



6th Session, 37th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF
DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 2, 2005
Afternoon Sitting
Volume 27, Number 23

THE HONOURABLE CLAUDE RICHMOND, SPEAKER

ISSN 0709-1281

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
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6TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2005

The House met at 2:04 p.m.

Prayers.

[1405]

Introductions by Members

H. Bloy: Mr. Speaker, it is a special honour for me today to introduce two constituents from my riding. One is a young gentleman, Greg von Euw, who is 13 years old, a local streamkeeper and local hero. His mother, Nancy, is joining him in the House today. Would the House please make them welcome.

B. Kerr: I have two introductions to make today. I have Bill Whitfield, a new constituent in my riding who has moved to the beautiful city of Langford, and his mother, Joyce Whitfield, who is visiting from Lanchester, Durham, England. I'd ask the House to please make them both feel very welcome.

Hon. W. McMahon: It's not often that I get to introduce somebody from my riding, Columbia River-Revelstoke. Joining us in the House today are Chief Paul Sam from the Shuswap band in Invermere, Grant Costello from Invermere and Matthew Ney from Kimberley. Would the House please make them welcome.

Hon. P. Wong: It is my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today a group of 87 grade 11 students from Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School in my riding, accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Burnell, Mr. Ferguson, Ms. Dennis and Mr. Chapman. Sir Charles Tupper School is a community of 1,200 students. About half the students can speak different languages in addition to English in their home. Would the House please join me in giving them a very warm welcome.

Hon. I. Chong: Today a number of visitors are in the gallery, and while I'm not sure where they're all seated, I understand they certainly are in a position to watch us here as we deliberate and have question period. I would like the House to join me in welcoming Don Mclean and friend Ian Smillie, who is a member of the Order of Canada for his work in international development and a recent author of *Charity of Nations*.

I would also like the House to welcome Torey Klein, who is my constituency assistant, as well as some very good friends of mine, Dr. Sam Macey and his wife, Mrs. June Macey. Would the House please make them all very welcome.

Hon. P. Bell: I have three introductions today. Joining us in the House — although they no longer live in my riding; they are now in the riding of the member for Victoria-Beacon Hill — are my two daughters, Donna and Diana Bell, and their friend Josh Comer.

B. Kerr: Well, this isn't an introduction, but today we had a beautiful set of roses and a balloon sent to the east annex to the member for Surrey-Tynehead. Before the rumour mill really starts, we confirmed that they are indeed from his wife on the occasion of his birthday. I would ask the House to please give a happy birthday to the member for Surrey-Tynehead.

[1410]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, in the House today I am pleased to welcome and introduce 14 teachers from across British Columbia who are participating in the second annual B.C. Teachers Institute on Parliamentary Democracy. They will be with us for the remainder of this week expanding their knowledge of both our parliamentary and political systems. They are joined by five of their peers, who are acting as facilitators, and three observers from Ontario and Saskatchewan. I trust many of you will have the opportunity to meet with them this evening in the Ned de Beck Lounge. Would the House please make them very welcome.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

B.C. YOUTH PARLIAMENT

V. Anderson: For most of the ten years that I have been sitting in this Legislature, on December 27 I have been here to celebrate with the members of the British Columbia Youth Parliament, along with other members of the Legislature. In particular, I mention the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development, who was a premier in Youth Parliament in her earlier days.

I bring greetings, Mr. Speaker, because this is a very special group of young people from across our province that meet each year during the legislative session. Also, I have had the privilege for a number of years to be the lieutenant-governor not only in the session in Victoria but in the Vancouver region, joining with the young people there during the year's activities.

It has been a great honour to have been associated with these dedicated youth, who take their holiday time each December to meet in Youth Parliament to debate and pass legislation on issues of concern to them in British Columbia. They also make plans for their projects to be service volunteers throughout B.C. during the year, serving people of all ages but particularly as youth serving youth.

A major program that they have undertaken for many years is Camp Phoenix, a summer camp planned by and staffed by the youth themselves. Each year at Camp Phoenix they give the opportunity for other young people and children who would not normally be able to get to camp in the summer to have this very important experience. The members of Youth Parliament undertake to raise the dollars needed to fund this important project. They do a variety of fundraising initiatives across the province, particularly the Sweet Dreams Dessert and Auction evening, which they hold every year.

This year it is on Friday, June 10, in Richmond, British Columbia. At their annual fundraising event, they gather with their families and friends and particularly with many of the alumni of Youth Parliament. They return to meet some of the lifelong friends they made because of Youth Parliament, some of them even becoming their lifelong partners.

B.C. WINTER GAMES IN PORT ALBERNI

G. Trumper: Today it is appropriate that I speak about the Winter Games, as it is the Sport B.C. awards today in Vancouver.

In 2004, Port Alberni was the host of the B.C. Winter Games — the fourth B.C. Games that the Alberni Valley has hosted. Last Thursday was the final event of the games, the awarding of the legacy funds. The board, under the great leadership of Dewayne Parfitt, brought to the table.... The legacy was \$135,350, and \$34,000 was given to community groups such as the Western Vancouver Island Heritage Society, the Port Alberni Association for Children with Developmental Disabilities and the Community Arts Council. And \$101,000 went to the Sports Legacy Fund.

Funding was given to 14 sports groups and to the Kidsport foundation, which will enable young people with limited means to participate in the sport of their choice. The B.C. Games are an integral part of B.C. society, encouraging people of all ages and abilities to participate.

One day some of these young people who participated in the games will be recipients at the B.C. sport awards, and I would just like to mention two from the B.C. high school wrestling championships that just took place recently. Pat McEvay and Bob Brown both won their weight classes. The B.C. Games Society and the communities that participate are one of the greatest assets in British Columbia.

[1415]

RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL

R. Stewart: Our government recognizes that mental illness is a serious problem. Left untreated, this illness can lead to severe social problems including homelessness and drug addiction.

In February, I joined the Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services for a tour of Riverview Hospital in Coquitlam. That facility, located in my riding of Coquitlam-Maillardville, has been serving British Columbians with mental illness for almost a hundred years. During this visit the minister of state and I were able to witness firsthand the outstanding service provided by the 1,800 doctors, nurses, staff and volunteers to patients and their families right across British Columbia.

However, we also saw, firsthand, facilities that were built as long as 80 years ago, when the model of care in mental health was very different. Some of these buildings must be replaced with more modern facilities

that more appropriately respond to the needs of patients, their families and the community.

We also saw Connolly Lodge. When our government opened that facility three years ago, it was the first new building constructed at Riverview in 50 years. Connolly Lodge has served as a model for similar new mental health facilities in Prince George, Saanich and Kamloops, allowing patients to transition closer to their communities.

During the nineties a process was undertaken to close Riverview Hospital and dispose of the facility. During that time many patients were moved out of the institution. In 1999 the *Vancouver Sun* had this to say about the government's handling of that plan:

"Facilities like Riverview, which once housed 5,000 patients, were emptied. The hospital now has about 800 beds, and the 4,200 or so other people who would have been there under 24-hour care are now in the community, dependent on services that turn on the answering machine after 5 p.m. These offices are staffed by case-workers responsible for 60 to 80 clients each — five times what their caseload should be."

What happened to those patients who were discharged from Riverview Hospital during the nineties? Sadly, many of these former patients are now homeless and living on the streets in communities across the province. Many of these now suffer from addictions in addition to their mental illness. We cannot allow a repeat of what happened to Riverview's patients in the nineties.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Oral Questions

FUNDING FOR LONG-TERM CARE BEDS IN VICTORIA

J. Kwan: Everyone knows that the government broke its long-term care promise. We've seen the evidence of that in Surrey. We've seen it in Penticton, and we're now seeing it right here in Victoria. Not only has this government broken its promise to build 5,000 new long-term care beds, it's actually cut 242 beds from the capital regional district. That's a net reduction of beds.

We know that officials in the capital region have been sounding the alarm for some time. CRD health officials are urgently requesting that the government commit the funding for 300 new long-term care beds for the region immediately. Will the minister drop the rhetoric, stop blaming others and immediately commit to funding the 300 beds?

Hon. S. Bond: We have a plan in place in British Columbia to meet the needs of seniors in this province. In fact, the Vancouver Island health authority is working on an aggressive plan.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we had extra work to do. While the members opposite want to continue to groan regularly in this House, we're not going to forget to remind them of the dismal...

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: ...record they had, of the ten years that they were in Victoria.

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

J. Kwan: The minister likes to claim that they've been doing planning all along. The only planning that they have done is to actually cut capital funding. What is the minister waiting for?

According to Jeremy Tate of the capital regional district, the property to build 300 long-term care beds is ready for development now. What's needed is the cash and the political will. Clearly, when the heat was turned up in Surrey, the minister found the political will.

To the minister again: her idea of leadership on long-term care beds is to fire CEOs — to shoot the messenger. Will she do the right thing, listen to the advice of professionals and fund the beds now?

[1420]

Hon. S. Bond: Actually, this government brought together a group of experts from around the world to look at a plan that addressed the needs of seniors. In fact, for decades in this province, seniors were placed in beds where they actually didn't get the level of care they required. We have said that it is going to take us longer because the condition in which we found the beds was far worse than we anticipated. We will make our commitment by the year 2008.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has a further supplementary.

J. Kwan: The plans are done. What the government has done is shelve their plans. There is no funding in this year's budget to actually support her commitment, her supposed commitment for 5,000 new beds for 2008. I don't think the minister really understands what's at stake here.

Interjections.

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

J. Kwan: I don't think a new toll-free line for seniors and advice to eat fruits and vegetables is the answer that seniors and their families are looking for.

Does the minister really think spinach and a help desk could actually replace long-term care beds? Does the minister really think that? Will the minister finally take a leadership role and commit funding today so that these 300 badly needed beds can be built? A simple answer — yes or no.

Hon. S. Bond: First of all, we do recognize and have recognized the need for increased funding. In fact, Vancouver Island health authority's funding was \$945 million in 2001-02, and for the fiscal year 2004-05 it has risen to \$1.2 billion.

It is time for the members opposite to take some responsibility. Let me read a quote from a previous....

Interjection.

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

Hon. S. Bond: Let's listen to an article. Let me read from an article in the *Vancouver Province* in April of 1996. Listen. "In November the capital regional district board asked the government to start planning for 300 new long-term care beds over the next two years. The then Health minister replied...."

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. S. Bond: "The then Health minister, Paul Ramsey, replied that more beds were not a Health ministry priority."

Interjections.

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

ACCESS TO CROWN LAND FOR RANCHING INDUSTRY

J. Brar: The Premier claims that he has only broken six promises, but every day another one seems to pop up. The *New Era* document promised to provide greater access to Crown land to protect jobs in the ranching industry. On February 24 the B.C. Cattlemen's Association sent a report on the state of that industry to the cabinet. Their conclusion was that the industry has lost access to Crown land, and the industry is in jeopardy because of a government solely preoccupied with the needs of large timber companies.

Interjections.

J. Brar: There is a question coming.

The cattle industry in this province just took another blow from the United States today, and the industry can't even get its own government on side. Will the Minister of Sustainable Resource Management admit that four years of Liberal government have failed B.C. ranchers and that this is yet another broken promise?

Hon. G. Abbott: This is a historic day. It's the first day the NDP has ever expressed an interest in cattle ranching in this province.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[1425]

Hon. G. Abbott: I know it only took 120 years. But it's a very good question, and there is an answer to that question. We have had a great relationship with the cattlemen in British Columbia. We have worked very hard, and the Minister of Agriculture has worked very hard, through some very difficult situations, particularly the BSE crisis. I know we both work very hard to ensure that the cattlemen have a bright future here in British Columbia. Among the ways — and I will speed to a conclusion here — we're going to get there is working with them to ensure that they have the access to Crown land that they need.

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

J. Brar: Every day the answer we get is shifting blame.

Interjections.

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

J. Brar: Every day what we hear is shifting blame, finding scapegoats. Those are the answers we get from this government. This government only has itself to blame for its failures and broken promises. The Cattlemen's Association recognizes this, and so should the minister. Downsized range staff, closed the range branch and cancelled the grazing enhancement fund — that's what this government has done.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. member, time for the question, please.

J. Brar: The facts are simple. The minister knows it. Why won't he admit that the government has failed the industry and broken yet another new-era promise?

Hon. G. Abbott: I certainly have a lot of respect for the opposition and their expertise with broken promises. We had a decade, I think, of broken promises under the NDP between '91 and 2001. So there is some acknowledged expertise there.

The fact of the matter is that we know full well that the cattlemen need access to Crown grazing leases. We know that full well, and we're working through some of these issues. But one of the new realities, which I know the NDP has difficulty understanding, is that we also need to work with first nations who have an interest in these matters as well. We are trying to ensure that we meet the test for consultation and accommodation where appropriate with first nations. We are working through those. But believe me, there is more sympathy on this side of the House for cattlemen than was ever exhibited over the last 50 years by that government.

J. MacPhail: This is a document that was sent last week from the Cattlemen's Association to the cabinet. I heard the Finance minister say: "Oh well, don't worry. They're all going to vote for us." That's the arrogance of this government expressed just by the Finance minister.

The government was so proud of the new Forest and Range Practices Act, a code that the Minister of Forests has failed to implement and has just delayed for yet another year. According to the cattlemen, his failure is putting ranching at risk.

Here's the real story of what's going on. As a result of the Liberal restructuring, Crown range and land interests for the first time are split between five government agencies. The result, according to the cattlemen, is that the industry now under this government is "falling through the cracks."

Again to the minister: stop the arrogance. The Cattlemen's Association report is clear. Your government received it last week. The minister has failed to protect the industry's interest. Of the six promises the Premier admits to breaking, where does this report fall amongst them?

Hon. G. Abbott: There is no industry that is more important to the government of British Columbia than the cattle industry in this great province. We know full well, unlike the former NDP government, the importance of agriculture to this province. Their entire agricultural policy was embodied in a place that we call Six Mile Ranch, which was all about the NDP cabinet jumping in and interfering with agricultural land reserve decisions. That was the penultimate point for them in agricultural policy.

[1430]

We're going to work with the cattle industry to ensure that they have the access they need to Crown lands. For the opposition leader to confuse this with all of the challenges we have around mountain pine beetle and other demands on Crown land...

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. G. Abbott: ...is frankly disingenuous.

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

J. MacPhail: Well, the B.C. Liberal government has cut the Forest Service so deeply that they now can't handle anything but chaos on land use.

Here's what the B.C. Cattlemen's Association report said:

"We have a Forest and Range Practices Act that leaves us in the unacceptable position of being subservient to timber interests."

It goes on to say:

"Ranchers have become poor second cousins in a ministry that has no mandate to advance the ranching industry. On aboriginal affairs, an active BCCA committee that worked with several current cabinet ministers when they were in opposition has been incapacitated by government's decision to abandon all consultation process."

Can the Minister of Sustainable Resource Management actually answer and explain why the forestry portfolio has willfully allowed the ranching industry to fall through the cracks and why his government has abandoned ranching interests in this province?

Hon. G. Abbott: Again, it's delightful to see, after only 120 years, this party discovering the importance of ranching to this province. Clearly....

Interjections.

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

Hon. G. Abbott: This government, upon taking office in 2001, was faced with a backlog of literally thousands of unresolved Crown tenure applications in this province. We've cleaned up....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. G. Abbott: We have cleaned up that mess, and we are working with the ranching industry to ensure that they have the future they need and the access to the Crown resource that they need far into the future, notwithstanding the opposition.

B.C. HYDRO PURCHASE OF WIND-GENERATED ELECTRICITY

H. Long: I have here a question from Adriane Carr...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

H. Long: ...the leader of the Green Party of British Columbia. It's a public written question to the Minister of Energy and Mines regarding the minister's responsibility for green energy.

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

H. Long: Vestas wind technologies incorporated....

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, hon. member. We will continue when we have some semblance of order in the House.

Please start over.

H. Long: This question is from Adriane Carr, the leader of the Green Party of British Columbia. She has a public written question to the Minister of Energy and

Mines regarding the minister's responsibility for green energy.

Vestas wind technologies incorporated, the largest builder of wind generator machines in the world, is willing to invest millions of dollars to build a factory in Squamish that will create up to 185 full-time jobs. But they won't do it unless B.C. Hydro gives a firm commitment to purchase the generated electricity at a fair price.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

H. Long: Will your government require B.C. Hydro to purchase at least 1,000 megawatts of wind-generated electricity at 7 cents...

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

H. Long: ...per kilowatt-hour...

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

H. Long: ...the same price as new energy products for fossil fuel costs?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I would like to thank the member for reading the question — one that was mailed in to the House and something that we should be doing all the time, which we committed to.

People should know that over 90 percent of the electricity generated in British Columbia already comes from clean sources. B.C. Hydro, under our energy plan that we introduced in 2002, is required to acquire 50 percent of its new incremental supply from clean sources. I'm proud to say that B.C. Hydro has accomplished 100 percent from clean sources.

B.C. Hydro also has a form of making calls for new energy, for acquiring new energy. They will make a call for acquiring new energy. Another 1,000....

Interjection.

[1435]

Hon. R. Neufeld: You know, listen up. You had your little day here a while ago.

They will put out to contract another 1,000 gigawatt-hours this year and a further 1,000 gigawatt-hours next year. I invite the companies that generate electricity with wind to bid into that fair, open process.

I have also been in touch with Vestas and asked them to come to British Columbia, because we are world leaders in alternative energy. They have huge opportunity here, now that we have a government that actually recognizes alternative energy and clean energy — not like the last administration that was here.

[End of question period.]

Orders of the Day

Hon. G. Bruce: I call Committee of Supply, supplementary estimates No. 10.

Committee of Supply

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

The committee met at 2:37 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:
MINISTRY OF SMALL BUSINESS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
(continued)

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

J. Kwan: Yesterday we were canvassing questions around the \$66 million slush fund that exists in this minister's bailiwick. He is going to spend and make political decisions in choosing projects and approving projects before the election and announcing them before the election. I was asking the minister then about the criteria for the selection process for this \$66 million pre-election slush fund. The minister listed a few things.

I'm wondering whether or not there is a written set of criteria that one could actually go to, which the government has produced.

Hon. J. Les: Those are the same criteria that have been in use for some time for the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program.

[1440]

J. Kwan: Is the minister saying that those are exactly the same criteria being utilized? If I can get a copy of the Canada infrastructure program criteria, are those exactly the ones that are being used to evaluate for project approval for this \$66 million pre-election slush fund? Is that correct?

Hon. J. Les: I reiterate that the criteria for this program are the same as those under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program. I have no difficulty making a copy of that available to the member as soon as possible.

J. Kwan: Good. The list of projects that the minister is choosing from for approval for the \$66 million pre-election slush fund... Could the minister please advise on the projects he is selecting from? Are those projects that have been previously received by the minister in the Canada infrastructure program or by the municipal infrastructure program? Or are they new applications or new proposals?

Hon. J. Les: I pointed out yesterday how almost \$800 million worth of projects had been approved un-

der the previous program that we shared with the federal government, but we had, in fact, received almost \$2.7 billion worth of applications. In addition to that, applications have continued to come in almost until the very present. We've had no shortage of applications to evaluate and consider, and that is the list of applications we're working from.

J. Kwan: That's not my question. My question is: is the minister considering only applications that have already been submitted to the government for consideration? Or are there new applications? That's what I heard the minister say — that there are new applications. If there are new applications, when is the deadline to stop accepting new applications?

How did the information get out to community groups and others to invite them to submit their application for consideration? Was there a process in place that would allow others to submit applications for consideration, given that new applications are still coming now?

Hon. J. Les: The existing Canada-B.C. infrastructure program.... It's been clear all along that decisions would be made within that program until the end of June of the current calendar year. We have consistently encouraged communities to submit applications under that program. They continue to come in. As I've already indicated, they've been coming in until very, very recently. Again, as I indicated earlier, we are making our selections from those various applications that have been arriving for many, many months. There is no shortage of applications to choose from.

J. Kwan: The minister is deliberately not answering my question and is misconstruing what I'm asking of him, Mr. Chair. I'm not asking whether or not there's a shortage of applications. I'm asking about what the government is doing and where the applications are coming from.

Is he saying — and saying it clearly in this House...? Are the applications that he's considering for this \$66 million pre-election slush fund from the Canada infrastructure grant project or the municipal infrastructure program? Let me just stop there and let the minister answer that question clearly. Yes or no?

[1445]

Hon. J. Les: I can just reiterate that the applications we are considering have come in under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program.

J. Kwan: You know, I don't know why it's so difficult for this minister to come clean on this issue. It's a simple question. All the minister has to say is yes or no.

Are they existing applications that have already come in for the Canada infrastructure program? Are these new applications that are coming in? The minister keeps on saying there are new applications coming in. Are they still coming in now? Those applications that are coming in now — can they still be considered?

Is there no deadline for this \$66 million slush fund? I suppose the only deadline is that you have to be able to make the announcement before the election is called. That's the only criterion in terms of time line. Is that right?

The Chair: Hon. member, I just want to caution you for a moment, please. You're yelling at the Chair. Can we just tone it down a tiny bit. Take some of the aggressiveness out of your voice. You're being a little bit aggressive. It is not necessary to yell at me or at the minister. Please — with some caution.

Interjection.

The Chair: My point proven.

Hon. J. Les: The answer — at least, what I hope will be the answer to the member's question, because I'm trying very hard to be as enlightening as I can — is yes, the applications are coming in under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program. Yes, they continue to come in almost as we speak. That has always been the case.

As long as I have been minister, I've been encouraging communities around the province to send in their applications. As the member knows as well, we have a further program that we're likely going to be engaging in with the federal government called the municipal-rural infrastructure program. Any community that's got its wits about it will be ensuring that they've always got their applications in front of government.

J. Kwan: Well, I gotta tell ya. This minister said yesterday that the Canada infrastructure program is separate from this \$66 million slush fund. Then today he says, "I'm considering applications coming in for the Canada infrastructure grant for this slush fund," except that the process for choosing the projects would not be under the process that's being followed under the Canada infrastructure program. It is going to be a completely political process engaging only this minister; the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services; the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection; and the Minister of Agriculture — just a completely political process and different from that of the Canada infrastructure program.

If the government is actually considering and taking initiatives and proposals from the Canada infrastructure program, why wouldn't the government then just follow the process that was established under that program? "No, we cannot do that," the minister says. Why? Because then that would take out the political aspect of the approval process here to allow for this government and this minister to choose programs they want to choose and to announce projects less than three months before the election. That's the real reason why. That's what you have.

The minister won't come clean and say if in fact there is an overwhelming number of projects sitting on the docket that weren't approved formerly. Wouldn't it make sense to choose from that list of projects that didn't

get approval earlier? No, we're not going to do that either. We're going to open it up and invite new projects to come in. Then there is no deadline on when new projects could come in, in terms of determination. I guess it would be open for as long as it fits the government's political agenda.

Well, let me ask the minister this question. In question period earlier today, we know that the government has failed to deliver its 5,000 new long-term care beds....

The Chair: Member, please get back to debates.

J. Kwan: I am getting back to debates, Mr. Chair.
[1450]

The Chair: Member, take your seat, please. Please, we are dealing with vote 34(S-2), not 5,000 beds. Proceed.

Interjection.

The Chair: Member, take your seat, please. I'm asking you to keep your questions focused on this vote.

J. Kwan: Well, this vote on a \$66 million slush fund — pre-election slush fund — is for community projects. That's what the minister said yesterday — community projects that could have a wide range of possibilities. I'm going to ask this question directly related to this bill, related to the \$66 million worth of pre-election slush fund.

The question is this. In the capital region there is a need for 300 new long-term care beds that the region is not getting funding for from this Minister of Health or this government. The capital regional district has already identified the need, and it's not getting a response from this Minister of Health.

Can they apply for this \$66 million slush fund to fund the 300 new long-term care beds that are much needed here in Victoria? It would actually help the minister and this government fulfil part of their broken promise of delivering 5,000 new long-term care beds. There's political motivation for you.

Hon. J. Les: Mr. Chair, it has been pointed out today that back in 1996 the government of the day, of which that member was a part, deemed that housing project in Victoria "not to be a priority." I'm a little bit taken aback.

Interjection.

The Chair: Order, please. Order. Let's hear the minister.

Hon. J. Les: I'm somewhat taken aback that the member would raise that question. For her edification, however, under the CBCIP guidelines those types of projects were never eligible. I think she would know that. So the answer to her question is no.

J. Kwan: It will be very interesting to note if this government and minister will get on record and say, "No, those 300 beds are not actually priority," and they won't do anything about it. We heard that from the Minister of Health in 2005. That's the position today after they have actually shut down long-term care beds. Now there is a deficit of beds, a number of beds reduced in the capital region in terms of long-term care beds. This minister says no, they're not qualified. They're not qualified? Why not?

Hon. J. Les: As I have already tried to explain, we're using the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program guidelines, which never have provided for funding of those kinds of facilities.

My colleagues the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and the Minister of Health.... Those kinds of ministries have traditionally had funding within them for that kind of housing.

J. Kwan: Well, except that this government and this Minister of Health have actually failed to deliver on the beds, and that's the reality.

The Chair: Member, move on. Member, take your seat, please. Take your seat. Member, I'm going to caution you to move on. Get off this subject and move on to vote 34(S-2).

J. Kwan: I am sure, Mr. Chair, that we want to move off this subject, because it is embarrassing for this government. Make no mistake about that.

Well, okay, long-term care beds do not qualify — don't qualify in the Minister of Health's budget, don't qualify anywhere in this government's budget. There's the delivery of long-term care beds, of 5,000 new beds for 2008 — zero promise.

Now let me ask this question: are private sector companies eligible to apply for the \$66 million slush fund?

[1455]

Hon. J. Les: No.

J. Kwan: Are non-profits eligible to apply?

Hon. J. Les: Yes, up to a maximum of a \$100,000 grant.

J. Kwan: Does the \$100,000 maximum apply for just non-profits or for other sectors too?

Hon. J. Les: Non-profit only.

J. Kwan: Is there a ceiling that applies for municipalities for their projects?

Hon. J. Les: The ceiling for municipally sponsored grant applications is \$2 million, unless an exemption is sought and granted from Treasury Board.

J. Kwan: What kind of exemption?

Hon. J. Les: An applicant could apply for an exemption for a variety of reasons, but I'll give one example. Where there is a particularly significant economic benefit that would ensue from a project, Treasury Board may well — although not necessarily — consider a lifting of the cap of \$2 million.

J. Kwan: Who could apply for this exemption?

Hon. J. Les: The applicant.

J. Kwan: Is it all categories of applicants?

Hon. J. Les: The applications can only be made for those qualifying for the \$2 million level of grant, not for the \$100,000 level of grant.

J. Kwan: The two categories identified that could apply for the \$66 million pre-election slush fund are non-profits and municipalities. Are there others?

Hon. J. Les: Mr. Chairman, the member refers to "slush fund." I wonder where in the documents she finds that kind of reference.

J. Kwan: Well, I'll tell you. Everybody understands that's exactly what this \$66 million is in this supplementary estimates No. 10 under this minister's title — \$66 million of pre-election moneys that the government can actually hand out less than 30 days before the election, chosen by politicians only behind closed doors in terms of what projects will get what grants.

My question to the minister is: are there other categories of applicants for this \$66 million?

Hon. J. Les: None other than those that I've described.

[1500]

J. Kwan: What portion, if any, of this money is targeted towards supporting the aboriginal community or depressed communities? What this minister and this government used to call the heartlands we now see in this budget has completely dropped off the face of the map. Some MLAs would actually admit that they don't want to use the word "heartlands" anymore. Those would be some of the brave ones, who occasionally actually voted against this government.

Hon. J. Les: Historically, it's interesting to note that the distribution of funding under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program has actually been in the majority weighted towards the heartlands — 54 percent versus 46 percent to urban British Columbia. When it comes to aboriginal communities, the federal government sponsors a number of programs specific to aboriginal communities — particularly in housing, for example — but certainly we are always open to those applications that

involve partnerships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities.

J. Kwan: What work has been done to engage and communicate with the aboriginal community with respect to the availability of this \$66 million for potential capital projects, less than three months before the election? Has any work been done to target the aboriginal community?

Hon. J. Les: I've already canvassed that with the member. We are dealing with applications that have been received over time under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program.

J. Kwan: Sorry. No, actually, the minister didn't answer my question. It's the first time I asked about aboriginal communities. The question was quite simple: whether or not the minister has actually engaged in consultation and communications with the aboriginal community about this \$66 million pre-election access for capital projects. It's a simple question.

Hon. J. Les: If there are any applications currently existing that involve, in whole or in part, aboriginal community applicants, they will be considered along with all the rest of the applications.

J. Kwan: Then the answer, from this minister's previous answers, is no. They have done no consultation. Has the minister done any consultation at all with anyone on the \$66 million pre-election spending spree?

Hon. J. Les: I'll try this again. We are dealing with applications that had been on the books, which have continued to come in over time. We're dealing with those applications. We're in the fortunate position that we have some surplus money that we can apply to these important community projects. I know that communities around the province are going to be delighted to receive these funds.

Frankly, I'm surprised that the member opposite seems to be very negative about this program. I'm sure she will recall, from the days when she was Municipal Affairs minister, that these programs are vital to the communities around British Columbia. They continue to be very well received today. I think this is great news, actually, for British Columbia communities. I anticipate that the UBCM, for example, which has already pronounced favourably on this, will be very supportive as well.

J. Kwan: I stated very clearly yesterday when we started to debate this \$66 million that the issue here.... This is about the process the government is engaged in. It's not about the amount of money that the communities need. It's about the secrecy behind this and the lack of information around it.

[1505]

Of course, one might note the timing around it as well. It's 66 million bucks, less than three months be-

fore the election — moneys that don't go into the regular municipal infrastructure program, which has a well-established process, or the Canada infrastructure program but into this ministry under a different process. Only provincial government ministers will actually have a final say in project approval. Unlike the other initiatives, this one is all about politics. That's what I object to, Mr. Chair.

Well, let me ask the minister this question. What we know is that there's been no consultation with anyone. There's no talking to the aboriginal community. The government is just going to make decisions. Will the minister go on record and say that all deliberations, procedures and decisions surrounding the allocation of the \$66 million will be published and open to the public for scrutiny?

Hon. J. Les: Again, Mr. Chair, I point out that we are using the same evaluation processes that have been in place for some time under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program. I'm happy to make available to the member any information that is available under freedom of information.

I want to point out this as well. The member continues to wonder about the lack of federal involvement. I should point out to her.... I had hoped that I wouldn't need to point this out, but this is money that is solely provincial money. Therefore, it shouldn't surprise anyone that we are not asking the federal government to come on board to help us do the evaluations. It would seem rather strange to ask the federal government to help us adjudicate projects which are being solely funded by the provincial government and municipalities. Does it really not follow to the member that we don't have federal government involvement in this?

Introductions by Members

R. Stewart: Mr. Chair, thank you for allowing me an interruption.

It's my pleasure today to introduce 47 French grade 5 students and six adults, led by their teachers Katherine Copley and Teresa Mazzuca. These guests are from Our Lady of Fatima Elementary School in Coquitlam.

[The member spoke French.]

It's particularly my pleasure, as I'm a proud graduate of Our Lady of Fatima. Would the House please make them welcome.

Debate Continued

J. Kwan: The minister likes to say: "Oh well, there are no federal moneys here. Why should we consult them?" Well, there are municipal dollars here. Why aren't they at the table for decision-making?

Hon. J. Les: Of course, each applicant is part of the process. We are in constant consultation with each applicant....

Interjection.

The Chair: Member, through the Chair, please.

Hon. J. Les: We are in constant consultation with each of the applicants to make sure that their applications are as complete as possible. Again, that has been an ongoing process for many, many years to make sure the applications, as they come in, are as complete as possible so that they can be properly evaluated.

J. Kwan: That doesn't answer my question, and that has nothing to do with decision-making. Municipal dollars are going in. Like the infrastructure programs where partners are putting in dollars towards these initiatives, they actually get a seat around the table for decision-making.

Not so. Not this political slush fund. That's the real reason behind it — because it's all about this government's politics. Nothing else. That's the real answer.

On page 5 of the service plan it states that the ministry is "working with investors to facilitate economic development such as a fast-track process for key projects." Could the minister please provide me with examples of what some of these fast-track key projects are?

Hon. J. Les: Mr. Chair, that line of questioning is completely irrelevant to the subject matter today.

[1510]

J. Kwan: It is absolutely relevant, because it's the \$66 million going into the slush fund under the minister, under the headline in this minister's service plan that says: "Enhancing Economic Development Throughout B.C." That's what the money's earmarked for — the 66 million bucks. What fast-track projects are we talking about? What is the time line for these fast-track projects to get access to the \$66 million pre-election slush fund?

Hon. J. Les: Mr. Chairman, the member knows that she's irrelevant, and she knows it well. We followed this line of questioning last year in estimates. She knows, for example, about projects like Mount Mackenzie in Revelstoke, which is part of the fast-track process. That has absolutely nothing to do with this program, and the member knows it.

J. Kwan: Well, Mr. Chair, I know that this minister would love for the NDP to be irrelevant. Sorry, not so. Have you taken a look at the polls lately? Not so. We are asking....

Interjection.

J. Kwan: It is this minister who attacked me personally, Mr. Chair. If he can dish it, he can accept it.

Mr. Chair, let me tell you: the minister knows very well what I'm talking about. It's under his very own service plan. Here we are talking about the supplementary estimates that allow for another \$66 million to go into some sort of economic development plan that's outlined in this minister's very own service plan. But he doesn't want to answer questions about fast-track projects. He doesn't want to talk about time lines. Why? Because goodness forbid, we might actually uncover some political agenda that this government could be caught on. "Better not say anything and just insult the opposition." That's the level of arrogance and the approach that this government has taken throughout the last four years.

Well, let me tell you, Mr. Chair: that ain't going to get you anywhere. It certainly goes contrary to the concept of accountability, openness and transparency.

The minister said earlier, when I asked about information — whether or not he would actually release information around the procedure, the process, for the approval of these projects.... The minister says: "Sure, we're open and accountable — if you can get the information under FOI." That's what the minister says.

Well, we know that under FOI we can't access information on another area of spending in this minister's supplemental estimates. That's the Olympics secretariat, which my colleague canvassed earlier. You can't even FOI that information. That falls within supplementary estimates No. 10. Any other information that the public will try to get, they will have to FOI it. Even then they may or may not get it.

That's the truth behind this government's approach to transparency, openness and accountability. How about that? Well, taxpayers will judge it on May 17.

I'd like to ask the minister a question. Will any of this \$66 million for economic development throughout the province go towards resort development?

Hon. J. Les: I've already pointed out that applicants for the funding would have to be a non-profit with a cap of \$100,000 or a community — a municipality or a regional district — with a cap of \$2 million.

J. Kwan: Can there be joint initiatives between a municipality and a non-profit?

[1515]

Hon. J. Les: I think, in theory at least, the answer to that question would be yes. We always encourage partnerships. Sometimes you can achieve through partnerships what you can't achieve by a single applicant acting alone.

J. Kwan: Is it the case that a private company could get access to these dollars if it joins up with a non-profit or a municipality and has the municipality or non-profit make the application — but ultimately, it's actually a private business proposal?

Hon. J. Les: The answer is absolutely not.

J. Kwan: So the private sector, for example, could be engaged in a ski resort development and engages, potentially, in a partnership with, perhaps, the local

government. The local government makes application, but ultimately it's a private development for the ski resort, for the private business, and that's completely legitimate — to access this \$66 million pre-election slush fund. That's what I heard the minister say as one example. Is that correct?

Hon. J. Les: This is a program, as was the Canada-B.C. Infrastructure program before it, that is driven by municipal applicants to the largest degree, with the exception of the non-profit grants. Our matching funding matches municipal contributions. This is not part of a Moe Sihota fund for developing Mount Washington.

Interjection.

J. Kwan: You can laugh. Wait until you look at your resort development piece — to that minister, the newly minted Minister for Resort Development. Take a look.

Interjections.

The Chair: Order, please. Order, please. Let's get back to the debate.

J. Kwan: Yeah, so be aware. Be aware. A private sector, though, can access this — by the minister's own admission — through a non-profit or through a municipality. There's nothing that precludes that. Are there any applications that the government is evaluating right now that actually have such a joint partnership — of those kinds of joint partnership opportunities?

Hon. J. Les: No, Mr. Chairman.

J. Kwan: Can an organization make more than one application?

Hon. J. Les: Yes.

J. Kwan: Will the government be doing any regional analysis on the approved projects?

Hon. J. Les: Fair and equitable distribution of these grant moneys has always been a feature of this program.

J. Kwan: What would be deemed to be fair and equitable across the regions?

Hon. J. Les: I've already indicated that the track record so far indicates that just over half of the projects have gone to communities in the heartlands, and the other 46 percent or so have gone to urban communities across British Columbia.

[1520]

J. Kwan: What's the expected turnaround time for the government to take a new application to come in,

to evaluate it and to make a decision? Given that there's actually less than three months until the election and these projects have to be announced before the election is called, time is of the essence here, I suppose.

Hon. J. Les: We always try to achieve a rapid turnaround rate, but as the member will recognize, I think, there are various levels of completeness in these applications as they come in. Some of them come in almost complete, to the point where we can do the evaluation. Others need a lot of work. Others need a lot of additional information, so the turnaround times vary widely. We do try to do our part within my ministry to make sure we turn them around as quickly as we can.

J. Kwan: How many FTEs are currently responsible for evaluating the first round of evaluation of these projects before it gets up to the political masters for final decision?

Hon. J. Les: Nine.

J. Kwan: Are the additional five FTEs due to the \$66 million additional funds, or has that always been in place? That's the nine FTEs that were formerly in place to evaluate \$18 million. You now have \$66 million you have to turn around in less than three months. Are the same nine staff that have been working on it when formerly in the '04-05 budget that was \$18 million, that's now increased with an additional \$66 million...? No additional new staff?

Hon. J. Les: No new staff.

J. Kwan: Okay. Formerly, in '04-05, \$18 million for the ministry to evaluate these projects. Nine staff. Additional \$66 million now. No new staff. Interesting.

Who should one contact from the community if they want to get in to access and make application to this new \$66 million pre-election slush fund? Who should they contact in the ministry?

Hon. J. Les: Municipalities, I think, know this well: they would contact the infrastructure development branch within my ministry.

J. Kwan: Some of the municipalities might know it well, but you know what? The non-profits that are eligible for \$100,000 may not. Information to the public would be useful, given that this government and this minister have done no consultation whatsoever to let people know that the \$66 million exists. They've done no outreach whatsoever, especially to communities that may be struggling — the aboriginal community, for example.

Information would be useful, actually, for the organizations and the public. Is there no contact name within the ministry that one should try and touch base with? Should someone just phone Enquiry B.C. and ask for the ministry? Then, I guess, they'd supposedly be transferred throughout to different people to try and

get some basic information in order to make application.

Hon. J. Les: As I've already indicated, there's a specific branch within my ministry to which people can apply, but if the member wants a more specific name, my Assistant Deputy Minister Doug Caul would be happy to field the calls personally.

J. Kwan: Okay. Thanks, Doug. I appreciate that.

Interjection.

J. Kwan: The other Doug. Okay. Thanks, the other Doug. You're on the hook. That's fine, actually. That wasn't a trick question. It's just so the public knows who to try and get information from, given that there's such a tight time line, in my view. If a project is to be evaluated, one needs to get the information in and make sure the information is complete and is the kind of information the ministry is looking for.

[1525]

A lot of times what makes grant applications successful, having written many of them before in my life before being in this chamber, is getting the right information and getting it to the right person in the right time frame. It is about that — very much so.

I suppose it's good news to the community — that right time frame. It is pre-election time. The floodgates are open. There's \$66 million of slush pre-election funds in this ministry. Come and get it. So I'm going to spread that word out there to community groups and others to make sure they know and are aware of it. I would expect that there'll be a lot of announcements just before the election, because the timing is right. The government wants to do exactly that — make the public forget the pain and suffering in the last four years and only remember good memories of the government somehow really caring for them three months before the election.

Vote 34(S-2) approved.

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

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 3:27 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolutions.

Mr. Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that the report of the resolutions from the Committee of Supply of this day be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$134,900,000. This sum is in addition to that authorized to be paid under section 1 of the Supply Act, 2004-2005, and is granted by Her Majesty 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. 10)

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intituled Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 10).

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

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: The use of supplementary estimates is consistent with the spirit of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. This supply bill is introduced to provide supply for the operation of government programs for the 2004-05 fiscal year as outlined in the supplementary estimates No. 10 tabled earlier.

[1530]

This 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: The bill will be permitted to advance through all stages in one sitting.

Bill 17 introduced, read a first time and ordered to proceed to second reading forthwith.

Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005 (SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 10)

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that Bill 17 be now read a second time.

Motion approved.

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

Bill 17, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 10), 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. 10)

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 17; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

The committee met at 3:32 p.m.

Sections 1 and 2 approved.

Schedule approved.

Preamble approved.

Title approved.

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

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 3:33 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

Bill 17, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 10), reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Supplementary Estimates

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: supplementary estimates (No. 11) 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 3:34 p.m.

[1535]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES

On vote 27(S): ministry operations, \$10,000,000.

Hon. S. Brice: Before we begin a detailed discussion of this motion, I'd like to take a moment to introduce some of the members of my ministry executive who are joining me today: Robin Ciceri, deputy minister; Andrew Wharton, assistant deputy minister of the policy and research division; and behind me, Sharon Moysey, assistant deputy minister of management services division and executive financial officer. These members of the executive are just a few of the hundreds of staff at the Ministry of Human Resources that I'd like to thank for their ongoing commitment and professionalism.

As I've said, we're here today to request supplementary estimates in the amount of \$10 million. We request these funds for ministry program operating costs resulting from government's recent \$70 monthly rate increase for persons with disabilities that came into effect January 1, 2005. This is the largest rate increase in the history of B.C. With this \$70 rate increase British Columbians with disabilities now receive \$856 per month, the second-highest rate in Canada.

The full cost of the PWD rate increase for fiscal '04-05 was \$18.5 million to cover additional costs for income assistance payments made for December, January, February and March. Of that \$18.5 million, \$8.5 million is being funded from within the ministry's existing budget due to savings from a declining caseload of clients who are capable of working.

We had originally planned for a more modest disability rate increase. However, because of the excellent strength in the economy and sound fiscal management, we were able to provide a much larger increase and provide it much sooner.

Mr. Chair, let me provide some background on this rate increase as it ties into government's goal for the decade ahead of building the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities. Increasing disability rates by \$70 a month is just one of the many supports that we have in place to ensure people with disabilities have every opportunity to achieve their potential and participate as fully as possible in their communities. With that, I stand available to answer any questions.

J. Brar: The opposition supports a rate increase for people with disabilities, but we do have some questions. This government subjected people with disabilities to a wasteful and intimidating review that caused enormous hardship and anxiety for thousands of British Columbians and found a vast majority of people did indeed have a disability.

[1540]

Just a year ago the auditor general released a report that concluded that not only did this B.C. Liberal government put British Columbians with disabilities through needless anxiety, but they based their attack

on false ideological assumptions and ended up costing taxpayers \$5 million to remove only 46 recipients from assistance.

My first question is: was the government informed by the auditor general's report in its decision to increase disability rates?

Hon. S. Brice: The review that took place has ensured that everybody eligible for PWD in the province is actually receiving it. In fact, we have approximately 10,000 additional persons currently receiving PWD assistance.

J. Brar: My question is simple, and I'm going to repeat the question. I need to get the answer. Was the government informed by the auditor general's report in its decision to increase the disability rates?

Hon. S. Brice: My apology to the member for perhaps not picking up on the thrust of his original question.

No, the auditor general's report did not make any reference to rates. The rate had been considered for some time by previous ministers in my role. It was the magnitude of the rate that we were able to consider, which came as a result of a number of factors, including the good economy.

J. Brar: This government was roundly criticized for this mean-spirited and ideological attack. If the government is now trying to make up for its actions, the public and, more importantly, the people with disabilities will have to decide if the fact that the B.C. Liberals have waited until mere months before the election to do so is credible or not.

How many people in B.C. will benefit from this rate hike?

Hon. S. Brice: In '05-06 approximately 57,050 PWD British Columbians and 900 seniors will benefit because of the increase.

J. Brar: If I understand the breakdown of this group correctly.... How many individuals are persons with disabilities and persons with multiple barriers?

Hon. S. Brice: All of the individuals who will be in receipt of the increase we are here asking for funding for will be individuals who have the designation "person with a disability."

J. Kwan: The people who receive this additional funding are all individuals who are eligible under the income assistance eligibility rules for disability. Does that mean that each individual, even if you're a couple, would actually receive the additional dollars? Is it per person as long as you are eligible under the disability eligibility rules?

Hon. S. Brice: Under the disability regulation and under the dollars we are requesting increased funding

for, it's a \$70 increase for each person. If there are two individuals in a family with a designated disability, there will be \$140.

[1545]

J. Kwan: That's what I want to clarify, because there is confusion in the community about this. Some have been told that if you're in a couple situation, even if both individuals have been designated as persons with disabilities under the criteria, they were made to believe that both of them would not get the increase. The clarification from the minister now is that each individual who qualifies for disability under the eligibility rules, whether in a couple situation or a family situation, will receive the additional \$70.

In other words, whether you're a couple or even if you're a family.... It could be that you could have two adults and children who are disabled. Under that scenario, three individuals, if they meet the criteria for disability under the Income Assistance Act, would qualify for an additional \$70 each. Am I correct?

Hon. S. Brice: Any adult individual who qualifies as a person with a disability is eligible for a \$70 increase. If both individuals in the family have a PWD designation, they will get the \$140. If it's a family where there are two disabled adults and a disabled child, the funding for the child comes through the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The Ministry of Human Resources has clients who are adult persons with disabilities.

J. Brar: Do the people on disability living in group homes qualify for this?

Hon. S. Brice: The issue raised about individuals with PWD living in group homes is something that has resulted in some discussions taking place at the staff level, because some are on PWD and some are on comforts allowance. My colleague, the Minister of Children and Family Development, and staff, along with the staff of the Ministry of Human Resources, are looking to find the best way to ensure that people are treated fairly and equally.

J. Brar: Just a minute ago, the minister said that everybody who is on disability is going to receive the rate increase. Is it fair to assume that people living in group homes are going to get \$70 more under this new decision of the government?

Hon. S. Brice: Every individual on PWD with the Ministry of Human Resources is getting the \$70 increase.

J. Brar: Including people living in group homes? That's the question.

[1550]

Hon. S. Brice: Every person receiving disability assistance is receiving the \$70. Yes.

J. Brar: The question is pretty simple. The minister made it very clear that every person with a disability is going to get a \$70 rate increase. My question is very simple. Are people on disability who are living in group homes going to get it? Do they qualify for this \$70 hike or not? That's the simple question I'm asking.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Hon. S. Brice: Yes. As I stated, anyone receiving disability assistance is receiving the \$70.

J. Brar: I did receive some information that people living in group homes have not received the cheques. Can the minister explain why they did not receive the cheques? Why is there a delay? What is the difference?

Hon. S. Brice: Outside of the 57,050 PWD clients I was referring to just moments ago, there is a different category of clients, those who receive a comforts allowance. They are not PWDs. That is the category for which I indicated that the staff from the Ministry of Human Resources and from the Ministry of Children and Family Development are in discussions about how to ensure that this particular group of people is treated fairly and equitably.

J. Brar: I am a bit confused about all this. I'm talking about the people with disability. I understand that the individual people are going to get a \$70 hike under the new policy. What I'm not getting the answer to is on people with disability living in group homes. My assumption is that they are also going to get \$70 in additional support. That's what the minister said just minutes ago.

My question is this. I did receive information from the people. The people living in group homes have not received the cheques for the \$70 additional hike. Can the minister explain why it is so?

Hon. S. Brice: All persons with PWD are receiving a \$70 increase. There is the base of it. That's why we're here today seeking the additional \$10 million. In the work of the ministry, as well, there's a group of people who receive a comforts allowance — individuals where we pay a per-diem cost and the individual receives a comforts allowance of \$85 at this time. They are not designated PWD, and they are not captured by this \$70 increase.

[1555]

J. Brar: Is it fair to assume, to make it pretty simple, that people with disabilities living in group homes are not eligible for this \$70 hike?

Hon. S. Brice: There are some clients to whom MCFD has passed along their \$70 increase: people who receive disability assistance. There are other individuals where government pays a comforts allowance and where they are not designated PWD. They are, therefore, not captured by this particular designation.

J. Brar: So I'm right in saying that the people with disabilities living in group homes are not eligible for the \$70 hike. Yes or no?

Hon. S. Brice: Yes, they are — if they're our clients and are designated PWD.

J. Brar: Are they receiving the \$70 hike. Yes or no?

Hon. S. Brice: Yes. If they're our clients and are in a group home and are designated PWD, they are receiving the \$70.

J. MacPhail: Is that a hypothetical, or are there actually clients as the minister describes — persons with disabilities in a group home receiving the \$70 hike now?

Hon. S. Brice: Yes.

J. Brar: I recently heard about cuts to services for persons with disabilities. Can the minister please tell me about the recent service delivery changes in the McBride office?

Hon. S. Brice: Nothing has been brought to my attention specifically about that particular office. I would be glad to look into it and get the information back to the member.

J. Brar: Here is a brief summary from the e-mail I received. This is from the McBride service centre, which is funded by the Ministry of Human Resources of British Columbia. They had this service centre, but now they got the cut. The only person working in that office now is an administrative assistant. The social workers have been moved to Prince George.

People with disabilities in that centre can only see the administrative assistant and explain their issues to him or her. They cannot meet with the social worker. Can you explain why?

Hon. S. Brice: As I said, I would be pleased to get a fulsome answer and get it to the member. I do know that we engage in a pretty intensive way in each community to try and make service delivery meet the needs of the community. In that particular community's situation, I would like to have the opportunity to get the material for the member.

[1600]

J. Brar: I understand that, but can the minister please indicate if that's the case? Is there any movement going on within the ministry to shift social workers from some centres to other centres? What are the centres that are going to lose social workers?

Hon. S. Brice: I'm just quickly reading through e-mails here to determine exactly what the situation is there. Apparently, we are currently seeking someone in

that geographic area who could perform the job duties, and the staff are attempting to get that position filled.

J. Brar: Is it fair to assume that the social worker at the McBride office has not been cut?

Hon. S. Brice: No, the position has not been cut. We're just having some difficulty finding an individual who is able to perform that task.

J. Brar: Is it also fair to assume there is no other office in the province where any social worker position has been cut?

Hon. S. Brice: In a dynamic staff of more than 2,000 employees, there are always changes. There are certainly no policy changes within this ministry to see any reduction in social work positions.

J. Brar: The November announcement for this change was for \$55 million. The minister is asking \$10 million. Where is the balance going to come from?

Hon. S. Brice: For the four months of January, February, March and April, as I indicated, that cost to the '04-05 budget is \$18.5 million, \$8.5 million of which we could assume within the ministry. That's why we're asking for the \$10 million addition into the supplementary estimates. On the go-forward year, this ministry has had a lift that will accommodate the \$55 million annualized costs.

[1605]

J. Brar: I have this fact sheet, which is prepared by the government of British Columbia and which lists out all the different categories of people who are eligible for the \$70. In that list, we have single persons, of course, getting \$70, and we have one-parent families with two children getting \$70 as well. A single gets \$70, and a parent with two kids gets \$70 as well. Is there any rationale to keep the same amount for both the individual and the family?

Hon. S. Brice: In recognizing that the \$70 per PWD, of course, attaches itself to the parents in the family, then when you factor in the fact that the family is on assistance and eligible for additional funding.... A single person, for instance, now gets \$856, but one parent with two children would get \$1,235, so the income from the ministry, certainly, is considerably more for a one-parent family with two children.

J. Brar: As far as the \$70 increase is concerned, the parents of two children are not a factor. Is it fair to assume that way?

Hon. S. Brice: The parents are the clients of the Ministry of Human Resources, and any adult with a PWD designation is receiving a \$70 increase.

J. MacPhail: We now have questions for the Solicitor General, Mr. Chair.

Vote 27(S) approved.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY
AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

On vote 31(S): ministry operations, \$3,400,000.

J. Brar: Just to clarify, in the budget and fiscal plan, this supplementary \$3.4 million is described as being for priority police equipment. In the wording of the current bill, this funding is described as being a part of a provincial commitment to adding 215 RCMP officers into B.C. communities.

Can the minister confirm that this money is intended as a one-time grant for capital expenditure only?

Hon. R. Coleman: The funding for the provincial force of \$30 million, \$30 million and \$30 million in the next three fiscal years for the 215 officers is in addition to this. This was an opportunity we saw where we could advance some capital costs and have some savings in our out years with regard to some equipment.

One is the Kelowna helicopter, which is a helicopter that is about 25 or 30 years old. Frankly, it is not as bad as the Sea Kings, but it is getting quite elderly, and our long-term maintenance costs are going to exceed the value of the unit. We have the opportunity in this year to move some capital forward to purchase the helicopter. That's \$2 million of the total dollars.

[1610]

In addition to that, we had equipment that we wanted to deal with, from the standpoint of some Zodiacs — boats we need for some of our internal waters with regard to some of our enforcement. We are purchasing two five-metre Zodiacs and three six-metre aluminum-hull inflatables at a cost of \$500,000. It's capital that we identified, and we got that in addition to the police funding. The IT equipment that is identified, the last \$900,000, is to upgrade radios for some of our police officers.

J. Brar: Is it fair to assume that the list of equipment indicated by the minister is final — and that includes everything listed on this list of equipment?

Hon. R. Coleman: Mr. Chair, I had activity beside me. Could you just repeat that question?

J. Brar: The minister indicated a few things as to the equipment, one being the helicopter in Kelowna, and a few other things. My question is: is that all the equipment in this list, or are there more things in the list under the \$3.4 million?

Hon. R. Coleman: No, that's all that's listed in this estimate. This is an opportunity to advance some capi-

tal. Obviously, we've been upgrading our small capital starting back in about 2002, and this is part of the plan. In the provincial policing budget we'll end up upgrading our cars, as they become older, and things like radios, computers and what have you. We have the process with regards to PRIME going on. This money is identified for these purposes, and we would want to make the purchases before the end of the fiscal year.

J. Brar: Certainly the minister must have done some sort of analysis to make sure what the priorities are, particularly for this \$3.4 million additional funding. How has the priority for this equipment been determined?

Hon. R. Coleman: The RCMP does that. They actually identify their priorities with regards to funding. We started a process a little over two years ago about building a five-year plan for policing and what funding would be required. As we came through that, we did some incremental funding with regards to some other things, and they identified small capital as one of the things they wanted to advance. The money is available to do some advancement of small capital, so we brought it forward to Treasury Board. The rest of our small capital is now in pretty good shape because we have been incrementally doing that.

Of course, the police budget now.... What happens with the global dollars is that they actually apply those dollars. We send the RCMP the money; they run the provincial force.

J. Brar: So the answer is that the minister got the list from the RCMP, and that's the list the minister is going to follow?

Hon. R. Coleman: There's a process involved where they send us a list of priorities every year. Then throughout the year they will come back to us with additional priorities so that we can track the budgets.

Police funding is a bit of an odd thing with regards to the fiscal years on funding. We have a federal-provincial contract where we pay 70-cent dollars and the federal government pays 30-cent dollars on things like this and on all the personnel. Yet we set our numbers basically in August with the provincial force because we have to match into their fiscal year. Yet we don't do our budgeting until this sort of cycle. There is a bit of overlap there.

We have this one here, and what we've done is.... They brought us their priorities, they identified these, and we felt we could add them into this fiscal year, in addition to the funding we're putting in the next few years into policing. Then we got commitment from the federal government to meet their 70-30 split.

[1615]

J. Brar: We do have what we call the integrated crime task force. Is this task force going to get anything out of it?

Hon. R. Coleman: I don't know if any of the radio equipment would necessarily go to that group. We funded the ramp-up of the gang task force in this fiscal year. The outgoing funding covers it, for the long term, to be able to have the task force operate.

They'll operate in a number of fashions. First of all, the police will set up the integrated unit. They will work with the municipalities to identify the officers that would come into it, including the communications. They will then have different aspects of it. Some of them would be doing, let's say, things like surveillance, so they may need radios. That equipment would be supplied.

The one thing the RCMP have asked.... Although we talk about the global size and the global dollars of the task force, they do not want us to discuss publicly the actual makeup and positions within the task force. They feel that they need to have some confidentiality with regards to that, because it is a pretty significant investigation, with a lot of sensitivities around it. They don't have a problem with us saying there's a task force. The dollars we're spending on it.... There is a public communications office that's been identified and made public with regards to that. They have some liaisons in the Indo-Canadian community in particular with regards to this.

The ramp-up has been within this year's budget, and we're okay for the outgoing years.

J. Brar: Just for clarification, I understand that much of the work in this case is done by the RCMP, including what kind of equipment and what kind of priorities and all that.

Are there any kind of criteria we look into where the funding must be spread provincially or where each region gets it equally or those kinds of things? Do we keep those things as factors, or is it not part of that at this stage?

Hon. R. Coleman: I'll try and answer the question this way. The RCMP is our provincial force. They have the provincial responsibility for policing all communities that are under 5,000 and regional districts. They also have a responsibility on a number of sophisticated types of policing operations — DNA databank, DNA work, a lot of forensic ident and laboratory stuff, things like integrated units, where we put together the integrated homicide unit or the task force or the missing women case, and those sort of things. They also supply overarching support and expertise in major investigations to other communities.

The way policing is in B.C. is that the provincial force is a portion of the RCMP members. The rest of it is an overarching support to all communities. Then each community has a detachment commander or chief of police who sets local priorities for policing and establishes their budget with their local department. All but 11 communities in B.C. are policed by the RCMP. Although we have responsibility for their contracts, we're not directing policing in those communities.

What we have done over the last three years, though, is gone to a more regional model. We now

have a regional command structure. For instance, the southwest district would be commanded out of Kelowna and would take care of everything to the Alberta border, the Okanagan and up into the Thompson-Cariboo area. That group would then have centralized communication, which would dispatch from that location. They'd also have an integrated relationship where they will share resources in crime cross-border, so we get a better impact from the use of our officers.

I don't know if that answers the question for the member. It's a pretty integrated relationship now between each level. The provincial priorities are set by the provincial force, but it's not uncommon for those resources that we give to the provincial force to be also shared with communities that are paying for policing.

Vote 31(S) approved.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:
MINISTRY OF SMALL BUSINESS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Vote 34(S-3): ministry operations, \$14,000,000 — approved.

The Chair: We will take a short recess while we wait for the minister and staff.

The committee recessed from 4:20 p.m. to 4:22 p.m.

[H. Long in the chair.]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:
MINISTRY OF
SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

On vote 35(S): ministry operations, \$28,600,000.

J. MacPhail: Mr. Chair, \$25 million of this supplementary estimate is listed under "Sound governance" under "Operating expense," "Core business," of the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. In the budget documents of '05-06, at page 31, there is \$21 million estimated for investigation and remediation of contaminated sites. Is there any relationship between this \$25 million and the \$21 million allocated in the '05-06 budget?

Hon. G. Abbott: The member is correct. There is a relationship between the two figures and the two budgets. In both cases the dollars that she mentioned are related to remediation of contaminated sites.

J. MacPhail: So the \$25 million in this budget is for contaminated site remediation. How much of the \$25 million allocated to sound governance that we're spending today has already been spent?

[1625]

Hon. G. Abbott: None of the amount in the supplemental estimates has been spent. We are booking the liability associated with the sites.

J. MacPhail: What processes are in place to distribute this \$25 million?

Hon. G. Abbott: I thank the member for her question. In terms of the breakdown, \$10 million is for the completion of the Pacific Place remediation project. That's the first \$10 million. Pacific Place is not a new one. This one has an interesting history, as I'm sure the member knows, going back at least a couple of governments in British Columbia.

The Yankee Girl, while obviously not a new site.... We've known the site was there, but there has been increasing interest and concern around the Yankee Girl in very recent years, and \$15 million is to remediate that site in the months and years ahead.

J. MacPhail: The reason I'm asking this question is that I'm wondering: is there a current list of high-risk contaminated sites that will be addressed first? And are the two mentioned at the top of the high-risk contaminated site list?

Hon. G. Abbott: Along with the Britannia site, these two are at the top of the list.

J. MacPhail: Is there a current list? Where is it, and how many sites are on it?

Hon. G. Abbott: There is a list of priority sites that have been identified. That list is composed of 13, including the three I've mentioned. I would be pleased to share it with the hon. member.

J. MacPhail: Yes, thank you. I'd appreciate that.

I was surprised to see that this money was allocated to the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, and the notes for the supplemental estimates say the \$25 million is for the management, assessment and remediation of contaminated sites on provincial land. Well, that responsibility lies, last time I debated estimates, with the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection. Why is it being assigned to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Management?

Hon. G. Abbott: The distinction for the member would be this: Water, Land and Air Protection is the regulator in respect of these issues. They also have leadership in respect of, typically, the smaller private sites, gas stations and so on, that have had localized problems. When you get to Crown lands, the responsibility rests with us.

In a case like Pacific Place, as part of an agreement going back probably almost 20 years now — hard to imagine that, going back 20 years, and in the case of Britannia, obviously, much longer — Sustainable Resource Management is the landowner, and as a consequence, we carry the obligation to do the remediation.

[1630]

J. MacPhail: My understanding is that the standards are set in a regulation called the *Contaminated*

Sites Regulation. Who has that authority? Which ministry has the authority to change those standards?

Hon. G. Abbott: Water, Land and Air Protection has that responsibility.

J. MacPhail: Will the list of 13 that the minister is going to provide me...? The determination for proceeding on cleanup will rest with which minister on the rest of that list?

Hon. G. Abbott: The responsibility for remediation of those 13 sites will rest with Sustainable Resource Management. We do, however, work in collaboration with all of the regulators. That would include not only Water, Land and Air Protection in the context of British Columbia but also, for example, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, who often have a considerable interest and regulatory authority around these matters.

J. MacPhail: Does the minister consult with municipal officials?

Hon. G. Abbott: We would where applicable.

J. MacPhail: What's the relationship between the minister's responsibility and decision about cleaning up contaminated sites and the aboriginal land claims office?

Hon. G. Abbott: While there may not be many, if any, instances where first nation interests would be engaged in respect of these 13 sites, where those first nation interests were applicable, we would include a consultation, or discussion, obviously, a collaboration, with TNO as part of that.

J. MacPhail: When I was doing my preparation for this supplementary estimate, I came across a Supreme Court of Canada decision of January 21, 2005. It was a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada that ruled that B.C. Hydro is responsible for the actions of its predecessor, B.C. Electric, which contributed to the contamination of a Vancouver property.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that it was B.C. Hydro who would be held responsible for cleaning up that site. That was its oral ruling. It still has to issue its written reasons, but they made an oral ruling that B.C. Hydro was responsible and that the polluter-pay principle applies.

Why is it that under this government we're using taxpayer dollars to clean up high-risk contaminated sites?

[1635]

Hon. G. Abbott: That's a good question from the member. We very much endorse the principle of polluter-pay. The challenge is that when a site has at some point in the past defaulted to Crown, and where there no longer exists a responsible entity that can help share in

the cost of remediating the site, that responsibility defers to Crown.

To give you a couple of examples. In the case of Britannia we have the benefit of about \$30 million that came in some agreement in the past from the former owner. We're using that in part to deal with the Britannia remediation. It certainly doesn't cover off the cost of Britannia, but it is helpful.

When you get into more difficult areas like Yankee Girl, which was mined and abandoned many, many decades ago... On the edge of the river — and I drove by it not too long ago at Ymir — you can see the remnants of Yankee Girl. Those remnants are of concern particularly to Department of Fisheries and Oceans. But the owners and developers of that site and the miners and so on are long gone, and it is just to exercise or discharge our obligations responsibly to get a cleanup. It clearly has defaulted entirely to us.

Generally speaking, the notion of polluter-pay is a good one and one we embrace, but finding the heirs and successors to the owners of Yankee Girl might be a difficult task.

J. MacPhail: Are there any sites on the list of the 13 high-risk contaminated sites where the government knows the owner but is cleaning it up with taxpayer dollars instead?

Hon. G. Abbott: No.

J. MacPhail: There's a new definition of what a contaminated site is. I understand what the responsibility is for a contaminated site. There is a shift from conditional certificates of compliance, and now it's a risk-based approach to site remediation. That change took place under this government. What's been the impact of that shift?

Hon. G. Abbott: Just so we don't have any confusion, the issue the member is referring to is a WLAP-regulated issue, as opposed to Sustainable Resource Management. We deal only with those sites, as I noted earlier, that have either deferred to Crown or are with Crown for historical reasons.

J. MacPhail: So this definition doesn't apply to Crown land?

Hon. G. Abbott: Yes, it does.

J. MacPhail: Then I'm asking: what's been the difference? What's been the effect in the shift from conditional certificate of compliance to a risk-based approach to site remediation?

[1640]

Hon. G. Abbott: I'm going to give the best answer I can here. It's an interesting question. The applicability of the model is tentative in respect of our sites. We have, generally speaking, historic sites that we are dealing with. So we certainly agree with and embrace

the new model. How it will play out in respect of remediation of a site like Yankee Girl, which has been alongside the river for — I don't know — 80 or 90 years, something in that neighbourhood.... We're going to start the process of designing how it will be remediated and the time frames and so on.

It gets difficult to translate. What makes perfect sense in the context of a gas leak from a gas station over time to one of these sites is kind of difficult. I don't want to diminish the importance of the question. It's just difficult to translate it into how it will work exactly with respect to the three very large and historic sites that we're dealing with.

J. MacPhail: Does the principle of polluter-pay continue to be entrenched in provincial legislation?

Hon. G. Abbott: Yes.

J. MacPhail: I just had our researchers look for the contaminated sites on the website after the minister had said that there are 13 high-risk sites. There are only two listed on the website of the ministry — Britannia and Pacific Place. Why? Why are there not 13 listed?

Hon. G. Abbott: A couple of points here. I mentioned these were priority sites. These are ones that have been identified. I'm also advised by staff that they are in the process of updating the site. More will appear. Whether all 13 of these priority sites will appear as high-risk sites remains to be seen.

Vote 35(S) approved.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES:
MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND
AIR PROTECTION

Vote 38(S): ministry operations, \$7,800,000 — approved.

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

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:43 p.m.

[1645]

The House resumed; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

Committee of Supply reported resolutions.

Deputy Speaker: When shall the report be considered?

Hon. C. Hansen: Now, Mr. Speaker. I move the report of resolutions from the Committee of Supply on March 2, 2005, be now received, taken as read and agreed to.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that there be granted from and out of the consolidated revenue fund the sum of \$63.8 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. 11)

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: a bill intituled Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 11).

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

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: The use of supplementary estimates is consistent with the spirit of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. This supply bill is introduced to provide supply for the operation of government programs for the 2004-05 fiscal year, as outlined in the supplementary estimates (No. 11) 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.

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

Bill 18 introduced, read a first time and ordered to proceed to second reading forthwith.

Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT, 2004-2005
(SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES No. 11)

Hon. C. Hansen: I move Bill 18 be now read a second time.

Motion approved.

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

Bill 18, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 11), 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. 11)

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 18; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:49 p.m.

Sections 1 and 2 approved.

Preamble approved.

Schedule approved.

Title approved.

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

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 4:49 p.m.

[1650]

The House resumed; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

Bill 18, Supply Act, 2004-2005 (Supplementary Estimates No. 11), reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BASES, 2004-2005, AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: a bill intituled Ministerial Accountability Bases, 2004-2005, Amendment Act, 2005.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move that Bill 19 be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: The Ministerial Accountability Bases, 2004-2005, Amendment Act, 2005, provides for an increase in the amount of operating expenses for the various ministries for purposes of ministerial accountability under the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Ac-

countability Act. The additional amount for each minister has been debated and passed by this Legislature.

I move that the bill be put on the orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 19 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.

Hon. C. Hansen: I request a five-minute recess.

Deputy Speaker: The House will recess for five minutes.

The House recessed from 4:52 p.m. to 4:53 p.m.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Hon. C. Hansen: I call Committee of the Whole for consideration of Bill 21.

Committee of the Whole House

CROWN COUNSEL AGREEMENT CONTINUATION ACT

The House in committee on Bill 21; H. Long in the chair.

The committee met at 4:55 p.m.

On section 1.

Hon. G. Bruce: I would just like to introduce my staff who are with me: Rick Connolly, who is the deputy minister, and Annette Wall, who is my assistant deputy minister.

J. MacPhail: We're about to debate Bill 21 clause by clause, where the government has outlawed two arbitration decisions awarding increased pay and benefits to the Crown counsel of the British Columbia government. Yesterday the minister conceded this in public: that the government had freely entered into the arbitration process; that the appointed arbitrator concluded that prosecutors should be awarded a 13 percent increase retroactive to April 2003; and that when the government fought this decision, a subsequent arbitrator ruled that the government had acted in bad faith.

The minister admitted all that. If he wants the context, it was *The Bill Good Show* for CKNW. But I'm sure he knows exactly when he said all of that — conceded that. So that's the context in which I'll be debating this legislation.

The government did agree to a process. The process called for negotiations first. Then, if negotiations were to fail, arbitration was the final decision-making process. The government was only able, under the agreement, to reject the decision on a reasoned basis. However, when that was tested at a second arbitration, the

arbitrator found there was no reasoned basis for rejecting the first arbitration.

In fact, here's what the minister did say yesterday when he admitted that, regardless of the arbitration process, his B.C. Liberal government had a fixed mandate of zero-zero-and-zero. I quote from the minister. Yesterday he said: "From the word go, we have said what we were going to do." That was his reference and description of the zero-zero-and-zero mandate.

No wonder the second arbitrator found that the government's rejection of the first arbitration was, and I quote that arbitrator, "not rational, legitimate or in good faith." That was an actual legal determination by the arbitrator. He also went on to say that the government didn't have a single rationale for rejection that was "reasoned."

Yesterday the minister basically gave a paraphrase of what he's always done which is: "It's our way or the highway." No one in the profession that's supposed to make decisions on a reasoned basis would accept that arbitrary, dictatorial way, so the government does what it always does. It brings in legislation — the hammer — to get its own way. It's going to be in that context that I'll be debating this legislation clause by clause.

The definition of "Crown counsel agreement" under section 1 reads thus: "'Crown Counsel Agreement' means the agreement entered into under section 4.1 of the Crown Counsel Act by the government and the BCCCA on January 5, 2001, as extended until March 31, 2005 under Article 3 of that agreement."

I looked up that section, and here's what 4.1(3) reads. It says: "The employer and the BCCCA must bargain collectively in good faith and make every reasonable effort to conclude agreements referred to in subsection (2)."

An arbitrator ruled that the government acted in bad faith. Why is it that the government now refers to a piece of legislation? Why do they mock a process that requires them to act in good faith in this legislation, where they're enshrining bad-faith bargaining?

[1700]

Hon. G. Bruce: There was bargaining that was taking place before the arbitration and then in the arbitration. It had always been the position of government that this set of negotiations, like others throughout government, would be covered by the mandate of zero-zero-and-zero.

J. MacPhail: This minister is particularly good at asserting his point of view, despite what the law says and despite what those who are to interpret the law say about him. Here he is. He stands up again and says: "We never planned on doing anything but zero-zero-and-zero."

Then let me ask the minister this: how can anyone have faith in an arbitration process where an arbitrator deliberately said that the government's rejection of the original arbitration decision, called the Taylor decision, was not reasoned, legitimate, rational or in good faith? That's a legal finding by an arbitrator against this government.

The minister's response is to stand up and say: "Well, we never intended to do anything in good faith. We said it was zero-zero-and-zero, so tough tooties." Is that the minister's response to a legal finding in an arbitration that his government acted in bad faith?

Hon. G. Bruce: It had been government's position. We assumed that the arbitrator would take note, take into consideration the zero-zero-zero mandate and the fact that it had been applied evenly across the entire government sector throughout the province in all aspects.

J. MacPhail: But so what? The government went into an arbitration process. Is the minister's definition of an arbitration process: "We like it as long as we get our way"? Is that his definition of an arbitration process? Are there other areas where the minister may feel jeopardized by his definition of what arbitration is?

Hon. G. Bruce: As a government, we're clear, to begin with, that we're working under a zero-zero-zero mandate. We've actually been able to complete 81 agreements now. With the docks there were some challenges, but we found our way home on that one.

[1705]

We made it clear in this particular instance that this group, as well, would be covered under the mandate of zero-zero-zero. In an effort to be fair and balanced to all of the members in the public sector, that's why we're taking this action here now.

J. MacPhail: I understand that that's the government's mantra. It's a mantra that doesn't make sense to anybody who's a fair and reasonable person in this province.

Let me just review a little bit of history here, because this has a long history that has many words behind it by the then Liberal opposition. The current Attorney General has spoken much to the Crown counsel's work conditions in this Legislature.

In 2001 Crown counsel was in negotiations with the then NDP administration. The government of the day and the Crown Counsel Association set up a good-faith bargaining process that was established in legislation in the year 2001. At that time, the then Liberal opposition had all sorts of criticism for the NDP government of the day about how they were treating Crown counsel so badly. It was despicable — these hard-working people.

I'd love to read into the record the *Hansard* speeches that I have right now of what the then Liberal opposition said, but I can just summarize it by saying that the legislated process for the good-faith bargaining between the government and the Crown counsel was established, and the then B.C. Liberal opposition voted for it unanimously — unanimously. That's after taking a whole bunch of shots at the previous government — a whole bunch of shots about how miserly they were toward the Crown counsel of the day.

An agreement was reached under the legislative process. The contract was rolled over, and it terminated in April of this year.

Sorry. The contract wasn't rolled over. That's what the government's doing today. The government and the Crown counsel then entered into a bargaining process pursuant to the legislation that the then Liberal opposition voted for unanimously.

There was an arbitration in the year 2004, the Colin Taylor arbitration, pursuant to legislation. Here's what he determined: Crown counsel in British Columbia have fallen behind Crown counsel in the three accepted comparator jurisdictions of Alberta, the Department of Justice and Ontario. What do we mean by accepted comparators? Well, the government went before Colin Taylor and said: "Yes, we agree, Mr. Arbitrator, that there are three areas you should examine to compare the wages and working conditions of the B.C. Crown counsel, and we agree that those three areas are Ontario; Alberta; and the federal ministry, the Department of Justice."

In fact, there was quite a bit of time spent on that at the hearing, as both parties accepted those comparators. Mr. Taylor reiterated that in his '04 arbitration. He determined that a market adjustment increase must take place. A market adjustment — What does that mean? Well, when this government gave huge, wonking increases to their deputy ministers, that's what they called it — a market adjustment. That's what we have to do in order to attract the best and the brightest — a market adjustment. It's a labour market term.

Mr. Taylor awarded a market adjustment increase. He recommended a 13 percent increase effective April 1, 2003 — not a 39 percent increase, as this minister tries to spin it, but a 13 percent increase. He made decisions on non-pecuniary issues, such as working conditions — I'll get to those in a moment — level and process of advancement, professional development and working conditions for Crown prosecutors in remote areas of the province. The Liberal government rejected all of that. They appealed that decision.

[1710]

Pursuant to the legislation, the appeal was heard by Mr. Jones in February of 2005. Here's what Jones determined. He said that the government must implement the decision of the Taylor award. There would be a 13 percent raise in pay over the three-year term of the contract commencing April 1, 2003 — so 13-zero-and-zero. Not 13-13-and-13, but 13-zero-and-zero. He said that any rejection of the Taylor award was "not rational, legitimate or in good faith." He also went on to say that there was not a single rationale for rejection that was "reasoned," and he determined that the government did not negotiate in good faith.

My question is this: how is it that the Minister of Labour can determine that Crown prosecutors will have any confidence in the Attorney General — who is responsible for this, by the way — when his government is legislating a bad-faith deal and is willing to overturn the law simply to have its own way?

Hon. G. Bruce: Just for clarification: the Taylor award was a three-person panel; two were in favour and one was opposed. The Attorney General had the right to reject and did so. The Crowns appealed that decision, and that then was the Jones arbitration.

With respect to labour market adjustment, first of all, I'd like to be clear. For the record and for anybody out there in TV land who is listening: these are hard-working people, and they do a good job for British Columbia. The award was such that they were suggesting the 13 percent be in the first year. What we have done is acknowledged that, only we're giving it in the third year because of the fact that we're in a government mandate of zero-and-zero in those same two years. To be fair and balanced to all the people in the public sector, we felt that needed to be done.

In regards to the comparators across the country, it's clear that we are in good stead relative to Ontario, Alberta and the federal government. They are higher, as we explained and spoke about yesterday. Ontario is higher. With this adjustment, we would be higher than Alberta. The acknowledgment could be that they haven't yet decided on what their compensation would be for '06-07. I acknowledged that yesterday.

J. MacPhail: No, you didn't.

Hon. G. Bruce: I did. I also acknowledged — and I want to be clear on this — the apples to apples of the hours paid, not the hours worked. I think we have to be fair and balanced in this. In the discussion that was had yesterday, we were talking about the hours of work as listed in Ontario, the federal government and Alberta, as compared to the hours listed in British Columbia. It was not necessarily the hours worked. If you were going to compare the dollar figure of the minimum, the dollar figure of the maximum, the hours of work that are itemized and also the benefits or the holidays — when, in fact, we had a greater number of holidays in British Columbia.... All of those go into that comparator.

From a labour market adjustment, as we've tried to do in all the categories across the public sector.... Where there have been, in our view, the criteria that would substantiate a labour market adjustment, we've given that labour market adjustment within the zero-zero mandate. We didn't feel at this point, with where these numbers were here and what we're faced with on this arbitration, that we had the mandate of zero-and-zero. We have put the 13 percent on the last year.

[1715]

J. MacPhail: I love the minister's coached explanation of what they did with this arbitration. It's a three-person arbitration, and because their nominee votes against the arbitration, that gives them the moral right to reject the arbitration process completely. Again it shows the arrogance. "We didn't get our way on a three-person panel, so we threw the whole process out." That's supposed to be a legitimate defence.

What if it had worked the other way? Mr. Chair, just think how vulnerable people are in this province to

this government's dictatorial approach. What if the arbitrator had ruled in favour of the government's position and the Crown counsel's nominee had objected to the arbitration? Would this government have then tolerated the Crown counsel saying: "We don't like the arbitration process. We're going to go out on strike"? No. They would have said: "Hey. This is the arbitration process. This is the law of the land. You have to live with it, Crown counsel." But oh, no — not this government. They lose an arbitration, and then they have the gall to stand up and say: "Well, our person on the arbitration board didn't like it."

How dare this minister stand up and insult Crown counsel like he just did about the hours of work? We'll get to the hours of work in a moment, and I'll read into the record what Crown counsel are saying about this government's treatment of them. I'll read into the record, but right now I'll deal with the wages.

This minister's government went to the arbitration and accepted Ontario and Alberta and the Department of Justice in Ottawa as the accepted comparators, and now the minister says: "Oh, well. So what?" Then he tries to say: "We're actually raising the wages by 13 percent two years later than what two arbitrators awarded, and it's the same as in Ontario, Alberta and the Department of Justice." No, it isn't. Not one of those jurisdictions has negotiated wages yet for Crown counsel for '06-07. The minute this award is shoved down the throats through legislation by every single one of these Liberal backbenchers, the Crown counsel will already be behind again — substantially behind.

This minister has the gall, in a coached way from his colleagues, to stand up and say: "Well, this is all legitimate." The only ground on which anyone — either party — was allowed to appeal the original arbitration award was on grounds of reason — reasoned grounds. The second arbitrator found explicitly that the government didn't have one reasoned ground to appeal the award. Shame on them.

Section 1 approved on division.

On section 2.

J. MacPhail: Section 2 talks about the terms of the imposition of the wages and working conditions on Crown counsel. The minister just now talked about hours of work. Yesterday he was on the radio saying: "Our Crown counsel have a 35-hour workweek, and in other jurisdictions they have a 36-hour workweek." Well, let me read into the record how he insulted Crown counsel. Let me just read it, Mr. Chair. The government itself brought on this criticism.

This is a letter dated today. It's from Michael van Klaveren. He's the president of the B.C. Crown Counsel Association. It's to the Minister of Skills Development and Labour.

[1720]

"Dear Sir:

"I write to you in my capacity as president of the British Columbia Crown Counsel Association, asking you

that you publicly clarify comments that you have made and issue an apology to Crown counsel and their families.

"In justifying your legislation nullifying the arbitration ruling of Mr. Jones, QC, you have stated publicly, and most recently in the Legislature yesterday, that prosecutors have a 35-hour workweek. This statement is completely false. It is not uncommon for Crown counsel to routinely work 50, 60 or 70 hours a week. Certainly that is so whether they are on a complex, lengthy trial, where it is not uncommon to work every day of the week including weekends, or staffing the remand courts and everything in between.

"Your statements are disrespectful of Crown counsel and their families. Far too often have spouses of Crown counsel had to soldier on with family life while Crown counsel have put in those long working days for which they do not receive any overtime compensation. You obviously have not informed yourself of what it is that Crown counsel do on a day-to-day basis and how they serve the public. I would ask that you do so by consulting management in the Ministry of Attorney General and then publicly clarify the truth of the matter.

"Management will tell you that a 35-hour workweek is a fiction that is an accounting artifact necessary to accommodate the payroll system and does not reflect reality. I would also suggest that you contact members of the defence bar and members of the judiciary. In fact, you may wish to speak to Bill Smart, QC, who authored a report on Crown counsel workload. Perhaps you should also consult the Attorney General. It is simply a well-known fact that Crown counsel work very long hours. Your misunderstanding of this issue is consistent with your government's general misunderstanding of its legal obligations to apply with Jones, QC's ruling. We look forward to your prompt attention to this matter."

Here's what got the Crown counsel so riled. This minister stands up and says: "Hey, our B.C. Crown counsel have better working conditions than other jurisdictions. Look at their workweek. It's less than other jurisdictions."

Well, what we know is that the only reason anyone ever says they have a 35-hour workweek is to accommodate their pay within a computerized accounting system. In other words, that's the salary they get. They get no overtime, no time in lieu. That's the salary they get for a calendar workweek. The minister has the gall to interpret that as a 35-hour workweek. Shame on him.

Here are two other letters that I just received. These are both from women. These are from women who are Crown counsel, in response to the minister's insult about how hard they work.

"I argue cases in the Court of Appeal and occasionally the Supreme Court of Canada. My job is to ensure that convictions of some of the most serious offences known to the law are upheld. I love my job. I'm committed to serving the public by being the best prosecutor I can be. However, the government's recent actions, compounded by the Minister of Labour's ill-informed blathering both in the press and the Legislature about our situation, make me sick to my stomach.

"His reference to our 35-hour workweek as compared to Ontario Crown's 36-hour workweek is a joke. Our paycheques certainly reflect a seven-hour day. I'll give him that much. The reality is generally at least nine

hours plus evenings and weekends, for which we are neither paid overtime nor given time off in lieu."

That's one. Boy, I'll tell you, the government caucus members are sure going to get a reality check real soon about how they treat people, how they treat public servants like Crown counsel, Mr. Chair.

Here's what another female Crown counsel wrote. She says:

[1725]

"Regrettably, the Minister of Labour is decidedly uninformed. His reference to our slightly shorter 35-hour workweek as compared to Ontario Crowns' 36-hour workweek is astoundingly uninformed. Although our paycheques certainly reflect a seven-hour day, 35-hour workweek, reality is much different. I put in at least 45 hours a week, which requires evenings and weekends. I used to work much longer hours, 50 to 60 a week, but decided the toll on my health and relationships was not worth it, as we are neither paid overtime nor given time off in lieu. Nor is there much prospect for advancement in terms of merit positions, no matter how hard you work or how complex and difficult the cases are that you handle."

She goes on to say:

"The government's recent actions, compounded by the Minister of Labour's ill-informed blathering both in the press and the Legislature about our situation, make me feel sick and disheartened — so much so that I seriously have to consider whether it is worth staying on any longer. That only compounds the disillusionment that I feel and that I know many of my colleagues, all dedicated and highly professional, feel as well. What a sad day for the administration of criminal justice in this province."

Of course, Mr. Chair, the government will continue to say how well-treated the Crown prosecutors are in this province, and the Crown prosecutors will continue to feel mistreated and disheartened and will probably not stay.

[K. Stewart in the chair.]

How does that help the administration of justice in this province? This government doesn't care a whit about public safety — not a whit about public safety — when they know that they're deliberately creating another bottleneck in the administration of justice by forcing Crown prosecutors to leave.

The Taylor arbitration dealt with non-pecuniary issues such as work conditions, level and process of advancement, and professional development. This legislation, Bill 21, outlaws any of those changes. Why?

Hon. G. Bruce: I just want to be clear again on the aspect of the comparator that was being explained yesterday in second reading and the hours we were talking about. It's always great to take something out of context. I think it's probably better when it's actually explained in context.

What we were doing there.... We were explaining where British Columbia was in regards to the minimum amount going in for a Crown and where they were from the standpoint of the maximum amount and how that compared in dollar terms to Alberta, the federal government and Ontario. Also, we then were talk-

ing about vacation days — again, as part of the package, just to try and give the comparison that was going on.

This was no slight to the Crown counsel at all. It was fully understood that these are only numbers that are used, just as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned in respect to a computer program for the generation of compensation. In regards to the days they had off, the hours that were worked, I can say this too: the Crowns in Ontario, the federal government and Alberta wouldn't work just those hours. I know that and you know that.

J. MacPhail: Exactly. But you're using it to say that ours are better off.

Hon. G. Bruce: No, not at all.

J. MacPhail: Yes, you did, yesterday.

The Chair: Members, through the Chair.

Hon. G. Bruce: No, I didn't, actually. All I did was just state them all right across the spectrum: what was taking place in Ontario, what took place with the federal government, what took place with Alberta and how they all compared. That was all. That's all I was doing.

I even said in my comments that our Crown counsel do a good job. The situation was such that what we were awarding here was 13 percent. It was an acknowledgment of that. I understand the fact that people would love to have that 13 percent in the first year and not in the third year. You would like that too. I understand that.

[1730]

I also understand that we've been working in a mandate of zero-and-zero. We're acknowledging that. We did the zero-and-zero, and then at the end of this contract, for '06-07, it's a 13 percent increase. That's an acknowledgment of the job and the work that they're doing.

In regards to the labour market side of adjustment, of turnover rate, in the general public service in the province, I believe it's just over 6 percent. In this particular field it's just over 2 percent. We're not seeing that turnover in this particular aspect of the public sector.

I fully appreciate the extra hours and time that people put in here. Within the contract, I believe there are an additional five days that are just earmarked. It probably doesn't compensate in total for the extra hours that they commit as well, but that's over and above the vacation pay they get.

You know, that's not to say: "Holy crow, this is the most generous award one could get." It's just acknowledgment of the fact of what's there in the contract. The other was just simply an acknowledgment of fact of what the hours were here, what the hours were on the computer program, if you like — for Alberta, for the federal government and for Ontario.

You know, we do fully appreciate the job the Crown counsels do in British Columbia on behalf of the citizens. At the same time, we are working within the mandate, and here is a 13 percent increase. Every single person in this House would love to have that 13 percent increase at the beginning rather than in the third year. I understand that — same with anybody in the workforce. But we're working in the parameters of what's been laid out by government, and we've come forward with a 13 percent increase, that being in the third year.

J. MacPhail: How the minister's tune has changed. Believe you me, Mr. Chair, yesterday this minister was using as a sword the Crown counsels' "shorter work-week" to defend his government's actions, and he got caught out. He got caught out, and now he's backing off, because he got caught out. In fact, everybody interpreted that he was defending his government's outrageous actions by justifying it in the context of their wages and working conditions, which were, as he was defining them, superior. He got caught out with the reality, and now he's trying to change his message.

Mr. Chair, I actually should just sit down and let the Minister of Labour go on and on, because it's to everyone's political advantage except his government's. Every moment he speaks, his government is harmed. But there's a real issue here, and that's what's right and what's fair. I mean, this government acts like a banana republic; every time it doesn't like something, it comes in and changes the law.

Here's what the current Attorney General said when we were discussing the actual legislation to set up this bargaining process: "I do find it truly astonishing that anyone on behalf of a government can sit down in a negotiation, particularly with its employees, and say that to achieve a result, to settle a dispute, we will change the law." That was the current Attorney General when he was in opposition, challenging our government — my government of the day — to set up this process.

Well, we were actually setting up a law as a dispute resolution mechanism. No one would have predicted that his words would come back to haunt him, that his government is now achieving a result to eliminate a third-party fair arbitration process that the government willingly entered into.

Well, Mr. Chair, my question was.... The Taylor arbitration dealt with non-pecuniary matters that have been completely outlawed by this Bill 21. Why has the government ignored all of those recommendations?

[1735]

Hon. G. Bruce: All we were trying to do here was to keep in it the narrowest of contexts in dealing with the wage amount. We have rolled the contract over — all the terms and conditions of the existing contract that they were living in — with the aspect that a 13 percent increase would occur for the year '06-07.

Of course, as the member opposite knows, there's also a process where they can bargain midterm if they

like in regards to some of these other issues. But the issue around the actual compensation has been dealt with. Again, from the standpoint of the legislative cycle in this instance, it was as tight as we could: "Here's the contract that you currently work within. We'll just roll that forward and allow for a 13 percent increase in the final year."

J. MacPhail: We'll get to section 3. The government has ignored two arbitrations completely. They've actually outlawed working conditions and non-monetary matters of the arbitration awards. Now the minister is saying: "Oh well, they can come back and negotiate those later." Oh, I'm sure the Crown counsel are going to trust the government on that one.

Yesterday in the media the Minister of Labour was questioned very carefully about why the government bothered to enter into an arbitration process in the first place when they had no intention of honouring it. Here's what the Minister of Labour replied: "There are a whole lot of other things that can be dealt with and worked through in arbitration."

Well, right back at him. There were a whole bunch of other things decided by the arbitrator — things such as safety and working conditions for Crown counsel who are working in remote areas. Why are those not dealt with? Why have those been outlawed by this legislation?

Hon. G. Bruce: Again, what we did was deal in the narrowest of contexts in regards to the legislation. Those particular issues, as the member opposite has noted, can be dealt with under section 3. The parties can come back and work those particular concerns through.

J. MacPhail: The minister, and his government, wilfully outlaws an arbitration, destroys it — outlaws non-monetary benefits that the Crown counsel were awarded, takes away Crown counsel's right to do anything else — and then says: "Gee, let's set up another process where you can negotiate with the government." How foolish does this minister think Crown counsel are?

[1740-1745]

Section 2 approved on the following division:

YEAS — 46

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|-------------|------------|----------|
| Falcon | Coell | Les |
| Chong | Locke | McMahon |
| Christensen | Bell | Barisoff |
| Roddick | Wilson | Bray |
| Cobb | Thorpe | Murray |
| Plant | Hansen | Bond |
| Bruce | Brice | Abbott |
| Neufeld | Coleman | Anderson |
| Jarvis | Hogg | Nurany |
| Nebbeling | R. Stewart | Hunter |
| Long | Mayencourt | Johnston |

| | | |
|----------|---------|---------------|
| Belsey | Krueger | J. Reid |
| Nijjar | Hayer | Visser |
| Lekstrom | MacKay | Halsey-Brandt |
| Whittred | Sultan | Hawes |
| | Manhas | |

NAYS — 3

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| MacPhail | Brar | Nettleton |
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Hon. G. Bruce: I move that we rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:47 p.m.

The House resumed; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

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

Hon. G. Bruce moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:49 p.m.