hours away. Their health would decline very rapidly, isolated and in some old facility that should have already been replaced.

Seniors would wait a long, long time. I'm told 18 months on average, but I knew seniors who were waiting longer. I knew Alzheimer's sufferers who were being looked after by their children, and the children were in their sixties or late fifties and having a very tough time trying to look after these aged seniors with serious health problems. It aged the children in their middle life dramatically to try and look after the problems that they had, taking on that responsibility.

But the NDP couldn't and wouldn't deal with that situation. What would they do for seniors if they were elected? They've spent three and a half years with the B.C. Federation of Labour bosses — union bosses — fearmongering, lying, slagging because they do politics like some sort of black religion 365 days a year. While our people and we are out making the economy work, creating jobs, raising families, volunteering in our communities and building communities, those people write nasty letters to the editor, fearmonger, spread fear.

They frightened a lot of seniors with their talk about our government. They would say it was going to turf seniors out of their homes, and there would be seniors on the street. They're always crying the blues about, allegedly, policies of this government wreaking hardships on unfortunate people. I have always responded that if you actually know any such people, send them to my constituency office. This government does not allow people to fall through the cracks, and we will look after them. They've never been able to produce real people.

I've had people come to me because they hear me saying that, and I've been able to help them. I had a young couple who had moved to town. They were on welfare. They were having a real tough time. They had been together since they were middle teenagers. Now they had three kids of their own. They were having trouble getting established.

In a matter of a few days, they had a nice rental home to live in. I had a job offer for him. I learned that she had two ICBC claims entitlements that she hadn't realized were entitlements, and he had walked away from a WCB claim because of the difficulties he was having. I can help them with all those things, and I'm happy to. That's the job of a constituency MLA.

All of these self-proclaimed advocates from the NDP side who run around fearmongering can't produce anybody, any real person, to back up their claims that people are falling through the cracks.

[1025]

I remember those days of desperation for seniors when they just couldn't get into seniors facilities. I committed to the people of Clearwater that I would get their hospital built. They had been waiting for a long, long time. Their hospital was outdated many years before I was elected. They had to put Cellophane over the windows in the winter; otherwise, the plumbing fixtures would freeze up. They had to leave the bathroom doors open in the winter for the same reason. It was like a number of Atco trailers, essentially, put together as a hospital.

The NDP had faithfully promised that they would build them a new hospital eight months before the 1996 election, even before they started running around making false election promises — again, not a spade in the ground, nothing done. We had that beautiful new hospital built in about a year after we were elected. It was one of the first major capital projects that was approved by our Treasury Board, and now we have a beautiful new hospital in Clearwater designed with the input of the staff, and it works perfectly.

They created an extended care wing in two directions. There's a nursing station at the centre of it where they can also see the acute care unit, which has, depending on need, between six and eight beds. Sometimes they're all empty and sometimes they're all full, but the same nursing staff can look after both wings because they were involved in the design. It has modern lifting equipment like the NDP should have installed in all the hospitals in British Columbia. The average age of a nurse at that time was 47 years old, and nurses were getting hurt hefting patients around because they didn't have modern lifting equipment.

People were dying because ambulance attendants weren't fully trained and because they didn't have defibrillators in ambulances. We've remedied all of those things. We've provided excellent training to paramedics. We've equipped every ambulance in the province with defibrillators. Recently we moved to staff every ambulance station in the province 24 hours a day, and that's a first.

This government has accomplished so much for British Columbians. Obviously, this budget is going to pay for even more. We'll have added \$3.8 billion per year to the health care budget. It's a staggering amount. We've added \$863 per student in the K-to-12 system. We're adding 25,000 new post-secondary spaces to that system. This government is not only firing on all cylinders economically, but is moving skilfully and rapidly to provide excellent services to British Columbians that they couldn't even hope for under the NDP.

Imagine having 52 different health boards and authorities all doing things in different ways, all hiring administrators and paying consultants and running around not getting health care done for people. Things are so much better today than they ever were under the NDP.

We're presently working on our third new building for seniors housing in Kamloops. We've subsidized 20 units in Chase in a private facility. I think that's a really neat public-private partnership, because when you walk around that facility, you can't tell which are the subsidized units. They all look the same. The people who have a government subsidy to be in their units don't get some lesser unit because they aren't able to pay for it entirely themselves. They get exactly the same units as other people. That's a great way of doing things — everybody being treated equally.

By the end of the NDP years there were 23,000 people in Kamloops who couldn't name a general practitioner and couldn't find one. We went to the heads of departments at Royal Inland Hospital, had a meeting with them and said: "How can we attract more doctors to Kamloops?" They gave us a wish list of the things that they'd like to see.

It was the emergency ward upgrade, which we did. It was to secure that psych unit you've been talking about, which we did. It was, "We need an MRI and better radiology equipment," and we got it. We installed a brand-new type of technology so that doctors in Clearwater and Barriere and Chase and throughout my far-flung constituency can have the benefit of instant collaboration with the specialists in Royal Inland Hospital because of this digital imaging — one of the many improvements that we've made, one of the things the doctors were looking for.

We delivered on everything they asked for, and true to their word, they were able to attract new doctors to Kamloops — 37 new doctors to Kamloops and region in three years. That list no longer exists. Every now and then we reach a point where we hear that doctors aren't taking new patients in Kamloops. But we've been able to, from the constituents who come to town and report that to us.... For them, we've been able to find doctors. The list is always at zero or just barely starting to grow from zero, and we find ways to deal with it when it does. So imagine that accomplishment — eliminating a list of 23,000 people who couldn't find a GP.

[1030]

Then you think about the fact that we have eliminated wait-lists in this province for all life-threatening

conditions, treatments. If you have a heart problem and your life is in danger, you don't have a wait-list. If you need cancer treatment, you don't have a wait list. Yes, there's a wait-list for joint replacements, and that's a consequence of the rapidly aging population — again, something we knew was coming. Everybody predicted it. We talked about it through our years in opposition to the ten-year NDP government, but they wouldn't do anything about it.

When Carole James, Jim Sinclair and the big union bosses say nostalgically that they want to go back to 2001, that they want to turn the clock back, are they talking about all that — seniors who just can't find placement in a seniors facility, people who just can't find a general practitioner, communities in British Columbia that doctors didn't want to move to?

Why didn't they ever create new doctor-training spaces in the system in British Columbia? We couldn't believe it. We were going backwards every year as doctors retired, grew old or left British Columbia for one reason or another — sometimes unhappiness with the NDP government. We were going backwards, yet we have this state-of-the-art, post-secondary education system that all British Columbians are proud of.

This government has moved on that, of course, almost doubling the numbers of doctors that will be graduating in British Columbia every year. There's a brand-new medical school at Prince George, up in the heart of the province. It's training people for rural medicine rather than insisting that anybody who's lucky enough to get into UBC has to take their training for all those years in Vancouver — a decade or more, by which time they've often married someone from Vancouver, gotten used to living in Vancouver and don't want to go back and live in the communities they came from. We're solving that problem by training doctors for rural medicine out in the north, where they're needed.

The turnaround that we hear about in Prince George does my heart good. I've lived there twice. It was a vibrant community in the years when I lived there. It got bombed down terribly by the NDP in the dismal decade of the nineties. Now, at last, it's on a roll again. Why is that?

Interjection.

**K. Krueger:** My colleague, the Minister of State for Mining, says the biggest mistakes I ever made were the two times I left Prince George. He loves Prince George, and he's been great for it. In fact, the government has been great for Prince George.

Why is that? Because we listened to the people up there and paid attention to what they said. We've made the changes that we promised we would make, and we've made other changes that people wanted us to make. The result is a booming economy in Prince George at last, booming like it used to when I was a kid and even when I was a newly married young man. Prince George was always a hub of economic activity, and now it is again.

The NDP say: "The only reason the economy is doing well with you guys is that interest rates are low." We say: "It's the same interest rate right across the country, and they built more homes in Kelowna last year than in all of Saskatchewan." It can't just be interest rates. "Well, then, it's commodity prices." We say: "Sure, we're really happy about the commodity prices, but actually, they're the same all around the world, and lots of other jurisdictions are benefiting from the good commodity prices."

It's not just those things. We're happy those things have happened, but it's a whole lot of things that this government has done, things that we laid out in a document called the *New Era* document. Of over 200 specific promises, we've been able to complete or have underway 97 percent of those. We're very proud of that.

I went around all through the campaign handing out those *New Era* documents, and I said: "Put them under your clothes in the bottom drawer of your dresser with your Tilley hat guarantee. Pull them out, tick them off and hold them up to me in the next election." I'm hoping people do that in the campaign that's starting on April 19, because I'm tremendously proud of the things we've got done.

I'm very proud of the road to Sun Peaks and the fact that we've fixed that up at last. I'm very proud of the assistance we gave to the ranchers and to everyone up in the North Thompson Valley during the fires. It was the first time in history that a government has come up with hardship grants for people who suffer losses that they just can't recover from any other source — \$2 million to my people up the valley for hardship grants and \$1 million to the North Thompson Community Skills Centre to help people retrain, because they lost their jobs.

The fine people at the skills centre were having to spend all their time fundraising, and we've relieved them of that responsibility. They are guarding that money so closely, as people out in the communities tend to do.

There's \$1 million to the TNRD to hire an economic development officer and have a long-term economic development function up that valley and another million dollars to the North Thompson Relief Fund to provide seed money for economic development activities. All of this money is entrusted to local people, who are husbanding it and guarding it very carefully.

[1035]

There's a dangerous corner called Pigs Corner. I've raised it so many times that I'm sure my colleague on my left, who was Minister of Transportation at the time, got very tired about hearing about Pigs Corner. It cost \$3 million to fix it, but it's fixed, and local people up there are very grateful for that.

We went from youth unemployment of double digits, nearly 20 percent, to a much lower youth unemployment rate right now.

I see that I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker, and I regret that. I think of those days in opposition where I could say I was the designated speaker and talk for two

hours. I'd love to do that, because this government has done so much for British Columbia and the people of Kamloops-North Thompson. I thank you for listening to me and indulging me in talking about those things this morning.

**Hon. J. Murray:** It's my privilege to follow my colleague Kevin Krueger, who was talking so eloquently about the throne speech and the budget speech.

I'll be speaking to Budget 2005 today as well. I've had the privilege of representing the constituency of New Westminster for the past 45 months. I'm very happy to share my enthusiasm for what has happened in our community and in the province and my enthusiasm for the future as British Columbians take our place back on the national stage.

That's something we lost in the decade of the nineties. At the very core of our plan is balancing the budget, as a basis for meeting people's needs. Meeting society's needs means that we need to have an economy that's thriving and a balanced budget, and we now have both of those.

We have created the ability to invest strategically in our future. We've created the ability to continue to be leaders in Canada, and we are leaders in a number of ways already. We're leaders in job creation. We're leaders in some of our health outcomes. We're leaders in education and skill training and in environmental results.

What we are doing is building a plan for the coming decade. In the throne speech we outlined five major goals. This government has been very good at identifying where we want to go, what our vision is, what our strategy is for getting there and then delivering on that. We plan to do that going forward. I'm very pleased with the five great goals that were outlined in the throne speech.

The first great goal is to make B.C. the best-educated and most literate jurisdiction in North America. A fundamental building block for people's success is literacy and education. It's a fundamental building block for their health and ability to be self-responsible and create great lives, so I think that's a very important goal for the coming decade.

The second goal is to lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness. I'm delighted to see us shift from the focus on emergencies and acute care at the expense of prevention and wellness. Yes, we have to deal with acute care needs. We need to be able to take care of patients and serve their needs, but we also need to be able to step back, look long term and think about the things that we need to do to have a healthier public and to have the public make those choices that allow them not to need the acute health care system or as little as possible. I really am excited about a goal that talks about healthy living, physical fitness and prevention.

Our third great goal is to build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk and seniors. A strong social safety net is critically important for a healthy society.

We have a goal of having that strong social safety net, leading in Canada, and we've already put in place a number of initiatives to get us there.

The fourth great goal that our budget is structured into is to lead the world in sustainable environmental management with the best air and water quality and the best fisheries management, bar none. I just want to repeat those words, Mr. Speaker. It's not to be the best in Canada. It's not to be the best in North America. It's actually to lead the world in sustainable environmental management, because we know that a strong and healthy environment supports quality of life over the long term, and it supports a strong and healthy and thriving economy.

[1040]

Our fifth goal is to create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada. That also is a very fundamental building block to having healthy families and healthy communities when people can support themselves and their families and have that kind of satisfaction — that they know they're contributing to society through their jobs. So having the most jobs per capita of anywhere in Canada is a very worthy goal that we will be pursuing across this coming decade.

I want to speak a bit about our budget and how we are unfolding initiatives, spending and investments to help pursue those goals, because that's something that we're good at. We're good at saying: "Here's where we want to go. Here's our plan. Hold us to account."

Over the past four years we have continually invested in our K-to-12 education system. One of the things that I find mystifying is when our opponents or Carole James will say that we have cut education, when we've actually increased the funding to school boards by 9 percent even while the student population dropped about 3½ percent. Now, to me, that is increasing the funding for education.

I was chatting with one of my family members recently who had listened to some of the radio talk after the budget and was absolutely mystified by the amount of discussion by opponents, the union bosses and Carole James that seemed to be the opposite of what actually is happening. We're investing in education, and they will say that we've cut education. We're investing in health care, and they'll say that we've cut health care. Finally, my son said: "Well, it's like Alice through the looking glass. We'll just have to call the leader of the opposition Lewis Carroll James, because she sees everything opposite."

We have made improvements to our K-to-12 system over the last four years, and it's not just about money. We're actually getting results. We have higher overall high school completion rates — the highest ever. B.C. students are among the best in the world in math, reading and science. We've brought parents back into school system. We know that the research shows that when they're engaged in their children's education, their children do better.

We've also focused on the post-secondary school system. We identified a problem. That problem was that we didn't have enough spaces to be able to serve

the needs of our children and our public. My daughter, for example, went to college about a year and a half ago, and she couldn't get a single course that was on her list of interests. We've addressed that shortage of courses. We've addressed the problem, and I see it as a problem that someone graduating with a decent percentage out of high school couldn't get into university or college because the demand so far exceeded the supply. We're adding 25,000 new spaces to our post-secondary education and training.

Douglas College in New Westminster, with another campus in Coquitlam, will be seeing 1,500 of those spaces. That's on top of the addition that was opened a few months ago: a fifth and sixth floor on Douglas College, which has a great new high-tech lab. We'll be training young people in technology. Also, new nursing spaces — Douglas College has the privilege now of offering a nursing degree. Within a year we'll be seeing 525 young people training as nurses at Douglas College.

[1045]

Now, in talking about education, one of the things I'm most pleased about in New Westminster is that the very item that I was told by the school board was the top priority in our community, which is a third middle school, has been funded. We have opened the second middle school in Queensborough. We have funded a third middle school for the West End. Even better, an item that was so important to the community is a brand-new high school.

We're now in final negotiations with the ministry. The ministry has committed funding for a new high school, and this is going to be an incredible facility. It's in the heart of New Westminster. We're also on the verge of negotiating some infrastructure grants to match city funding so that we can have a facility that really represents the Premier's vision for our schools, and that's the schools are at the heart of a learning community.

What we will have is the New Westminster centre for community achievement, where the community uses the sports fields and the field houses; where the community has a fine arts and performing arts centre that is part of our high school; where the students, rather than being isolated in a K-to-12 education building, are actually part of a school and community joint vision for learning, for education and for sharing those facilities. I'm very enthusiastic about that, and I'm hoping that we'll be putting a shovel in the ground within a few months.

Education. The budget saw some major increases in our funding for education continuing to move forward, the kind of results and achievements that we have already been seeing.

Health care — that second great goal of healthy living and physical fitness. We're spending a record amount on health care. Money by itself doesn't buy you great health care, but we're leading in health care reforms in British Columbia. We're seen across the country as being leaders. One example is that shift from 53 health authorities and health boards to six, so we can manage this as a system. The regions can actu-

ally take a look at their network of care and maximize it and make sure it is cost-effective and serving people's needs.

We're seeing results from that. We're leaders in a number of ways. We have the best outcomes for cancer. We have the shortest median wait times for diagnostic procedures and specialist visits. We've just, in the budget, added a \$100 million funding commitment to the Michael Smith Foundation because we in B.C. have the top genome and cancer research in the country. So we are already leaders in a number of ways in health care. We're doing scores of thousands more surgeries and procedures than we were doing when we were elected.

One of the things that I'm most proud of is that in our throne speech and our budget, we are really putting a focus on prevention. I'm going to read two sentences from the throne speech that I think are a real watershed in terms of commitment to looking into the future, to prevention and to really thinking out of the box with health care. They are these two: "As your government continues to improve patient care, it will devote new energy and new resources to prevention. It will explore new ways to integrate alternative health care options into our mainstream health care system."

That is incredibly important because we have naturopaths, we have chiropractors, we have Chinese doctors and we have acupuncturists who at this point are somewhat marginalized in our mainstream health care system. There is duplication. Naturopaths can't refer someone to a specialist and can't access laboratories in hospitals. What we are committing to do is find ways to integrate those practitioners into the mainstream health care system.

To me, that's enormously important, as someone who has utilized naturopathic, chiropractic, acupuncture care, and so on, for myself and my family members for 25 years. I know how well that works. It's preventative; it keeps people healthy. It will be giving more choice to people in British Columbia. It will help with prevention and wellness, and it will save money. It's time we did this.

We have the privilege as MLAs to work for the things that are specifically being asked of us by our constituents, and we also have the privilege to work for things that we care passionately about. As you can hear, alternative medical choices is one of those things I feel passionately about. It's been my privilege to work with my colleagues in caucus and cabinet, and with the Premier, to bring forward the importance of having those choices and having that focus on prevention. So I was very pleased with this statement in the throne speech.

[1050]

In my community we have the Joe Boucher college of naturopathic medicine. This is a well-kept secret, which I think will become more and more known, and that is that we have the only facility that's accredited to train naturopaths in all of western Canada. Those students and those practitioners and the people who use their care can be very, very pleased that we've made

the strong statement of commitment to those alternative health care practitioners and the importance they have in our society.

Another budget speech highlight is that we will be bringing our investment into the health care system up \$3.8 billion by the end of this three-year plan, compared with when we were elected. That's a billion and a half dollars more for health care over the next three years.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Those funds are really making a difference in New Westminster. We have the privilege to be the centre of health services in the entire Fraser region, which goes from Boston Bar to Burnaby — an enormous area. New Westminster, because of its historic role as the capital of British Columbia, has the Royal Columbian Hospital, Queen's Park Care Centre and many long-term care facilities. We provide the primary trauma and tertiary care for the Fraser region. We have a high density of beds per population in New Westminster, and we serve people from all around the region.

I've been very pleased at the kinds of upgrades to the Royal Columbian Hospital that have happened over the last four years, including an absolutely leading-edge angiography interventional unit. What that means is equipment — the only equipment in Canada and at the very leading edge — that is able, while doing a diagnosis of a vascular condition, to actually do a procedure to correct it, using three-dimensional imaging of the vascular system and avoiding surgery for patients. This kind of state-of-the-art opportunity is now located at Royal Columbian Hospital.

There have been dozens of other upgrades to that hospital: to their renal units and their catheterization units, a new leading-edge CT scanner that will be installed over the coming months, the picture archiving communication system and much more. New Westminster has a very important role to play in our health care system and is meeting the needs of patients in that region — not perfectly, of course. We know that some of the waits in emergencies are unacceptably long. I know that the Fraser health authority is looking at their processes in emergency and doing some cross-departmental analysis to make sure we improve that. I count on them to get those results.

The third goal had to do with leading in the support of the disadvantaged and seniors. We have done some very important work in that regard. There are some funding announcements in the budget speech that will continue that good work.

I've held two women's forums in New Westminster over the past four years, and I heard from women about the positives — all of the extra jobs and how they benefit women and their families. I also heard about the need for additional resources for women and their children who are experiencing violence and about the need to really care for people who are disabled and can't go into the workforce in a regular way. So I'm very pleased at some of our initiatives in the recent budget and before.

One of those is the increase in disability benefits by \$70, the largest one-time increase ever. The funding for autism has increased tenfold since we were elected, and a number of my constituents have fought very hard for the recognition of the need for funding to those families to support their children's needs.

We have increased the funding for women's transition houses by 33 percent. That's to transition houses and the programs that support women and their children who have experienced violence. I know that there will be a benefit to Monarch Place in New Westminster through that funding.

We also have the privilege of being on the Premier's task force on homelessness, mental health and addictions. New Westminster has a number of people that need that kind of support. We've already seen funding for 20 new emergency-shelter beds, and I'm confident there will be more housing aimed at the disadvantaged who might otherwise be on the street.

[1055]

The major, major initiative in our budget speech that I'm very pleased with is the tax breaks for low-income and moderate-income people. If you earn — and I know you don't earn that, Mr. Speaker — \$16,000 or less, the provincial government will no longer be taking money out of your pocket to pay provincial income tax. Almost three-quarters of a million British Columbians will benefit from this income tax reduction or elimination of provincial income tax. About 215,000 British Columbians who have low or moderate income will also benefit from reductions in their MSP premiums or elimination of premiums.

As a mom of three kids and as a daughter of a mother who has retired, I'm very aware of the need for this kind of strong social safety net because of the number of women that end up caring for both seniors and children. I'm very pleased to see these initiatives. Really, it is the power of a strong economy and a balanced budget that enables us to afford these programs without layering the interest costs and the debt on our children — and on my children.

Leading in environmental stewardship, our budget adds \$150 million to environmental stewardship. I know that some of the environmental groups are holding workshops and are going around the province saying we are reducing protection of the environment. That is absolutely not true. We have expanded our park system. We have done land and resource management plans so that once endorsed or once the consultation with first nations is complete, we will have a record 13.5 percent of our entire land area in British Columbia in parks and protected areas.

It's not just parks. It's also wildlife and wildlife habitat. I was talking with a person on the Forest Practices Board the other day — actually, the chair of the board — and asking: "What do you see, out on the land base and in the forests, with our changes from the Forest Practices Code to the new regulation?" He said the key thing he's seeing is that, rather than companies having to manage two rules — never mind the results — and as the auditors went out in the forests.... If

those rules had been followed, then the auditors had nothing more to say, because the rules were followed even if the results hadn't been achieved.

Now it's about results. The board goes out and investigates whether the results are being achieved. They are having conversations with people in industry and out on the land base not about what the rules were but what the results are. It's a much more direct way to ensure that we get those results of environmental protection.

We've done a number of other things like accelerate the set-asides for wildlife habitat and old growth forests in our forest land base. We've improved the recycling regulation to make the producers responsible for bringing those products out of the waste stream. Here's one that many people don't know about, and my guess is that some of my colleagues may not have heard of this one: we've increased the fees for waste discharges by 48 percent over a two-and-a-half-year period.

That is a very good incentive for municipalities, regional districts and industry to put in the equipment that reduces pollution discharges and reduces impacts on the environment. It may be counterintuitive to say an increased tax is a good thing, but in fact, this is a shift. It's a shift of a tax away from good environmental things like hybrid cars, for which we've doubled the tax credit, and adding costs to waste discharges and pollution into the environment to motivate that to decrease.

Our government has done a number of good things to protect the environment that I'm very proud of. One of the ones that New Westminster cares about is Burns Bog. After years of playing around with Burns Bog... Our opponents had plans to do all sorts of things with it, including a theme park. That was a project I had the privilege of being very involved with in the first three years of this government, and we now have acquired and protected Burns Bog — for the future, forever.

[1100]

The last part of our structure for moving forward with our vision for the coming decade is the fifth promise: that we will lead in job creation. And we are. We're leading in economic growth. We have the highest level of job creation increase. This is a critical basis for meeting people's needs — that we have a thriving economy. It's been a very important part of the work that we've done.

In New Westminster we have literally hundreds of jobs in construction as we start to see that investment come in, and the development. Particularly, our downtown area has been stagnant over the years and just hasn't attracted investment, and that's starting to change.

Wages are increasing in B.C. The average wage is up about \$1.30. Small business bankruptcies are down. More people are moving to British Columbia, while for six years we had a net outflow. These are the kinds of changes that are wonderful for people in British Columbia, for people like me with children, who want to have their children make their homes and lives here in British Columbia.

Our plan is working, and it is bringing us back to leadership in Canada. We no longer have to go with our hand out to Alberta and Ontario and say: "Your taxpayers should help us pay for our spending here in British Columbia, because we've made promises we can't actually afford to fund." That's what was happening in the nineties. That's absolutely not acceptable. We've put that behind us, and our economy is back.

I'm pleased that my Ministry of Management Services is also making a contribution to that. With the collection of programs that this ministry oversees, we're saving taxpayers upwards of \$130 million each and every year. That's increasing to about \$180 million over the next couple of years. That \$180 million is money that can go into tax breaks for the low-income people, that can go into programs for disability benefits, education, health care and the environment. Those are very important initiatives.

One of the ones that I'm enjoying working on is bridging the digital divide and bringing high-speed Internet access and opportunities to communities all around the province. That is going very well, and I expect to be able to have some news about that before too long.

New Westminster is reaping the benefits of our economic turnaround and our investment in people who are less fortunate. New Westminster is going to see a tremendous opportunity through the 2010 Olympics.

I was very pleased to be at the Justice Institute just this week. Our provincial government has funded \$2.4 million for a new facility at the Justice Institute to house the critical incident simulation centre. That's a state-of-the-art technology by which the Justice Institute can train emergency responders — police, RCMP — and train the volunteers for the 2010 Olympics and many other needs.

New Westminster has got everything ahead of it in this coming decade. It's a thriving community. It is right in the heart of the GVRD area, served by five different SkyTrain stations, and just has a tremendous community spirit.

How did we manage, in less than four years, to bring the sense of opportunity back to the province, Mr. Speaker? We did that because we had a vision. We had a vision of a province where people had hope, prosperity and opportunity for the future. But we did more than set a vision. We created a strategy, and our *New Era* document was the blueprint.

We made over 200 specific promises, and we have kept well over 95 percent of those promises; they're either kept or underway. That's historic. I would like someone to point to a provincial government that has accomplished that much in terms of setting the pathway and actually completing all of the steps that were promised. We did not allow the tech meltdown to derail us. We did not allow 9/11 to derail us. We didn't allow SARS, the pine bark beetle, forest fires or the avian flu to derail us. We stayed the course.

[1105]

Four years has taught me a great deal about how government works and what's needed to succeed. It's impor-

tant to listen to feedback. It's important to correct mistakes. Over all, it's very important to have a clear plan and a determination to put that plan in place even when the going gets tough, and that's exactly what we have done with a lot of plain hard work by a lot of people — MLAs, ministers, executives, government staff, the public. Our competence in restructuring and refocusing how we serve the needs of the public.... The competence that has been brought to it is really showing results.

Before I close — and I see my time is pretty much up — I want to acknowledge the people in New Westminster who've worked with me on a number of volunteer activities that I've initiated or been part of: people who served on the Royal City volunteers group that creates the Festival of Volunteers; people who've worked with me to create a sixtieth anniversary of D-Day event in the armouries last June; people who helped me put on a crystal meth prevention forum for the community; and people who have helped me with the women's forums, neighbourhood forums and breakfast speakers events.

Our community is doing great. We have more jobs, new schools, more college spaces, state-of-the-art medical equipment, better highways, safer bridges, less traffic jams, a thriving downtown and healthy social supports. We have a decade of opportunity ahead for the people of New Westminster. Let's dream big. That's what we've been doing over the last four years. It's time to pursue those opportunities. Let's dream big for the coming decade.

**R. Nijjar:** I'm going to be very brief right now and continue at a later time. Let me start off by saying this as intro comments.

British Columbians have a choice in — what? — 80 days or so. They have a very easy comparison to make. There were ten years of an NDP government versus the four years of this current government, B.C. Liberal government. It's not that they can put theories out there and say that this is what they're going to do or that's what they're going to do. We know what they're going to do. We know what the results were. They were in power in the seventies. They were in power all throughout the nineties. The results speak for themselves.

For the first time in the history of British Columbia, more people left British Columbia to go to other provinces than to come here. It's known as the greatest place in the world in which to live, but people chose to leave this place to go to other provinces like Saskatchewan and Manitoba. That's what the NDP did.

For the first time in the history of British Columbia, we became a have-not province. This province is so resourceful. Natural resources, human resources, cultural resources, land, water, air — you name it; we have it. Have-not province under the NDP.

You know, often people say: "Politicians are saying this. Politicians are saying that. We don't know what the truth is." Okay, fine. Forget what we say in this chamber. Forget what we say in the media. Look at the fact. The fact is that people speak with their feet. They picked up their families, they picked up their children, and they left this province to go somewhere else. In

1997-98 over 7,000 people left British Columbia to go to another province. It is today that Canadians are moving back to British Columbia. Why? Because they're sensible, they're logical, they know where their future is, they know where their education is, and they know where the job opportunities are. It's here under a B.C. Liberal government.

Since I have just brief moments before I will adjourn, I will say this. The NDP government was removed from office with the largest margin in the history of British Columbia. No man led that way more, no man controlled that government more, no man made more decisions than the member that represented the seat I represent now: Glen Clark, who was Premier. Glen Clark said: "My right hand, the person who I confide in the most, whose opinions I trust the most, is Adrian Dix." Adrian Dix was his chief of staff. Adrian Dix now wants to run to become the MLA for Vancouver-Kingsway, in his boss's old seat.

[1110]

Let's look at the history of the NDP under Glen Clark and Adrian Dix's reign. Let's face it. Three people ran that government: Adrian Dix; Meggs, who is now at city hall in Vancouver; and Clark. Cabinet was irrelevant. Cabinet did not make decisions. Cabinet was told what the decisions were, and they came here and voted accordingly.

The member for Vancouver-Hastings was the Minister of Finance. At the Minister of Finance's budget speech, she had a budget prepared that was a balanced budget, because in the end, she knows balanced budgets are the right thing. In the end, she knows what this government is doing is the right thing. What happened? The Premier of that day, Glen Clark, forced her to change her budget, to come in here and to read that budget out, regardless of whether she knew it was the right thing to do or whether she believed in it. Who led that way? Who led the way in reshaping that budget? Who led the way in fudge-iting that budget, hiding things? It was the one that he got advice from the most, Adrian Dix.

When that casino licence issue took place and Glen Clark was going to court, who was the gentleman that forged a document, typed out a document, backdated it four months and then for three months insisted it was a legitimate document? Who was that person? That was Adrian Dix — the person who, in the highest office in this province, took the words of the Premier, created those words, pretended those words were said four months earlier, created a document, created all the paperwork to make it seem like it was actual and real and then insisted for three or four months that it was the truth. Only when he was in proceedings did he admit that it wasn't. Now that person wants to represent Vancouver-Kingsway, and that person wants to stand here in this House after leading the worst government in the history of British Columbia.

I don't think British Columbians should be so fooled, but I can tell you that British Columbians also sometimes have some of the shortest memories in Canada. The fact that we have this current government turning around the economy at the pace that we did is

an example not only across Canada but around the world, where people are looking at what we're doing economically in health care and education and social services and using it as an example. Yet the former government, even with — what? — 14 different people from their former government running for office this time, is on the verge of winning many, many seats, if you look at the poll today. What does that say about what we remember about the 1990s?

The NDP will tell you that they represent the ordinary man, the ordinary worker. The ordinary worker had take-home pay decrease by \$1,700 during the 1990s — the only jurisdiction in North America where take-home pay went down. Is that for ordinary workers?

Today the ordinary worker is working more than they have in 25 years. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 25 years. That's not CEOs working. That's not MLAs working. That's not deputy ministers working. That's working people, working in their communities and in the towns throughout British Columbia at the highest rate since 1981. Or we can go back to the NDP, where there are countless jobs lost, people moving and the forestry and mining industry cut in half.

I have pages and pages of the dismantling of British Columbia that the NDP did during their ten years and how we had to fix that. I will continue that in due course.

For now, seeing that there are no more speakers, I move adjournment of debate.

R. Nijjar moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

**Hon. S. Hagen:** I call Committee of Supply.

[1115]

### Supplementary Estimates

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: supplementary estimates (No. 10) 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 11:18 a.m.

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

On vote 17(S-2): ministry operations, \$26,000,000.

**Hon. M. Coell:** I'm pleased to be here today and to answer questions on these estimates. The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services is asking for a transfer of \$26 million from the consolidated revenue fund. These transfers are progress claims that the province is obligated to pay to honour our commitments under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program. The expenditure, I believe, is consistent with our commitment to safe, reliable drinking water and improved wastewater systems and our longstanding programs in the province and Canada.

Under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program, the province, the federal government and local government each provide one-third of the cost of projects to improve drinking water, wastewater and other infrastructure programs from time to time. The municipalities have requested these from the province now, and I'll give you some of the reasons why. Several of the large municipal sewer and water infrastructure projects have already been completed. Paying these transfers in 2004-05 will allow local government sewer and water infrastructure projects to proceed on a timely basis.

[1120]

I can give you some examples, Mr. Chair, of the projects that may be funded depending on their progress to the end of this month. Those would be the greater Vancouver water district, the Seymour water treatment plant, the city of Burnaby-North Burnaby combined sewer separation program, the Central Kootenay regional district Arrow Creek water treatment plant, the city of Dawson Creek water quality assurance plan and the Fraser Valley regional district Hope and District Recreation Centre. Those are the types of projects.

As the members would know, the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program has been going for many years — a tremendously successful program since the eighties. We have an opportunity of paying down some of those infrastructure grants that were agreed to some two and three years ago.

I look forward to answering any questions, Mr. Chair.

**J. Kwan:** The supplementary estimates that we're debating, as the minister identifies, to provide \$26 million to the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services for infrastructure programs for local governments.... All of these dollars are to be allocated under that initiative, the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program. That's what I heard the minister say in his opening remarks. I assume that's correct.

Could the minister please clarify the broader infrastructure fund for me, though? For example, the green infrastructure fund, the strategic highway infrastructure program and infrastructure Canada program — are those programs administered under the Canada infrastructure program?

**Hon. M. Coell:** No, they're not. It's separate.

**J. Kwan:** So those are separate initiatives. Where do they fall under, within the ministry — those other initiatives? Is it this ministry — just for clarification?

**Hon. M. Coell:** The transportation ones that the member required some information on would come under the Ministry of Transportation, and the strategic program would depend on the project. I don't believe we have any of those projects that are being paid off.

**J. Kwan:** So the green infrastructure fund is not part of this ministry's programming?

**Hon. M. Coell:** Actually, the green infrastructure fund is run through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

**J. Kwan:** The total contribution from the federal government for this initiative, the minister said, is one-third, one-third and one-third. What is the actual amount for each of the partners?

**Hon. M. Coell:** This is a five-year program that's just coming to an end now. It was \$266 million from each level of government. That's the federal, provincial and local.

**J. Kwan:** All of it is divided by one-third. Is the \$266 million the total cost of the program so that then, if you divide it by three, that gives you the contributions from each of the levels of government? Or is it \$266 million from each level of the government?

**Hon. M. Coell:** Over the five years it was \$266 million from each level of government.

**J. Kwan:** With the additional \$26 million that we're debating, is that added to the \$266 million, or is it...? The provincial contribution was \$240 million. Therefore, adding the \$26 million makes it \$266 million?

**Hon. M. Coell:** The provincial contribution remains the same at \$266 million. What we're doing is paying off some of the ones this year that we would probably have had to pay off in the next few months of next year's budget.

[1125]

**J. Kwan:** So it's really an accounting question here that we're dealing with as opposed to another \$26 million being added to the infrastructure program.

**Hon. M. Coell:** I think you could say that. It's definitely paying off funds in this year's budget — because we have a surplus — that we would have had to pay off early in next year's budget.

**J. Kwan:** The minister named some projects that this fund is going towards. I wonder if the minister could advise this House: does he have a full list of the

projects which this funding is going towards? Have all the announcements been made for this funding, or are there still some announcements expected at a later time?

**Hon. M. Coell:** Actually, all of the projects that I mentioned, like the greater Vancouver water district, the Seymour water treatment plant.... That's an announcement that was made a number of years ago. They have gone through the project development, building the project, and then they're asking the federal and provincial government for their part of the funds to complete the project.

**J. Kwan:** Are there outstanding projects that are not yet announced?

**Hon. M. Coell:** As this is the winding down of this particular one, we are negotiating with the federal government for a new infrastructure program. We have the water quality program that I did announce earlier this year. Under this particular program, our commitment was for the \$266 million for those programs to be completed, and most of them are in process or are nearing completion.

**J. Kwan:** Is the minister saying, for this initiative and the dollars associated with it, that it's \$266 million from each level of government for the five-year program, that all of those projects for this program have been announced and that there are no more new programs or projects to be announced at a later time?

**Hon. M. Coell:** That's correct. All of the Canada-British Columbia-local government ones have been announced and are all in.... Many have been completed and paid. All three levels of government have paid for them. With this instance, there are some that will probably finish up between now and March and some that will finish up next year, but having all been announced and funded, funding should be complete this next year.

**J. Kwan:** Are all of the dollars from each level of government expended? That's a total of \$788 million from three levels of government. Are they all expended through this five-year initiative? In other words, there are no more dollars left unspent from each of the levels of government for this initiative.

**Hon. M. Coell:** All dollars have been allocated to projects. There is occasion.... The member may remember that sometimes projects don't go ahead for some reason. They would have a time lapse — I think it is three years — and if they hadn't gone ahead, then that money would be unspent. Generally, I would say 95 percent of projects over the last 15 years have gone ahead. There have been some that for some reason.... Usually the local government decides not to move ahead with the project. Then those funds could be reallocated.

**J. Kwan:** Could the minister say, out of this B.C.-Canada infrastructure program, what percentage of the programs have gone into what could be deemed to be green initiatives?

**Hon. M. Coell:** The approximate number is 75 per cent.

**J. Kwan:** That deals with the range of programs like water and sewer? Or could the minister give us some examples or, perhaps, highlights of what could be deemed to be a green initiative and what project the minister considers to be a green initiative?

**Hon. M. Coell:** They would fall into three categories. There would be water projects, sewer projects and then energy-efficient buildings, either upgrades or new buildings.

[1130]

**J. Kwan:** Based on the information I have, wastewater treatment, for example, would be deemed to be a green initiative. Water purification initiatives would be deemed to be a green initiative. Water demand management would be deemed to be a green initiative, and improving building efficiency — energy efficiency-type investments — would be deemed to be green initiatives.

Is there anything else that I'm missing under those categories?

**Hon. M. Coell:** No, I believe that's a complete list.

**J. Kwan:** What percentage of this funding has gone to transportation-type initiatives, if any? I would include in that question things like bikeways and those kinds of initiatives. Have any of the dollars from this project or from this program gone into transportation-related initiatives?

**Hon. M. Coell:** Those projects would probably come under the non-green part of the infrastructure program, which this ministry doesn't administer. There may have been a few, but they would be a very, very small percentage.

**J. Kwan:** And the rest of the 25 percent? The minister says that 75 percent of those went into these types of green initiatives. The other 25 percent went where?

**Hon. M. Coell:** As we administer the green portion, as the member has mentioned, the non-green portion — approximately 25 percent — would be community facilities, recreation facilities. There would be some roads, some bicycle paths. But they're actually administered in the second part of Small Business Development.

**J. Kwan:** What was formerly known as — and, I think, is still known as — what we call the soft infrastructure programs, which include community initia-

tives like swimming pools and arenas and theatres and whatever communities identify as their priority.... These soft infrastructure-type programs are administered under the Small Business and Economic Development ministry, but they come from the same pot of money of the Canada infrastructure program.

**Hon. M. Coell:** That's correct. It is in the same agreement with the federal government.

**J. Kwan:** The \$26 million with the supplemental estimates. I would assume that some of that, because it goes to the total pot of the \$266 million.... Who actually administers all of that funding? Is it divided up such that 75 percent of the funding is administered through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, and the other 25 percent is administered through the Small Business and Economic Development ministry? Is that how that is done, because of the way in which the programs are separated out in the delivery of the projects?

**Hon. M. Coell:** The entire budget is with my ministry, but Small Business and Economic Development administers the other portion of that which the member has mentioned.

**J. Kwan:** So you're on the hook, though, because the fund actually comes out of your ministry even though another minister gets to decide and ultimately administer that other 25 percent. The funding is not split — right? — so the minister ultimately then is on the hook on this.

I will ask the minister this question: when will I get the opportunity, then, to canvass the questions around the other 25 percent of the funding in terms of the projects that have gone to that funding stream? When will I get a chance to canvass those questions, given that the dollars administered for this program are under this ministry?

[1135]

**Hon. M. Coell:** As I mentioned, these are mostly tied to the green infrastructure fund that we administer. Those projects are coming forward as being near completion or completed, so we were paying those funds down. Most of them are water and sewer, which are part of our 75 percent of the fund that we administer — although the member is correct. The agreement is with this ministry for the infrastructure program. It has been, I think, for a number of years, and with Municipal Affairs before that.

**J. Kwan:** I understand that. The issue of course is this. All of that funding falls under this ministry. The \$26 million that we are talking about goes towards that overall fund of \$266 million. Even though this minister only administers 75 percent of the projects under this program — the other 25 percent is in another ministry — this minister is ultimately responsible for all of the

funds in his expenditure. That's what it reads in the budget, and that's what it reads in the agreement.

Now, I'm fine if there is an opportunity in the supplemental estimates process for me to canvass some questions around the other 25 percent with the Minister of Economic Development. I'm fine with that, but I'm just asking the question to the minister: will I get the opportunity to do that? If not, then I just have to ask the questions to this minister at this time to get the answers. Ultimately, he is responsible for the fund, and that's what I'm interested in. At the end of the day, the opposition member, in following the dollars and trying to hold the government to account on that front, is to follow the dollars — where the dollars lie — and ask questions to the minister responsible for the dollars.

**Hon. M. Coell:** I will be happy to answer any questions I can. With the \$266 million provincial funding, that is fully allocated, and most of it has been spent over the last five years. The \$26 million is.... Instead of waiting till next year to pay these off, we'll pay them off in this year. Most of that five-year program has been announced two, three or four years ago. The moneys are allocated — all \$266 million. What we're doing is saying that we had an extra \$26 million this year and that we'll pay off this year part of the \$266 million. But I think all \$266 million have been announced, allocated, and the projects are underway and in most cases are completed.

**J. Kwan:** I take it from the minister's answer that I should be asking this minister about the other 25 percent of the funds at this time. I actually don't see another opportunity to ask the other minister about the 25 percent in terms of that funding. I fully understand that these dollars are completing the cycle of the \$266 million under the Canada infrastructure program. I fully understand that, but because this \$26 million is to complete that \$266 million investment, this would be the opportune time to ask these questions for the minister who holds the purse strings on this program.

These are not tricky questions. I'm just trying to figure out what's been done and where things are at as we now come to a full completion, if you will, of this program and, therefore, tie off the loose ends of the \$266 million investment from the provincial government on this. So on the 25 percent of the dollars that has been put towards community projects.... For lack of a better word, I think I'm just going to call them community projects for the moment unless there is another official term that the government or the minister uses.

[1140]

Could the minister please advise...? The 25 percent of the initiatives — how does the government decide what projects are picked for these initiatives? What is the process? Is that the same as all of the other projects under the overall Canada infrastructure program? Do local governments actually table their projects, and then they're actually at the decision-making table around this 25 percent of the funds?

**Hon. M. Coell:** I don't think the process has changed much over the last 15 years. The local governments apply. Then it comes to a joint management committee of bureaucrats in the federal and provincial governments. We have had UBCM as an adviser but not a voting member on that committee. Then it would come forward through a rating process. I think that's been pretty standard for these types of programs, and one that's been used for the five years of this program.

**J. Kwan:** How many projects were completed, or how many projects got approval, under this 25 percent? If the minister doesn't have that information, that's okay too. Perhaps I could get a list from the minister in terms of what projects got approved and how much and where, for both actually — the 25 percent for the soft infrastructure and the other 75 percent for the hard infrastructure, I guess.

**Hon. M. Coell:** What I can do — and I'm not sure whether it's on our website or not — is give you a list. There are approximately 309 projects that have been applied for and had funds allocated to them. I can get that list in its entirety, so then you'll have the breakdown of both green and non-green.

**J. Kwan:** I would appreciate that. We did go into the website to try and find some of this stuff. We found some old press announcements, but I don't think that's a complete list in terms of what's there. I would appreciate that. If we could actually get that information on the basis of the breakdown of where it is so that we know, on a regional basis, how that looks and what it looks like, I would appreciate that — along with the dollar amounts associated with it.

I just want to canvass a few more questions around this. The distribution of the funds in terms of the process — how does it work now? Let's say a project was identified and had been approved through all the different steps. In terms of the funds being distributed to the municipality, is it phased in, in terms of phase 1 and phase 2, so therefore the funds are received by the municipalities really by instalment? Is that how it works? Or does the local government get all of the dollars for the project right off the top?

Perhaps the minister can walk me through that process. I wonder whether or not that differs from previous practice.

**Hon. M. Coell:** If it's a small project, we would just pay on completion. The local government would carry the costs and then bill us for the completed project. For some of the larger projects like the Vancouver water system projects, we would have milestones where there would be funds allocated. In some respects, this \$26 million may be only paying off the last milestone. That money may have already been spent on projects in a number of different opportunities.

**J. Kwan:** I'm just trying to figure out.... In the overall scheme of things, you have \$266 million under the

Canada infrastructure program — right? Let's say — I'm just going to make one up — a project was approved for Vancouver that required \$20 million. The initiative was \$20 million. In that case, is it such that Vancouver would receive the \$20 million upfront for the approved project? Or is it the case that it's broken down into perhaps phase 1 and phase 2, and so then the city of Vancouver would receive \$10 million in its phase 1 completion and then in the phase 2 completion? How does that work? Actually, that makes a difference in the outcome — when the dollars are actually given to the municipalities. There are some ramifications with respect to that.

**Hon. M. Coell:** Actually, I can give the member a real, live one. Kamloops had a major water treatment facility, about \$25 million, and that had a number of milestones. We have yet to pay them the last milestone, and that project is actually up and running now. That would be an example.

[1145]

**J. Kwan:** This last \$26 million will then complete the payment to Kamloops for that project. In other words, the local governments actually have to front the cost first and then receive the payment afterwards?

**Hon. M. Coell:** Yes, that's correct. That's the way it's been, I think, since the early eighties.

**J. Kwan:** The last question relates to the list of information — the projects that have been approved, the location and so on. I wonder if the minister can also attach when the project was approved as well. In the cases where they're completed, you know, then they're completed. If we could identify those as well, I would appreciate that.

Sorry, Mr. Chair. I have one last, last question. I do note, though, in this year's budget that the municipal infrastructure dollars have actually gone down significantly. The budget dollars were, I think, \$90-something-million for '04-05. Then it goes down to \$5 million for the following year and then to zero, zero the following.

In that instance the minister actually mentioned that the Canada infrastructure program is coming to a completion under these five years and that there is another set of negotiations going on. Is it the case that...? Well, maybe the minister can just quickly give us some information about the negotiations that are going on right now.

**Hon. M. Coell:** We have been in negotiations, and I think other provinces are, with the federal government on what we're calling the municipal-rural infrastructure program. Hopefully, something will materialize.

I don't think there's been a year gone by that there hasn't been a federal-provincial infrastructure program in many years. I think with this year, the federal government announced their fuel tax rebate to local government. We're still in negotiation with them on how

that will work, and that will be basically a flow-through of federal funds through the province directly to local governments, be it regional or municipal, for infrastructure-type programs.

We haven't had the ability to conclude those agreements with the federal government on either one of those programs, but my hope is that they will both be put in place this year and would be long-term programs again — five years or ten years.

**J. Kwan:** Then the \$90-something-million in this year's budget for municipal infrastructure programs has nothing to do with the Canada infrastructure program? The \$90-something-million is just completely provincial dollars and has nothing to do with the federal infrastructure initiatives?

**Hon. M. Coell:** Through the Chair to the member: which vote is she commenting on and which part of the budget?

**J. Kwan:** I just want to canvass quickly, in this sense. The \$266 million and the \$26 million to complete the \$266 million on the provincial contributions on the Canada infrastructure program bring it to a full completion. There are no more federal dollars coming in for the infrastructure program.

Where I'm confused is this. I see in the budget for '05-06 that there is \$ 90-something- million — I forget the exact figure; I can look it up — for municipal infrastructure initiatives. On that question, the \$90-something-million has nothing to do with the Canada infrastructure programs? That's completely separate and apart. That's just provincial dollars, so that there is.... It is completely distinct from the infrastructure programs that we're talking about.

**Hon. M. Coell:** I think it is fair to say that this winds down this five-year project with having allocated and completion of the \$266 million. I'm hoping that in the next few years, we do get another federal program that will match our provincial funding and local government funding. But we haven't concluded that negotiation as yet.

**J. Kwan:** Who is the lead negotiator on this from the provincial government side, and who is the provincial government negotiating with? Is it the same people that the province negotiated with on this Canada infrastructure program?

**Hon. M. Coell:** John Godfrey is the lead federal infrastructure minister, and he's the one we would be dealing with.

[1150]

**J. Kwan:** Who is the lead for the province? I understand that it is the minister from the two respective governments, but underneath that, usually there's a staff person who takes the lead in those negotiations. Who are the staff people I'm curious about?

**Hon. M. Coell:** My assistant deputy, Dale Wall, is the lead from our ministry.

Vote 17(S-2) approved.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:  
MINISTRY OF SMALL BUSINESS AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

On vote 34(S-2): ministry operations, \$108,900,000.

**Hon. J. Les:** A brief word of explanation. The \$108.9 million is broken down as follows: \$66 million to be allocated to a community development initiative; \$2.9 million to fund the provincial commitment towards the western economic partnership agreement; a \$15 million commitment to the LegaciesNow Society for sports initiatives and funding; and a \$25 million endowment to be lodged with the Vancouver Foundation.

I'm happy to answer any questions that the member might have.

**J. Kwan:** My apologies. I was mistaken in understanding that the questions that I canvassed to the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services were around the \$26 million. I didn't realize we were actually also going to pass the supplementary vote for the Minister of Small Business and Economic Development on the \$66 million in terms of supplemental spending. I have questions on that, Mr. Chair, so I would seek your advice as to how we should proceed, because I thought we were only doing the Ministry of

Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and that we weren't canvassing questions with the Minister of Small Business and Economic Development.

I understand that we now proceed with the minister reporting out on resolution of the \$26 million spending for the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. Then after the lunch break, I guess we'll come back and canvass questions on the \$66 million under the Ministry of Small Business and Economic Development. I think that's the procedure that we'll now follow.

**Hon. J. Les:** I would move that the committee report progress and resolution.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 11:55 a.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

The committee, having reported resolution and progress, was granted leave to sit again.

Hon. S. Hagen moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 11:56 a.m.