



Second Session, 38th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF
DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 22, 2006
Afternoon Sitting
Volume 7, Number 12

THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

ISSN 0709-1281

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

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
Her Honour the Honourable Iona V. Campagnolo, CM, OBC

SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2006

The House met at 2:05 p.m.

Prayers.

Introductions by Members

D. MacKay: Last night many of us had the opportunity to meet with the Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia. Joining us today somewhere upstairs, from the Indian River guide-outfitters out of the Smithers area, is Ginny Larson. I would ask the House to welcome her to the chamber today.

H. Bains: In the House today are my good friends from Steel. They're led by the director of district three, Steve Hunt. He's with the normative board. Monty Mearns, Bill Derbyshire, Scott Lunny, Bill Routley and Rick Wangler. They're here to educate us about the concerns in the forest for safety. Please join me in welcoming them to the House today.

D. Hayer: We have some very special guests visiting our Legislature today from the B.C. Care Providers Association. First is Art Foster, president and CEO of Pro Vita Care Management; Wayne Baron, president and CEO of Fraser Intermediate Care; Scott Nicoll of Hamilton, Duncan, Armstrong and Stewart of Surrey, barristers and solicitors; Marilyn Slade, the CEO of Villa Capital; Ed Helfrich, CEO of the B.C. Care Providers Association; Dave Pel, CGA, from David Pel and Co.; and Pat Doyle, CFO, from Elim Housing Society in my riding of Surrey-Tynehead.

Would the House please make them very welcome. They were here discussing some health care issues with our caucus.

R. Chouhan: In the House today are two dear friends, Scott McRitchie and Kevin Zwick. Please join me to welcome them.

Hon. P. Bell: I'm very pleased to introduce to the House today some folks from Prince George. They were down for the guide-outfitters dinner last night. They're Ken and Crystal Watson and their two daughters. I might add that I'd like to pass on special thanks to Crystal for looking after my wife when I'm down here in Victoria. They go out and walk on a regular basis. So thanks very much to Crystal, and welcome to the House.

C. Evans: A couple of other Steelworkers are visiting us here today: Frank Everitt, president of the Prince George local, and a guy I especially want to introduce, Richard Tones. I wanted to assure the House that all rumours to the contrary, Richard is really not a slum landlord. His house could be fixed up with a little bit of paint. Those people that he rents to are really honourable citizens and appreciate the space. We're saving the house in case the Steelworkers ever send him back to

Victoria to work here. Then he could live in his own house.

J. Rustad: It's my pleasure today to introduce to the House Mary-Jane Fillion, who is actually from just south of my riding — from Hixon in my neighbouring riding of Cariboo North. She's also with the guide-outfitters and is very active with the North Central Guide Outfitters. Outfitters is a very good organization for our province that generates more than \$120 million in economic activity. Would the House please make her welcome.

B. Simpson: I would like to add to the list of Steelworkers representatives who are here today making sure that we're well apprised of the safety issues in the forest industry. In the House are Leslie McNabb from Black Creek, Leanne Baird from Duncan, George Rogers from Port Alberni, Ray Hudden from New Westminster, Dan Ewaskow from Prince George, Jeff Brumley from Cranbrook, and Dennis Devoe and Kim Polak, who both hail from Vancouver.

Will the House please make them welcome.

[1410]

Hon. G. Abbott: As members may be aware, this week is Anemia Awareness Week. The Anemia Institute is holding an anemia screening clinic in the Legislature this week, and I'd encourage all members who may be feeling anemic, like me, to visit the clinic and be tested. It is my pleasure to welcome three representatives who are here today in the Legislature from the Anemia Institute. They are Durhane Wong-Rieger, Virginia Krupiz and Michelle Levesque. I'd ask the House to join me in making them all welcome.

S. Fraser: I would like to take this time to welcome a friend and constituent. He has been mentioned already, but I'd just like to say that George Rogers has supposedly been retired and retiring, yet he has been devoting a lot of time towards protecting workers in the forests. So please help me in welcoming him here today.

N. Macdonald: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House Bob Madders, with Steelworkers from the East Kootenays. I ask the House to help me make him feel welcome, please.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, yesterday I think we missed a milestone in the chambers. One of the Clerks who sits in front of us actually went past the three-quarters-of-a-century mark. Could we wish Mr. MacMinn a happy birthday.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

VANCOUVER HOMELESS
OUTREACH PROJECT

L. Mayencourt: I rise to highlight an important initiative that's taking place in downtown Vancouver. It is

a program in which we partner with the city of Vancouver to connect homeless people with income support and housing.

The Vancouver homeless outreach project, or HOPE, is a pilot project aimed at taking homeless people from the streets of Vancouver and providing them with income assistance and housing, often within the same day. The pilot project began in October 2005 and will conclude at the end of this month.

The initial phase of the homeless outreach project was in place from October to December, and during that phase homeless individuals from the West End and the downtown east side were assisted. During the second phase, which is run from January to March of this year, individuals from the downtown south and the downtown east side were assisted.

The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance in partnership with the city of Vancouver and the Carnegie Centre and their housing department have worked together to make this project a success.

I'm really proud of the success of this pilot outreach initiative in combatting homelessness in our community. Of the people brought into the outreach offices, 95 percent have begun receiving income assistance and have been provided with a place to live in the same day. To this date, this initiative has assisted 89 previously homeless people. Think of it — almost 90 people taken off the streets, given a stable income and a place to live. I'm really, really proud of that. No other government has ever tried this here in British Columbia.

Our government recognizes that many people living in Vancouver and in other communities face unique challenges and complex issues including homelessness, addiction and mental health. One of this government's goals is to build the best system of support for British Columbia's most vulnerable citizens. We are doing it. We are committed to working with other levels of government all across this province, with community partners, to ensure that individuals in need have better access to the support and services that will make a real difference in their lives.

SINKING OF B.C. FERRY

C. James: I rise to ask the House to join with me and all British Columbians in expressing relief, knowing that all the passengers and crew aboard the ferry vessel *Queen of the North* are safe.

Thanks to the rapid response of the B.C. Ferries crew, everyone aboard was safely off the ferry vessel before it sank early Wednesday morning en route to Port Hardy. Their professionalism ensured that there was no loss of life.

I also want to make sure to thank the Coast Guard for their quick response. Their actions meant that the recovery of survivors from lifeboats began within 19 minutes of the call.

I also want to express my appreciation to the people of Hartley Bay, who opened their hearts and their community to the passengers and crew and offered assistance and shelter to those in crisis.

[1415]

I fully expect that the provincial government will make available to the public the results of the investigation that will take place so that we can learn from it and prevent it happening again.

As important as it is that British Columbians have an accessible ferry service, it's equally important they have confidence in the safety of the vessels they use. A full accounting of the circumstances that led to this incident will ensure that public confidence is maintained.

UNMARKED GRAVESITES OF VETERANS

G. Hogg: James Irving McMillan was a distinguished Canadian veteran. He was recruited on Christmas Eve in 1901 by the North West Mounted Police. He fought as part of an outnumbered British force at the battle of Hart's River, one of Canada's bloodiest days in the Boer War. He was discharged in South Africa in 1902 and then served with the South African constabulary, which was staffed by many ex-North West Mounted Police members.

These Canadians are credited with integrating the Boers into various communities. This continued the legacy of keeping the peace which was started by the North West Mounted Police on the plains of western Canada and which is now an important part of our Canadian heritage. As a result of their service in the Boer War, the North West Mounted Police was given the title "Royal," and the Stetson and Strathcona boots became an important part of the RCMP dress uniforms.

In 1916 James joined the Canadian Grenadier Guards and fought at the Somme and at Courcellette, where we suffered 24,000 casualties. In 1917 he joined 520 Canadians for the assault on Vimy Ridge, three days in a battle which helped define Canada. They took their objective, while 55 percent of their battalion were injured or killed. James McMillan was awarded the military medal for gallantry at Vimy Ridge. He is credited with twice crossing no man's land to provide crucial information to the brigade regarding the progress of the attack.

James died in White Rock in 1965 at the age of 87. He was buried in an unmarked grave in the veterans' section of the Sunnyside Lawn Cemetery. He is one of an estimated 3,000 veterans in unmarked graves across British Columbia. In May the RCMP, led by Constable Cyril, the armed forces, the Royal Canadian Legion and the local school children will hold a ceremony to commemorate and mark the grave of James Irving McMillan and the unmarked gravesites of 35 other veterans.

These men and women will be remembered, while many hundreds of veterans who served our country still lie in unmarked graves. With the assistance of the Last Post Fund society, the armed forces, the Royal Canadian Legion, the RCMP and local groups, we can ensure that our veterans are remembered in a spirit of commemoration by communities across this province. I believe that it is our challenge and it is our responsibility.

WORLD WATER DAY

S. Simpson: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize World Water Day. First established in 1992 by the United Nations, March 22 was set as the day for people across the world to recognize the essential role of water in our lives. It's a day for activities that promote public awareness about conservation and development of our water resources.

We have an abundance of water riches in British Columbia, particularly compared to much of the world; 9.5 percent of our land base is covered by fresh water. We are incredibly fortunate compared to the billions of people worldwide who face serious health issues and premature death, largely because of their lack of a supply of clean, drinkable water.

However, even in B.C. we must stay aware of this most valuable and irreplaceable resource and not take it for granted. For us, World Water Day is a time to ask ourselves whether we are doing the best job possible as stewards for the fresh water resource.

Unfortunately, we cannot always feel as good about our efforts as we might want to. We need to do a better job on water conservation, including maintaining public control over the resource. We need to do a better job on public awareness and education, including getting people to do simple things, like using the short cycle on their washing machine or fixing that leaky faucet that they've been ignoring.

We need to work with the resource sector, including our farming community, to reduce the use of fresh water, while still allowing these enterprises to prosper. Water-dependent industries, including power production in B.C., bring over \$17 billion to the economy of B.C., and that is critically important. But even more important is the invaluable role of water for drinking and public safety.

[1420]

World Water Day is an important event, and I would call on every member to think about the critical role water plays in our lives when they turn on a tap or have a drink. Along with air, it is our most valuable resource and public asset, and one that certainly deserves our attention and recognition every day in this Legislature.

MARGARET STRONGITHARM

R. Cantelon: I rise in the House today to honour one of Nanaimo's most prominent citizens, Margaret Strongitharm. If I were to stand here and cite the accolades that Margaret has received for exemplary community leadership, I would consume the entire two minutes and not have time to tell you about what a warm, sincere and wonderful person she is.

But here are a few: the Order of Canada for her work on many federal women's commissions; freeman of the city of Nanaimo to recognize her as a leader and community builder; receiving an honorary doctorate of laws from Malaspina University College. There is a room named in her honour at the Port Theatre, which

she was instrumental in seeing built. Margaret has served as a city councillor, on the school board and with too many other organizations to name.

She was married to Ted, a lawyer by profession but a great raconteur and storyteller by avocation. Ted was a prominent leader of the Conservative Party. Theirs was a political family, and the dinner table was a daily forum of current events. Their son Bruce, however, became permanently afflicted by this constant exposure to political environment and now works in this building for the Minister of Forests and Range.

It was my good fortune to have Margaret on my board when I chaired what is now the Port Theatre Society. There was no theatre then, just a dream. It was a dream Margaret was able to imbue in us as a reality. It was not a time for smooth sailing for the Port Theatre Society. We were running out of money, and the city was running out of patience with us, but Margaret never wavered.

You might envision a steely persona — the Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher. Our Margaret, however, is a sincere, serene lady, always polite, calm and fully self-possessed. She had a unique connection to the truth and positive hope. She would never overreact to a crisis, real or imagined. Margaret would give a little, amused laugh, and that was a signal that nothing on earth is that serious. Then her wonderful, calm insightfulness would bring us back to the task.

She was the type of person who would walk into a barroom brawl, ask people to sit down, and they would sit down. It was her working evidence of the power of the meek. Her manner may have been meek, but she was never cowed and never taken off her game. She is a living legend to me and a blessing to all who know her.

FOREST WORKER SAFETY

B. Simpson: Another log truck driver was killed this week on a Forest Service road near Mackenzie. Apparently it was the driver's first trip of the night, but that means little at this time of the year, when these drivers are affected by a season's worth of fatigue.

I've had the opportunity over the past few months to hear the stories of many forest workers and their families. A general theme of these stories is the impact that shift arrangements and working conditions are having on the bodies and minds of these workers — fatigue, not a culture of risk-taking, as some would have us believe. It is insulting to the workers who have borne the brunt of our drive to be globally competitive to suggest, as some have, that we cannot address the safety issues in the forest industry unless individual workers want to be safe.

In fact, if there's a culture of risk in the industry, it is in the boardrooms whenever decisions are made about cost control that fail to have a safety lens. If there is a culture of risk, it occurs in this room when legislation is passed that undermines the government's obligations and its ability to ensure that every worker in the forest industry is guaranteed the right to work in safe conditions and to speak out against unsafe ones.

The real risk-takers are the decision-makers, including all of us in this Legislature. Each time a worker is killed or maimed, we need to take a long look in the mirror and see if we were part of the root cause of that tragic event. One way we can collectively look in the mirror is to act on the Steelworkers' request to conduct an independent review of the government's deregulation of the forest industry. For the sake of all those who have given their lives and limbs, it is simply the right thing to do.

Oral Questions

SINKING OF B.C. FERRY

C. James: This morning we had a major disaster involving a ferry vessel. The public have a lot of questions. We know there will be a federal investigation, and I expect there will be a full investigation undertaken by B.C. Ferries.

My question is to the Transportation Minister. Can he assure the House that the results of these investigations will be made public?

[1425]

Hon. K. Falcon: If I may, Mr. Speaker, with the forbearance of the House, I would just like to take an additional moment to speak about this morning's events and address this very important issue.

At around 12:45 a.m. this morning, there was an extraordinary and very unfortunate incident with the B.C. Ferry vessel *Queen of the North*. Approximately 70 miles outside of Prince Rupert, the *Queen of the North* apparently ran aground and sank near Gil Island in the Inside Passage. To the best of our knowledge, all passengers and crew were safely evacuated to Hartley Bay and Prince Rupert. It goes without saying that without the extraordinary response from the ship's crew, local fishermen, Coast Guard and residents of Hartley Bay, this could have been a much more tragic incident.

I can assure everyone, and to the member's question directly, that extensive reviews will take place with B.C. Ferries and the federal regulators — which, as this House knows, are Transport Canada and the Transportation Safety Board — to find out exactly what happened. I will commit that whatever those reviews are will fully be made public.

I know all members of this House join with me in extending our thoughts and prayers to both the passengers and the crew as they go through what must be an extraordinarily traumatizing time.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has a supplemental.

C. James: Thank you to the minister for committing to making sure that those reports are public. We will look forward to it, and I know the public will look forward to it.

The reason this is an important question on behalf of the public is that there is a very real accountability

gap with B.C. Ferries. As we all know, it's no longer subject to freedom-of-information requests; it's no longer subject to reviews by the Auditor General. In fact, it's not really accountable to British Columbians anymore, despite the fact that taxpayers have put over half a billion dollars into that corporation since 2003.

Today there is a major disaster on our coast. There are questions surrounding the government's discussion on the corporation regarding the state of the northern fleet — questions that deserve answers.

So my question is to the Minister of Transportation. Will the minister commit today to take a step towards accountability and add B.C. Ferries to the Freedom of Information Act, and will he give the Auditor General oversight of B.C. Ferries operations?

Hon. K. Falcon: I think the member knows that there was a reason why B.C. Ferries was moved to be an independent authority. It wasn't just a bright idea that the government came up with. It was actually a recommendation that flowed from three separate reports that followed from the fast ferries fiasco. Those reports, including the Auditor General's, suggested.... The primary suggestion was that there needed to be independence from political interference. That's exactly what we have today. That's why it's so important that that independence be maintained.

Now, the Auditor General is free to examine whatever the Auditor General wishes to examine. But I can tell you that they have accountabilities built into place, including oversight from the securities markets, which are much tougher, frankly, than this House. They have oversight in the form of an annual general meeting in which members of the public, including members of the opposition, have an opportunity to question first-hand all of the members. They have audited financial statements that must be released each and every year to ensure that the public has confidence that all of those things are taken into account.

C. Trevena: I'd like to suggest to the minister that freedom of information has nothing to do with the independence of the corporation. However, I'm not wanting to talk about politics on this day. There has been a tragedy on our coast, and I want to talk about safety.

The Premier assured British Columbians that our ferry service, our marine highway, is safe. However, the Minister of Transportation hasn't been able to give assurances that other vessels of this class are safe. So I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation whether he can clarify the government's position on this and whether those other vessels in this class are safe.

[1430]

Hon. K. Falcon: I think the member probably recognizes that the one thing we have to be very careful about is not jumping to assumptions or conclusions about what may or may not have caused the very unfortunate, tragic incident that took place today. One thing I can tell the member with absolutely great confi-

dence and certainty is that B.C. Ferries has one of the best safety records in the world. It's important to remember that B.C. Ferries plies the waters with up to 500 trips a day. That represents over 145,000 trips a year. The particular vessel that unfortunately sank today has been plying those waters for some 25 years.

The member should also know, for her information, that there is an annual inspection certificate required for each and every vessel that Transport Canada puts into place each and every year to ensure that these vessels are safe.

Let's just make sure that we don't jump to conclusions as to what the cause of this most regrettable situation was. When we get that information, we will, of course, make sure it's shared with everybody in this House so that the appropriate solutions can be put into place.

Mr. Speaker: The member for North Island has a supplemental.

FERRY SERVICE TO NORTHERN COMMUNITIES

C. Trevena: I wasn't jumping to conclusions. I was wanting to know about the vessels of the other class. I understand that the *Queen of the North* was on the Prince Rupert to Port Hardy route because the *Queen of Prince Rupert* was having its annual inspection so it will get its safety certificate. It'll have regular maintenance.

This ferry links Haida Gwaii, the Queen Charlottes, to the mainland. It links the north coast to the north Island. It has been described as a lifeline. It's what people use for medical transportation. It's for non-letter mail. It's for regular use by many, many people. It's also part of industry, because it gets goods to the islands and is good for transportation.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation how long the residents of Haida Gwaii, Queen Charlottes, and the residents of the north Island and north coast will have to wait for a ferry to be put back on that route.

Hon. K. Falcon: The member is correct in pointing out that the *Queen of Prince Rupert* was undergoing some minor maintenance work on that vessel.

I spoke to Mr. Hahn today, the president of B.C. Ferries. He advised that they will try to accelerate — obviously, within safety requirements, not to jeopardize safety at all — to make sure they can complete that work as quickly as possible and have that vessel back in operation within the coming days so that it can replace the *Queen of the North*.

But B.C. Ferries has also made it very clear to me that they will undertake whatever measures are necessary. That includes flying people in and out, if necessary, if the ferries are not there to provide the services they expect. They will barge food in, if that's necessary. They will take whatever steps need to be in place to ensure that those folks are serviced in that very important area of the province.

COASTAL COMMUNITY ACCESS TO FORESTS MINISTER

S. Fraser: Monty Hussey is a coastal forest contractor, and he has been in dispute with Cascadia over compensation for contractors impacted by the revitalization strategy. Last fall Mr. Hussey reached out to the minister for help, and he was told by ministry staff that the minister could not get involved because of a declared conflict. Mr. Hussey wasn't told this just once. It was three times.

My question is to the Minister of Forests and Range. How many other coastal communities, workers or contractors have been told by the ministry staff that this minister cannot get involved in their cases because he has a conflict?

Hon. R. Coleman: When I became the Minister responsible for forests and range last August, I filed the required letter with my deputy minister to deal with issues in and around a particular TFL in British Columbia because I have a brother that happens to work in middle management of one of the companies on the coast.

Subsequent to that, when Western Forest Industries made a bid to buy that particular company, I filed a second letter, more specific, with my deputy minister with regards to the conflict of interest. I received a letter back from the Conflict-of-Interest Commissioner advising me that I had conducted myself absolutely correctly in the manner that should be done by a minister of the Crown.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Alberni-Qualicum has a supplemental.

S. Fraser: I do. I understand what the minister is saying, and I don't think he understands what I'm referring to. I'm referring to the lack of attention he has been able to put on coastal policy because of this perceived conflict that he has stated.

The tree farm licence 44 near Port Alberni is a microcosm of forestry issues on the coast. Until last week, the minister has failed to respond to requests for assistance on the issues regarding TFL 44.

[1435]

To the Minister of Forests and Range: how many more coastal communities, workers and concerned citizens will have to take to the streets in order to get political attention to their issues because the minister has still not responded to his declared conflict with respect to coastal forest issues?

Hon. R. Coleman: Nobody is not being responded to. All that happens is that if it happens to touch a conflict with regard to one of my siblings, it is referred to my deputy minister for action versus myself. If it is something of a statutory responsibility, it's referred to my backup minister other than myself. It does not affect the overall operation of TFL 44 — only in a very small area where the person that is related to me has some involvement in a company that happens to be involved in TFL 44.

Frankly, I've been here for ten years. I've never got personal, and I'm not about to. The NDP last week got personal about some stuff to me, including making some overtures to the company with regard to my brother, which was despicable. I'm not going down that road, but hon. member, I will not put myself in a conflict of interest. I never have in this House, and nobody is being badly served in the province of British Columbia by this Minister of Forests as a result.

B. Simpson: With all respect to the minister, he is correct. We have not questioned whether or not the minister did the right thing or did the wrong thing.

The issue here is that there are people on the coast who, in a critical situation in which their livelihoods are at stake, only get access to the deputy minister, and there are people on the coast who get access to the minister.

When Western Forest Products takes over Cascadia it will be the largest corporation on the coast, with oversight over 42 percent of the annual allowable cut. My question is to the Deputy Premier. I'm not questioning the minister's decision-making or actions; I'm questioning the Premier's actions. When the coast is in crisis, why wasn't a minister put on that file who was absolutely free and unencumbered to deal with all of the issues, without having to go through and have his deputy minister deal with some and him deal with others?

Hon. R. Coleman: With all due respect to the critic across the floor, he wrote a letter to the Premier last week that was full of hearsay and innuendo, which was not true. To stand in this House and say you haven't made those types of accusations is false, and that upsets me.

However, I will read this quote to the member so that you are completely clear. This comes from H.A.D. Oliver, the Conflict-of-Interest Commissioner for British Columbia, with regard to the very takeover this member is speaking of: "As your brother is neither a director nor an officer nor a shareholder, but middle management employee, any appearance of conflict on your part, I think, is eliminated by your memorandum to your deputy minister dated November 14, 2005, of which you have been good enough to send me a copy and which I think is suitable in the circumstances."

Basically, what it says is this, hon. member. Because my brother would see no financial outcome, I can deal with the Western takeover as a minister without being encumbered.

[1440]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Could I remind members to go through the Chair.

B. Simpson: Again, I directed my question to the Deputy Premier for a reason. We don't have issue with the minister and his actions. His actions were correct.

The question is the decision to appoint the minister when there was a situation in which the minister could

not give his full attention and his personal attention to every issue on the coast.

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Member.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. The member for Cariboo North has the floor.

Continue, member.

B. Simpson: The issue here is that we have a forest sector throughout the province that is in significant crisis and significant restructuring. We have a Liberal government that has chosen to exacerbate that with sweeping forest policy changes that we are just beginning to see the implications of. We have a coast forest sector that is uniquely different from the interior.

My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier do the right thing and recommend to the Premier that a coastal forest minister be appointed so that everyone on the coast has direct access to a cabinet minister on every issue and is not encumbered by a declared conflict?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. R. Coleman: To the hon. member: none of the vision or leadership required to deal with the issues on the coast or the interior of British Columbia is affected by this small middle-management situation with regard to a forest company on the coast. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, if you were to talk to the industry, nobody has not had access to the minister with regard to the future of the coast, how we're going to price our timber with timber-pricing groups, how we work with the Truck Loggers Association, the Coast Forest Products Association, the companies themselves — nor in the interior of British Columbia.

As a matter of fact, I think the work done in the last number of months by my staff and me has actually positioned us to build a very strong future for the coastal forest industry in British Columbia and in the interior of British Columbia. The reason we can do this is that we can actually think to the future and build that, and I believe that we're doing it right.

I believe we don't have control of the dollar. I believe we don't have control of softwood lumber. But I do believe that we can put the structure in place and the future for forestry in British Columbia on a very solid footing. I have been doing that as minister, and I will continue to do that as minister on behalf of British Columbians.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN B.C. FIRE SERVICES

D. Thorne: My question is to the Solicitor General, who is responsible to provide advice to local govern-

ments on the delivery of fire protection services in this province. Just recently, we have heard that female members of the Richmond fire department have taken leave due to claims of harassment. One woman stated that she faced everything from verbal abuse to feces being placed in her boots. This is not an isolated incident. In 2004 a female firefighter in Burnaby also filed a formal complaint with the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal about crude sexual jokes, exposure to pornography, and other forms of sexual harassment.

To the Solicitor General: what is your government going to do to ensure that women firefighters provincewide are able to do their jobs without fear of sexual harassment?

Hon. J. Les: I'm aware of the allegations that have been made in that particular fire department, and I want to state unequivocally that we expect every workplace in British Columbia to be free of harassment and discrimination.

[1445]

I also expect that the municipality in question, as the employer, take all appropriate steps to ensure that that matter is dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Coquitlam-Maillardville has a supplemental.

D. Thorne: I, too, expect workplaces in British Columbia to be free of harassment, but obviously that's not the case, and that is the concern. It appears that the Solicitor General is willing to let the municipality take full responsibility, and he doesn't appear to be taking any responsibility today himself. So I will ask my next question of the Minister of Community Services.

In the past two years we have seen multiple complaints from women at more than one fire service in B.C. This suggests there could be systemic problems in the workplace culture of the fire service. To the Minister of Community Services: are you going to continue to allow individual women to carry the burden of raising complaints about the fire service? Or will you take proactive steps to ensure that we don't hear about these types of complaints again?

Hon. I. Chong: Let me say unequivocally here in this House that sexual harassment is unacceptable, and it is something that we all take very seriously. Under the B.C. Human Rights Code, there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment in all provincially regulated businesses and agencies. Employers and service providers are responsible for ensuring a harassment-free environment, including taking reasonable action to correct situations where sexual harassment does occur.

FOOD SERVICES IN MAPLE RIDGE HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

M. Sather: People in my constituency are getting sick and tired of the poor quality of food that's being

served at Ridge Meadows Hospital and the adjoining extended care facilities. The seniors in my community are taking the lead. They're petitioning this government to cancel this disastrous experiment in rethermalized food and bring back real food made on site at our community hospital and in our extended care homes.

Yesterday even the Ridge Meadows Hospital Auxiliary association weighed in with their concerns. They said in a letter: "Some of our members have had the experience of having to eat this rethermalized food. The reports have not been good. We are also concerned about the people living in long-term care. Do you not feel that appetizing meals would be a benefit to those citizens who, in most cases, have their years numbered?"

Will the minister cancel this failed experiment in rethermalized food and bring back real food for the deserving citizens of Maple Ridge?

Hon. G. Abbott: I thank the member for raising the issue. It may not surprise the member, but this issue is not one that is confined to his area or his hospital. I suppose there are debates across the province, across Canada. I know that in Manitoba there's a raging debate about rethermalized food in hospitals as well. This is a debate that is going on around the globe.

From my perspective, what we need to do with not only hospitals but other institutions is ensure that the food served to patients is nutritious, that it is of good quality and that it is, most importantly, safe for the consumption of the patients. I'm pleased that for the first time ever, we are doing audits around food quality. We believe that the results of those food audits will help us continuously improve the quality of food that's served in hospitals.

This has been an issue as long as there have been hospitals. If the member thinks it started with rethermalized food, he's wrong.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows has a supplemental.

M. Sather: It's true that there is a lot of discussion and discontent about rethermalized food around this province. That much the minister has right. But the fact of the matter is that many of these people who are living in these long-term care facilities are fragile. They can't wait for another study.

[1450]

Will the minister do the right thing: cancel this failed experiment now and bring back real food to those long-term care facilities in Maple Ridge?

Hon. G. Abbott: There are 20,000 to 30,000 meals served every day to patients in hospitals in British Columbia — about seven million meals per year. Again, the member may have a predisposition against rethermalized food, and that's fair enough.

The issue...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. G. Abbott: ...is: is the food safe? Is it nutritious? Is it tasty? Is it safe? Those are the issues that are central to the debate around food quality. If the member is making a declarative statement on behalf of the official opposition that they are going to eliminate rethermalized food from hospitals in the future, I welcome them to make that declaration, and I'll take note of it.

WANETA DAM POWER PROJECT

C. Evans: After years of excellent and successful work, the Waneta expansion project near Trail is due to receive its environmental assessment certificate this year. I'm wondering if the minister responsible for Columbia Power will tell us if he has instructed the Crown that he desires to see this 435-megawatt project proceed.

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, I can't comment on that question. As the member said, it's before the EA process. That's with the Minister of Environment. It would be unfair of me to comment on something that's in front of an environmental assessment process.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Nelson-Creston has a supplemental.

C. Evans: I guess if I had asked the Minister of Energy if he would please say if he thinks this is an environmentally benign idea, then that would be a reasonable answer. But I'm talking business to the minister. I'm talking about buying the power that's produced.

I'll ask a different question. B.C. Hydro is now in a deficit position. We're consuming more power than we are producing. We tend to buy electricity from our neighbours to the east and to the south, and it's all made by burning hydrocarbons — essentially coal and gas. Waneta will produce clean, green Kyoto-safe power — 435 megawatts. That's half as big as Site C.

Will the Minister of Energy please tell us if he has instructed B.C. Hydro, as a business proposition, to initiate negotiations to buy the power that will be produced by Waneta Dam?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Well, I appreciate the question from the member for Nelson-Creston wanting to talk about business. I think it's not something...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. R. Neufeld: ...that he's normally talked about.

Clean energy in the province of British Columbia. We have the cleanest energy in North America. Over 90 percent of our generation of electricity comes from clean sources. We should be proud of that. Any clean

electricity we can get in the future, we're actually going to use and buy. In fact, since we came into office, B.C. Hydro has purchased 5,000 gigawatt hours. That's as much as the Site C dam would put out — all clean energy in the province of British Columbia.

We intend to move forward with that, unlike the opposition when they were in government. When that member was in government, what did they build? A gas-fired plant in Pakistan. That's what they built in ten years. They built a gas-fired plant on Vancouver Island.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. R. Neufeld: They built a gas-fired plant in Fort Nelson, British Columbia. And here he starts talking to me...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. R. Neufeld: ...about green energy, clean energy.

Mr. Speaker, we will do the right thing for British Columbians. We will make sure that there is electricity here for British Columbians and for generations to come and from all clean sources.

[1455]

[End of question period.]

Tabling Documents

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, I have the honour to present a report of the Auditor General, report 9, 2005-2006: *Leading the Way — Adopting Best Practices in Government Financial Reporting 2004-2005*.

Petitions

S. Fraser: I have a petition to deliver here, calling for action to deal with the tragedy of death and disability in the forest industry in B.C.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Cowichan-Ladysmith — Powell River-Sunshine Coast. Sorry.

N. Simons: The nice thing about Cowichan-Ladysmith is that it looks at the Sunshine Coast.

I would like to also present a petition on behalf of residents of the beautiful Sunshine Coast, who are expressing their concern about mining activity, potential mining on the Sechelt Inlet.

Orders of the Day

Hon. M. de Jong: In Committee A, I call Committee of Supply. For the information of members, we'll con-

tinue with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

In this chamber, committee stage debate on Bill 6. Thereafter, Bill 11, second reading.

Committee of the Whole House

MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BASES ACT, 2005-2006

The House in Committee of the Whole (Section B) on Bill 6; S. Hawkins in the chair.

The committee met at 2:59 p.m.

Sections 1 and 2 approved.

Title approved.

Hon. M. de Jong: I move that the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 2:59 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

[1500]

Report and Third Reading of Bills

MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BASES ACT, 2005-2006

Bill 6, Ministerial Accountability Bases Act, 2005-2006, reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Hon. M. de Jong: I call second reading of Bill 11.

Second Reading of Bills

NEW RELATIONSHIP TRUST ACT

Hon. T. Christensen: I move that the bill now be read a second time.

I am pleased to move now to second reading. The government is committed to a new relationship with first nations based on mutual respect, on reconciliation and, fundamentally, on recognition of aboriginal rights. In embarking upon this new relationship, we are turning our backs on a legacy of denial in the province.

It's an unfortunate legacy. When we have the opportunity to sit down and look at the history of the relationship between first nations and the provincial Crown in this province, it's not one we come away from feeling proud. We started out all right in the 1850s. We negotiated a few treaties, which have come to be known as the Douglas treaties, here on lower Vancouver Island, and then we stopped.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

From the late 1850s for well over a century, the province dug in its heels and consistently denied that first nations had rights, that first nations actually were here before European contact and that there was a need to reconcile the existence of those rights and those title interests with the immigration of so many others to this great province. It's a legacy of denial that was consistent through the late 1800s into the early 1900s.

Quite frankly, the record of history shows that we took extraordinary steps to ensure that first nations didn't have the opportunity to embark upon a debate about those rights and title interests. We went as far as outlawing the ability of first nations to organize themselves, to pursue claims of rights in title. We denied aboriginal peoples the most fundamental opportunity that we all hold dear: the one that gives us the vote. We held on to that denial for a long time.

We outlawed customs that we feared allowed first nations to come together and debate these issues themselves and then come to government and make the case that aboriginal rights and title interests had to be dealt with. For decade after decade we took extraordinary steps to not have to address issues of aboriginal rights and title. It's only really in the past two to three decades that we've started to see a shift.

We've seen an opportunity for first nations to pursue their rightful claims that their aboriginal rights need to be recognized and their title interests need to be recognized. Very slowly, governments have come to recognize that these are issues we need to deal with. Far too often we've dealt with these issues in the context of what amounts to a continued denial rather than trying to work with first nations to recognize what is the most simple fact: the fact that we are all here to stay. First nations aren't leaving, and I don't think any of the rest of us whose families have only been here a century — in some cases a couple of centuries, or in many cases much shorter than that — are prepared to leave.

[1505]

We have to find a way that we reconcile the existence of aboriginal rights and title with the reality of Crown title and the need for all of us to live here together and pursue the opportunities that are available in this province in a way that benefits both first nations and non-first nations.

We have very deliberately, in embarking upon a new relationship, chosen to turn our back on that legacy of denial of aboriginal rights and title and to embrace an opportunity to work with first nations in trying to find a way that first nations and non-first nations — a way that all British Columbians — can benefit from the incredible opportunities that lie before us in this province, whether those are economic, social or cultural opportunities.

This journey to build a new relationship started in earnest about a year ago. There's a very important organization, a small group that has been instrumental in initiating this journey, and that's the First Nations

Leadership Council. They've been our partners in this journey. I was incredibly honoured yesterday, when we introduced this bill in first reading, to be joined here on the floor of the Legislature by three representatives from the First Nations Leadership Council. It was an honour to be joined by Chief Stewart Phillip, who is the president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, by Grand Chief Ed John and by Dave Porter, both of whom represent the First Nations Summit.

It's important that we recognize the other first nations leaders who are on the First Nations Leadership Council for the time and energy they have put in over the last number of months, as we go down this path of the new relationship. I want to recognize, as well, Chief Mike Retasket and Chief Robert Shintah, both from the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, as well as Chief Doug Kelly from the First Nations Summit and regional chief Shawn Atleo from the Assembly of First Nations.

All of these first nations leaders have been instrumental in getting us to where we are today. That's not to say that there's not a great deal of work still to do. But we have made progress. It was important and, again, an honour that some of those leaders were able to join me here on the floor of the House during first reading to recognize the significance of this initiative.

Those first nations leaders and first nations leaders around this province represent a significant segment of our society: the first nations of British Columbia. Collectively, these first nations are among the most culturally diverse in Canada, the most culturally diverse in the world, and their contributions to our culture and to our history certainly have not been appropriately recognized in the past. The new relationship marks the first time in the history of British Columbia that the provincial government and first nations leaders representing all first nations in the province have come together in a spirit of cooperation to look at changing the status quo for the benefit of all British Columbians and to realize a shared vision for a strong and prosperous future for this province, a province that has the opportunity to lead Canada in social and economic development.

The government's strategic vision for the province of British Columbia is embodied in five great goals, and we've laid those goals out for the public to look at and to help us pursue. Those goals are to make B.C. the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent; to lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness; to build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, persons with special needs, children at risk and seniors; to lead the world in sustainable environmental management with the best air and water quality and the best fisheries management, bar none; and to create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada. But when we look at those laudable and ambitious goals, we quickly recognize that this vision can only be achieved if first nations citizens attain these goals as well.

[1510]

To achieve these strategic goals, we recognize that we must achieve first nations economic self-sufficiency

and make first nations a strong economic partner in the province and the country through sustainable land and resource development, effective shared decision-making and shared benefits that support first nations as distinct and healthy communities. If we do that, if we explore the contributions and celebrate the contributions of first nations to our shared history, all British Columbians will benefit from that richer understanding of first nations culture and from the economic, political and cultural partnerships that we have the opportunity to pursue with first nations.

What we recognize as we explore these ideas, as we look to the future and try to determine how we better walk this path together, is that to reach those goals, first nations need the tools and the skills to become full, active and engaged participants in the social and economic landscape. To make this possible, our government has set aside a one-time, \$100 million capacity-building fund for first nations, and that is the bill that is before us this afternoon. Because the fund will support increased capacity for first nations into the future, its benefits will carry on over the long term as first nations increase their ability to participate in the new relationship with government.

I have been asked — actually, quite frequently in the last 24 hours: "What sorts of things will this fund support? When we talk about capacity-building, what do we mean by that?" I think we often throw these terms out there and leave them to hang there, and people can define them themselves. Capacity-building can be a pretty broad concept. We recognize, notwithstanding the incredible success of some members of our first nations communities — and whole communities, in some cases — that in this province over the recent years there is a great need to build strength and capacity within first nations communities, and the ability to better be involved in the modern economy, and that that's going to take a great deal of effort.

It's important to recognize, in identifying the priorities for capacity-building, that it's first nations that need to be doing that. We need to move away from the days where those of us who don't live in those communities, those of us that don't have the opportunity to spend time in the communities and identify first-hand and feel the challenges that are present.... It's not us who should be defining the priorities for capacity-building. We should recognize the need for it, and we should provide assistance as we are able, and we're doing that, but we must allow first nations to choose what their fundamental first priorities are for capacity-building.

The board of directors that will manage this fund will do that, and they will do that in consultation with first nations. But some of the things that have come up in the conversations we've been having over the course of this last year — and, in the context of those conversations, evolving to, "Oh, wait a minute. We need some people to do certain things" — do help inform the types of things that might be funded through this fund.

When we look at opportunities for first nations to be more involved in forestry, for example — and when

we look at the fact that we now have over 100 agreements in the province where first nations are taking up an opportunity to be involved in the forest economy, to have access to fibre — we find, in discussions with those first nations, that there's a need for greater forest development planning and better engagement of individuals from those first nations communities in that planning. There's a need to develop the business expertise so that first nations can take better advantage of those forest tenures. There's a need for expertise, including forest technicians, financial planning for business expansion and marketing of potential forest products that could be manufactured because there's an access to fibre.

[1515]

There's a need for skill sets that become relevant when we're looking at trying to address the very difficult circumstances before us when we look at the mountain pine beetle epidemic. We know there's a need to build skills in land use planning and in being able to document traditional knowledge so that can be taken into account when we're looking at land use planning.

Land use planning is a pretty complex exercise in this day and age. There are lots of technological advancements that assist us in that, whether it's geographic information systems or it's other technologies we can take advantage of in land use planning. But there's also a need in working with first nations communities to be able to incorporate some of their traditional knowledge, the knowledge of their elders, in how that process goes forward. We need skill sets within those communities to take advantage of the knowledge that the elders are able to provide, as well as to combine that knowledge with some of the assistance that modern technology can provide.

When we speak with first nations, we see there's a keen interest in opportunities in aquaculture. But again, there's a need for training opportunities, and there's a need for first nations to be able to control their own destiny in respect of some of those economic opportunities.

When we look at social program management, there's no question that we are better engaged with first nations now than we have ever been when we're looking at education for aboriginal students, when we're looking at issues of child development, when we're looking at the difficult issues of child protection and how we best support families.

Aboriginal communities, first nations — they need to be and they certainly want to be directly involved in the development of policy and in the delivery of services in those important areas. Yet we find that there are additional needs for training. There are additional needs for building of capacity to be effectively involved in the delivery of those services.

I could obviously go on, Madam Speaker. There's a good long list, and the skill sets that will be desired and are desired in first nations communities to better engage in the new relationship with government are the same skill sets that government finds it needs in order to engage in that discussion. It will take a period

of time to ensure that that capacity builds. It won't happen overnight.

But what we are doing is embarking upon the path of building that capacity over time. We do, I think, often focus on the challenge that's ahead of us, the need to build capacity over a period of time. It's easy for us to say that we need capacity in this area and that we need people with these skill sets or those skill sets.

Sometimes I think we get a bit discouraged in terms of the scope of the challenge ahead, but it's important to recognize the progress that's actually been made over the last number of years in terms of aboriginal participation in post-secondary education, for example, where we have incredible graduates coming out of our post-secondary institutions, returning to their communities and making strong, innovative contributions to first nations communities around the province. So it is important that we recognize those success stories as we look to build and add capacity in the future.

[1520]

As I've said, building capacity will enhance first nations participation in land and resource planning, in decision-making and in the implementation of agreed decisions. Building capacity will mean that first nations are better able to look much more to their own communities rather than hire outside consultants and specialists for the expertise that's needed to conduct their business and manage their affairs. I think we've tended to say, in this conversation around the need to build capacity, that there's a desire to get rid of the consultants.

That's in no way meant to disparage the work that the very many people do who are working with first nations now but aren't aboriginal. There are many dedicated individuals that are working with first nations around the province and are sincere — incredibly sincere and dedicated — in their efforts to help first nations move forward with economic development opportunities, with the delivery of social programs.

But I think we inherently recognize — I hope we inherently recognize — that those communities are going to be much stronger if they're able to rely on people who have grown up in the community, who intimately know the community, to assist in delivering or in exercising those skills within the community — to look at economic opportunity, to look at social opportunity going forward. That's the reason that we need to build that internal capacity.

Madam Speaker, the legislation establishes a corporation. It's a corporation independent of government but with a requirement to publicly report strategic plans, annual reports and audited financial statements. Seven directors will be appointed to form the first board of directors. They will oversee the corporation, and they will ensure that the purposes and the principles of the trust are upheld. Those principles and those purposes are set out in detail in the act to guide the board of directors in getting this fund up and running.

In looking at those purposes and principles, we must recognize that above all, the directors will ensure that the funding supports the capacity-building needs

of first nations as identified by first nations. The organizations that make up the First Nations Leadership Council — the First Nations Summit, the B.C. Assembly of First Nations and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs — will be represented by three members on the board of directors. Then, the First Nations Leadership Council as a whole will jointly select two additional directors based on federal and provincial board appointment guidelines. The province will also select two directors based on skills and experience.

The directors will then be responsible for soliciting and considering the advice of first nations to set priorities and to develop a strategic plan that will guide how the funds will be accessed, what the goals are in terms of building capacity, how the corporation and the board of directors will measure how they're meeting those goals and whether they're meeting those goals.

They will develop three-year strategic plans. They will review that rolling plan on an annual basis and publish an annual report so that they can measure whether or not progress is being made in building capacity and enabling first nations to better participate in discussions with government, to better participate in pursuing economic opportunities, to better participate in the delivery and enhancement of the delivery of social programs for first nations.

The directors will also appoint an independent review committee to examine the state of the fund every five years — again, an additional opportunity to review and see whether or not this overarching goal of building capacity within first nations is being reached. The report of that independent review committee's findings will be part of the public record. So it's clear that the legislation is based on sound public accountability measures with the goal of supporting first nations to achieve greater self-reliance in their communities and across British Columbia.

[1525]

As we put this fund in place, and as we look to the future and the opportunities that the fund might provide, it is important to reflect on what has happened over the course of the last year with the new relationship. I think all of us get frustrated from time to time. We'd like to see what we call tangible results faster. We'd like to go into any first nations community in the province and be able to point to the specific things that we can consider to be evidence of a new relationship. But a relationship, by its very nature, is something that evolves. Certainly, it has evolved very positively over the course of this last year, as we have had an unprecedented level of engagement with first nations in trying to come to terms with what our mutual obligations are to work with one another.

We are having very constructive discussions with the First Nations Leadership Council and, in doing so, are trying to address some of those very difficult issues around fulfilling the government's obligation to consult when we're making decisions that impact aboriginal rights, including aboriginal title interests. Those discussions will continue to have more meat brought on to them.

We have had some incredible successes in the course of the last year. One that I certainly want to highlight and one that I think will benefit ultimately from this New Relationship fund is the transformative change accord that was signed with the federal government, which the Premier and members of the First Nations Leadership Council signed at the conclusion of the first ministers meeting in Kelowna back in November of 2005.

That transformative change accord came about.... It's important to recognize that B.C. is the only province that actually signed an accord with the federal government at the end of that first ministers meeting. And it's critically important that we recognize that it was a tripartite accord — that it involved both levels of government as well as the First Nations Leadership Council. It came about because first nations in British Columbia and the province of British Columbia, as we approached the first ministers meeting, were working together.

When the Premier was doing the work leading to the first ministers meeting in Kelowna, the consistent question was meeting with first nations leaders and saying: "What is it you hope to see as a result of this first ministers meeting?" It was a historic opportunity to bring together provincial leaders, federal leaders, territorial leaders and aboriginal leaders from across the country.

We had a cooperative effort that I don't think would have been possible but for *The New Relationship* and the mutual respect we have built in the months since the new relationship as a concept first arose. That allowed us to move away from the first ministers meeting with a transformative change accord that commits us to working together to ensure that we have specific plans in place to close the socioeconomic gaps that exist between first nations and the non-aboriginal population in British Columbia and in Canada. We'll have specific plans in place pursuant to that accord to eliminate the gap that exists in educational outcomes, to eliminate the gaps that exist in terms of health outcomes, in terms of housing and economic opportunity, and it's allowed us a foundation on which we can move forward.

I've mentioned that we've seen significant opportunities, increased opportunities, for first nations to be engaged in forestry activity in the province. We're seeing significant engagement of first nations as we strive to develop the plans necessary to address the mountain pine beetle epidemic. We need to make no mistake about it. That epidemic has horrendous impacts for first nations communities, which in many cases have been there for thousands of years living off that land base that now is being so tragically impacted by the mountain pine beetle.

[1530]

We're engaged with first nations, and while we don't always agree — we don't always disagree either — and while we recognize that there are challenges we have to confront as we move forward and try to develop the plans to address the mountain pine beetle,

the simple fact is that we're doing that together. That is what is new, and that is what is critical.

We've made significant progress on the treaty front. We now have six agreements-in-principle that have been signed since 2003. I'm hopeful that we're getting close to another, and our task ahead is to make sure we're making progress towards final agreements. Again, I'm hopeful.

I've moved away from trying to put time lines on those things because that's a recipe for being wrong, but we are making progress, and we are engaged with first nations in how we try to break through some of the final barriers that are there to getting to final treaties. I am confident that we will get to final treaties and that some of the goodwill and the trust that is being built through the new relationship will assist us immeasurably in getting to those final treaties.

But we need to build on these successes. Looking forward, we recognize that we have a long way to go for our relationship to be the constructive one we envision. But it's clear that we are committed to walking this path together — this path of promise, really a path of prosperity with first nations — now and into the future.

In establishing the New Relationship fund, we're providing a significant, tangible example of how we can work together in terms of how this initiative has been developed, but also a very significant and tangible tool that will be available to better enable first nations to engage with the province in the evolution of the new relationship.

With that, I will look forward to hearing the comments of other members. I know that there is a good deal of interest in this initiative, and certainly my belief is that members across the floor are generally supportive. They may have some questions in committee stage, but I look forward to the comments of all members of the House as we move forward with this significant and historic shift, this new relationship between the province and first nations here in British Columbia.

S. Fraser: I would like to acknowledge the minister's statements that we are on record as being supportive of *The New Relationship* — of the document and of the trust. This is a good-news day, and yesterday was a good-news day.

We were getting a little bit antsy about what was happening. The new relationship, of course, was first announced not that long ago. It was early last year, and it was quite a surprise in a lot of ways. In a lot of ways it was a total about-face from policies of the government in the previous term, and policies of the Premier — a welcome about-face.

As we saw the commitments made around the \$100 million — which was, I think, in September of 2005 — we've got to a point where the clock is ticking to March 31, 2006, which is, I think, nine days from now. So seeing the announcement that the trust was actually being put into place was a relief to many in the province, certainly to many on this side of the House, because if

nine days further had passed, it would have, from what I understand, gone up in smoke. So I'm happy, happy, happy that this happened.

Bill 11 has the potential to make good on this government's promise of a new relationship and to follow through with the ideas expressed in the new approach by government towards first nations in this province. We are glad to see what appears to be this about-face.

[1535]

There are some very, very high expectations in first nations communities around the new relationship in British Columbia — among aboriginals and non-aboriginals alike. Capacity problems are widely recognized as inhibiting progress of first nations communities. Without addressing them, first nations won't be able to truly engage as partners with government. This extends, in particular, to treaty negotiations, issues surrounding natural resources and resource uses in traditional territories and achieving essential levels of education and health security. We hope that this fund will reconcile some of the many outstanding issues of first nations in British Columbia.

I am pleased that we saw the introduction of Bill 11 yesterday, and I'm pleased to stand here today to speak to second reading of the New Relationship Trust Act. With its introduction and first reading in the House yesterday, there was, as I've mentioned, a collective sigh of relief throughout the province.

I think the proposed makeup of the board of directors is particularly promising. The strong representation of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the Assembly of First Nations in B.C. and the B.C. Summit bodes well, I think, for the future of how this trust will be administered.

I'd like to thank and to acknowledge, in particular, several people. We've seen the work done here where the Leadership Council has come together, those three organizations. There have been a lot of people responsible for that who should, rightly so, be proud. A few that I know of in particular are Chief Stewart Phillip; Grand Chief Edward John; A-in-chut — that's Chief Shawn Atleo; Dave Porter; and Chief Doug Kelly. There are so many others, but they have set an example, and I think they've also set, in a lot of ways, role models for a lot of people in British Columbia — both aboriginal and non-aboriginal.

The New Relationship trust that we're dealing with today, this act — I don't want it to be confused with the new relationship. The New Relationship Trust Act is dealing with \$100 million. That is to go towards capacity-building. There are many, many needs in first nations communities and in the aboriginal communities and peoples in British Columbia.

I've been spending a lot of time travelling throughout the province trying to learn as much as I can about those needs. There are complex issues. There are treaty issues, there are resource use issues, there are health issues, and there are education issues. There are countless issues that need to be addressed.

So \$100 million may sound like a lot. It's certainly not an insignificant amount, but the needs of many of

these communities are great. It will be a challenge for the directors of this new trust to determine the criteria for access to the moneys available here, because the needs are so great. I know there will be a controversy over this amongst first nations and others about which is the best use possible, what is meant by capacity-building. The minister is correct: that's a term that would be hard to pin down. It would be hard to find a direct definition in any dictionary.

The New Relationship trust, the \$100 million, is not the new relationship. The document that came out early last year, the *New Relationship* document, speaks to many things. One piece of that is capacity-building, so it's heartening to see this coming about.

As I've said, we are supportive of the new relationship on this side of the House. I have said to the minister and to the Premier that I would not be obstructive. I would not get in the way of any true reconciliation and relationship-building with first nations. There is a lot to be made up for. There's a history, as the minister has pointed out, that none of us should be proud of.

[1540]

With the new relationship, there is an obligation to put more than just words out. There is meat on the bones required here, and this New Relationship Act is, I think, the first significant bit of meat on those bones.

There have still been policies of this government that do not reflect the new relationship. There still seems to be a great disconnect in many ways between ministers and ministries and this *New Relationship* document, which was the birth of this act. We're seeing great disparity issues throughout the province. We're seeing issues that are of tragic consequence — the highway of tears, Highway 16; the seeming disparity between how things were dealt with, with aboriginal communities and non and with aboriginal peoples and non.

We were given a heads-up, all of us were, almost two years ago with an Amnesty report, *Stolen Sisters*, that spoke directly to some of these problems and the discrepancies in western Canada, in specific, and B.C., of course, is included in that. It should have raised flags for all of us. We had the one-year anniversary of that Amnesty International report last October, I believe, in 2005. The federal government at that point had put forward, I think, a \$5 million obligation towards trying to deal with that discrepancy. I know the Saskatchewan government put some resources forward too. But we hadn't seen that here. It was raised in this House, and it didn't seem to catch anyone's attention.

I know the tragedy of the missing women along that highway. It's continuing. I said this in the House once before, but if such a thing were happening in, say, a community like Shaughnessy, I don't think we would need to see marches on the highway to get the attention of this House, of the authorities involved or of the press. So I am hoping that the recognition of a new relationship will take us beyond that.

There are a few things in the document, in the act itself, that have.... I won't call them lacking, but I think they warrant notice. As the minister said, we'll be

bringing these up at committee stage, but I will make note of a few of these. I don't mean this specifically as criticism, but as constructive criticism, maybe.

As a comment, setting the terms of reference that have yet to be made is going to be an awfully big challenge. As I've mentioned already, the needs in the communities are great. There have been needs that have been created or problems that have been exacerbated over the last few years — cuts to native court-workers and transition homes. I mean, issues around social assistance have led to actually greater needs and greater challenges in first nations communities in British Columbia now. There is catch-up to be done with this turnaround by this government, and again, I mean this in a positive term. I like this turnaround.

The way that these funds will be used to meet the needs of the communities at the ground level is going to be a significant challenge. I know that even in the *New Relationship* document there was mentioned more than once the need for dispute resolutions, and there may be a case for that here. There may be times when impasses are reached in trying to deal with the great number of needs of the many communities. There are some 200 different bands in B.C. They all have in some cases common and in some cases unique needs, and they're all critical to those first nations. So that may be a challenge.

There may be some third-party mechanism that may be thought of to help deal with dispute resolution, as such. Like I say, that was actually laid out in a general term more than once in the *New Relationship* document. It does seem to be absent in the actual bill, so that may be to come.

[1545]

Also, I am happy with section 3 of the bill. It's quite lengthy on dealing with public accountability. I'm grateful for this, because there are always skeptics amongst all of us — aboriginal and non. They have voiced those opinions to me and, I'm sure, to others about where this \$100 million will go.

I am very pleased with the makeup of the board of directors. There's a very strong first nations makeup on the board, so it will be somewhat different than many different planning processes that we've seen in the province by giving first nations a significant say in the use of these funds.

I did note, though, that there was no mechanism for the way the corporation is set up for freedom-of-information access. I don't know if that was an oversight.

The total transparency of such an important act as this is, I think, important because it keeps the credibility high. I mean this with no disrespect to anyone here. This is to help to ensure that no one can come back later and make comments that may be inaccurate. Certainly, transparency is a very good thing. There may be some work needed there, but there are mechanisms in place that are addressing some of those issues.

I've noticed in my travels across the province and in speaking with aboriginal groups — first nations — that there are certainly needs that will not be dealt with

through this act. The act is very specific in addressing first nations capacity-building.

Of course, most of us are aware, or should be aware, of the great needs of those aboriginal peoples that are living off reserve in urban settings also. Greater Vancouver — I believe there are 25,000 aboriginal people living in that one region, which is a very large group. The needs in the urban sectors are often quite significant. My hope as critic for Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation is that we will see some parallel resources, that this not the end of what we will see towards dealing with capacity problems and with some very, very dire situations in some cases.

There are some groups doing great work to assist and to raise the level of health, education and support for aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in urban centres — friendship centres and such. They also need to be recognized, I think, through the new relationship, first nations being a first step being dealt with, at least in part, in this act. It is a very good first step, but we'll need to see parallel resources, I believe, coming forward here to deal with some of the realities we have in this province and with the great disparity that we have seen.

I'm hoping that maybe some of the policies that were put in over the last four or five years might be relooked at. The removal of native courtworkers and such has had a significant effect, specifically on aboriginal peoples.

[1550]

We've seen other areas that the new relationship is not really reflected in, and I'm hoping that this one act is a step that might cause some serious reflection on some of the policies that are still in place or the lackings that are still there. In my travels to first nations across the province, on the ground I'm still hearing a lack of any new relationship. It is something that has been heard of and read about, but when it comes to meaningful consultation from ministers and ministries, it's simply the worst of the old relationship.

Even in this House we've raised issues around the use of pesticides on traditional territories and that sort of thing — without any meaningful consultation. These incidents fly in the face of the spirit and the intent, I believe, of the new relationship.

In treaty — and not all first nations, of course, are involved in treaty.... There are Douglas treaty issues that the minister reflected on that are really outside of the modern-day treaty process. But in the treaty process today, one of the criticisms I'm hearing is that the new relationship is silent on treaty in a lot of ways. There have been no new resources put towards treaty at the treaty table by many of the first nations I know of that are involved at the treaty table. They have seen no change since this government's commitment to a new relationship.

Maybe the act here, the trust, will help in some ways with capacity from the first nations position. But the new relationship is larger than just between aboriginal and non-aboriginal. I think the new relationship has to be between how we act and react to each other

and how ministries and ministers act and react to first nations needs that are laid out in the new relationship. This is about security and prosperity and doing the right thing for all British Columbians. Certainty in economic ventures or in treaty issues or in land use issues benefits all British Columbians. The minister is right. No one is going anywhere.

I got a few calls in the last month regarding issues like the shackling of youth in detention centres, native youth who are involved in sweat ceremonies. The minister, rightly so, raised the issue of some of the past ceremonies that have great tradition and are spiritual in nature amongst first nations that were banned not that long ago.

When I hear of youth.... Part of their spiritual rehabilitation, if you will, is a traditional ceremony which is being allowed. The use of shackles — it just rings of the worst of the old again. So I hope things like this will be addressed and looked at seriously as the issues come forward from first nations, because that is the new relationship. It is about communications. It is still not just about \$100 million, because at some point \$100 million will have been spent. I hope we all don't think in this House that that means we are done with the new relationship.

The minister raised the issue of Kelowna. I also attended Kelowna, and I was proud to be there. I think there were a lot of positive steps made. Again, expectation levels rose through the roof for aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, first nations and non-first nations communities, as far as bringing some certainty and addressing some of the wrongs of the past. Indeed, reconciliation is about atoning for the past.

[1555]

We have a change of government federally, and there was some mention that there might be some changes made to those agreements. My hope as critic for Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation is that the provincial government will not be weak-kneed here. They will be pushing this new federal government to live up to those agreements. That is an expectation, I believe, that you don't have to read between the lines in through the new relationship, which should be there. First nations communities, leaders, aboriginal peoples in B.C. should be able to expect this government to fight to make sure those obligations made by the federal government prior to the election are met by this new government.

Last year we saw bills introduced here — this is post-new relationship — and the bills specifically excluded first nations involvement in a consulting role, which is clearly laid out in the new relationship as something that should change. This side of the House tried to put those in — I assumed it was an oversight — and we did not have any success.

I found it disappointing, which would be an understatement. I thought it a contradiction to the words, spirit and intent of the new relationship that brought so many high expectations. I have heard over and over again from first nations leaders, from aboriginal peoples across the province since then that they were also

very disappointed. Again, with this new relationship, that sort of thing should stop. We should start living up to the words that are in that document, which will provide certainty and fairness for all British Columbians.

Part of the new relationship, as laid out in the *New Relationship* document, refers to getting beyond this age of litigation. I may be off by one or two, but the last time I looked, I think there were 44 cases before the courts — some of them just dealing with this government's inability to recognize a first nation as a first nation. Sometimes these decisions have been in favour of first nations, and this government has gone on to appeal them. I have a problem with that. I do believe that it flies in the face of the spirit and the intent of the *New Relationship* document.

Litigation has other problems. Not only does it fly in the face of any sort of new relationship — and being the worst of the old relationship — but relying on the courts is a very expensive venture. It has created a lot of economic burden for a number of first nations involved in the treaty process, for instance. As it's often played out, if a first nation is forced to go to the courts to fight for recognition as a first nation, it's a very costly thing. It can be dauntingly so. It can come out of any future settlement that is made, which I believe is unfair.

Also, there is a practice of government walking away from the treaty table once an issue is before the courts. I'm certainly no lawyer, and I'm being respectful to the lawyers across the way and actually on this side too — yes, Madam Speaker. However, I have a moral problem with taking a position as government.... I won't just single you out here, but I mean, any government that refuses to negotiate should a first nation end up going to court or be backed into a corner to go to court to deal with proving their identity, for instance.... Stopping negotiations while that court case is in place seems punitive in some ways.

I think it's the right of all British Columbians, the right of all Canadians, to fall back on the court system, if need be, in an issue that is deemed unfair. There should be no penalty for that. In this case it actually de facto becomes a monetary penalty, and I believe those practices are not in keeping with the new relationship and the words and spirit and intent of the *New Relationship* document. So I would hope that we'll see with this first tangible step in this bill of \$100 million, a step in the right direction towards changing some of these somewhat draconian actions.

[1600]

The minister referred to some forest and range agreements which have been negotiated — over a hundred now, depending on how you would identify or define a forest and range agreement: FRA or FRO. There are probably some good things in these agreements. But they are not a replacement for treaty. They are laid out specifically in the new relationship agreement, but in my discussions with first nations that have been trying to consider whether or not to sign off on them — or some that have already — there is some discomfort with them. There has been a very rigid

process that seems not to be open to negotiation. The rules are set. They're laid out not by consultation but by government.

It is very difficult for a first nation community that has great needs — and, in a lot of cases, great disparity and great responsibility by the chief and council to take care of that — to sign these, because they're watching the resource they may be negotiating for disappear by the truckload out of their traditional territories, in some cases. The signing of these things is often equated as a gun to the head. So they're not always a good-news story. They should not always be lauded as such. They are fraught with problems in many cases, they are not necessarily fair, and they are not necessarily in keeping with any new relationship. In some cases, these sorts of negotiations, if I can call them that, are the worst of the old relationship.

Other issues that have come up around the new relationship that probably, in theory, should be helped by this bill, in capacity-building, are around land use planning. What has come up from numerous chiefs in the interior is that some of the land use planning has been done over a period of maybe the last decade and has serious omissions at the table from first nations. Some of that traditional knowledge, that wisdom, that history that could come from first nations communities and elders was lacking in these plans. So those plans, if they're the basis for decisions around resource use and around uses on traditional territories, are flawed because of that.

The recognition that I heard today that the acknowledgment and the meaningful consultation with first nations around traditional knowledge are important.... That is another issue that should be relooked at. If land use planning has, indeed, occurred without significant consultation with first nations, aboriginal communities that are involved, then I suggest that those are flawed, and they should be....

Deputy Speaker: Member, are you the designated speaker?

S. Fraser: I am.

Deputy Speaker: Okay.

S. Fraser: I'll either speak much slower, Madam Speaker.... I promise I will not take up two hours.

What should not be lost in my response to the bill is that I am thankful that this bill has come forward. This side of the House has supported the new relationship. It may be unique, and I may be talking myself out of a job in some ways as a critic by saying that, but I don't think so. There are so many examples where the meat is still not on the bones, and our parliamentary system here is requiring me and this side of the House as critics — constructively — to ensure that there is something tangible to this and that the new relationship is not just about \$100 million. It's much bigger than that.

[1605]

We must see that resources are put to the ministers and ministries that inextricably make decisions with

first nations and about first nations, and we have not yet seen that. There is a disconnect there. As long as that disconnect exists, there will not be a new relationship.

I'd like to see this as a beginning. I'd like to see the new relationship in British Columbia set an example to Canada, and while the act we're discussing today is a first step, it is not yet an example. Moneys have been spent in the past to try to deal with the wrongs of the past, and that won't cut it with a lot of the first nations that I know. I know there are issues. There will be a march starting in April — on April 5, I think — from the west coast of Vancouver Island, and there will be a cedar log travelling to Ottawa. It is to deal with residential school issues.

This is about reconciliation, and the new ministry that is bringing forward this bill is entitled Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. The reconciliation that the cedar log will represent for first nations is regarding residential schools and the compensation that was guaranteed through the Kelowna process. That compensation, first of all, is in question, I guess. We haven't really seen it in any significant way, so I would hope this government, this minister and this Premier will be pushing the federal government and supporting the issues brought forward by this symbolic march in the context of this new relationship.

Let's be working together. The resources being put towards atoning or reconciling what happened in the residential school systems may be a good start, but it is woefully lacking and is a double standard. Similar compensation for similar abuses for non-aboriginal peoples has been much higher. It's a much higher level of compensation, so that double standard is not part of any new relationship. It is the worst of the old relationship. I will be urging this government and this minister to take a role there in ensuring that recognition is put where recognition should go and that resources are put to bring about reconciliation, which is the namesake of this ministry.

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

We on this side of the House hope that the new relationship will not stop at this \$100 million. We encourage the minister and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to take the initiative to create parallel networks of support that foster and promote the work of the trust and to deal with the transition needs of getting these resources out. There's a lot of work yet ahead, I think, before we'll see any resources from the trust going and actually hitting the ground in first nations communities.

[1610]

The needs in some of these communities are so great, and in some cases, there's no time to wait. One-time investment is not enough. While we support the intent of the new relationship, we recognize that the success of the new relationship relies on a continued dialogue with aboriginal peoples on the basis of recognized aboriginal rights and title.

With that, I shall sit down.

J. McIntyre: I rise with great honour and pride today to speak in favour of this bill that creates the New Relationship Trust Act. I want to really start by giving my thanks to the minister, actually, for his comments in his introduction. He shed some light and some insights into what this relationship is about and what capacity-building is about. He spoke about a theme of our history — of our sad history, actually — of continuing denial of rights. I think he was quite correct about all that, and I hope to speak a little bit more now about the present and going forward.

I also want to make note of.... I was very pleased that the member of the opposition from Alberni-Qualicum told the House now today that he was happy — happy, happy — about the introduction of this bill. I, for one, am thrilled. If this government can do things that make this opposition happy, I am very proud to be part of this. I like to hear that.

Interjections.

J. McIntyre: Yeah. It's a new approach.

Actually, I'd like to reassure the member that.... He talked several times about this — hoping that this was about more than the money or the \$100 million. I think even as a private member and a member of this government, I would like to reassure you that this is about an approach, an approach of reconciliation and respect. It's not just about money. So if I want to make one point clear, I hope I can do that.

I think, like many of us in the House, my constituency has a significant indigenous population. I'm very proud, as I was saying, to stand up in the House to be part of a government that is taking, I think, historic steps to properly acknowledge the importance that first nations play in British Columbia's history and, likely more importantly, the role they have in paving our future, especially when we're working collaboratively.

In addition to In-SHUCK-ch N'Quat'qua and others, my riding of West Vancouver-Garibaldi is home to two of the four host nations for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. That's the Squamish and Lillooet Nations. I think, quite frankly, it would be fair to say that without the support of our aboriginal population, our province wouldn't be hosting those games, and all of us would not be able to enjoy the benefits that we have already and will be enjoying through the next four years and beyond. So I think it's very important to start off by acknowledging their contribution to us.

I was actually in Prague for the awarding of those games where people like Chief Gibby Jacob were present, and they were very much a part — and certainly the cultural component, I know, was very much a part — of our being awarded those games. Through that bid process and now, of course, all the many opportunities we have for hosting events, I'm already seeing cooperation with all levels of government, whether that's municipalities, districts, local communities, businesses or our first nations communities.

I was so proud. I have to tell you that when I was watching the closing ceremonies in Torino on my tele-

vision, there was a huge spotlight on Chief Gibby Jacob of the Squamish Nation, and I recognized Bill Williams, another chief, amongst the dancers. There they were in the spotlight in Torino, in essence, taking our torch as we go forward in our quadrennial. I couldn't have been prouder.

Further through this collaboration, we've seen things like the creation of the Squamish-Lillooet cultural centre, which I've mentioned in this House before. It will be a new and very attractive draw for the fast-growing aboriginal tourism industry that we have. I believe that that's the first time two nations like that have joined together in an economic initiative like developing that cultural centre. Again, I continue to be so proud of that.

As an aside, I'd also like to mention that that aboriginal tourism industry blueprint that we've developed here in British Columbia is now a model across the country and probably beyond. We're getting lots of requests for the work that's been done on that — again, another moment of pride and another example of collaboration.

As the minister mentioned, there has been interest, there have been questions since we've announced this new reconciliation. We're talking about this and the trust that was announced in our throne speech, and he said there's been sort of a need to find some tangible benefits, and I agree. I think we probably agree on that. I really feel that even in my own riding I'm already seeing those very tangible benefits.

I've seen a number of economic partnerships forming before my very eyes, as I say. For instance, the CRB Logging Co. is now working with Lil'wat nation on a number of forestry initiatives. There are some first nations apprenticeships in the construction industry on the creation of the Sea to Sky Highway. This sort of goes on and on. Lyle Leo, who is an economic development officer with Lil'wat, has just won a national award for economic development, honoured by his peers across the country. I was actually very proud. I was part of that submission in putting forward his name for that award — a great example of alliances that are being created now, as we move forward.

[1615]

In the past when we talked about first nations or relationships with first nations, sometimes, I'm ashamed to say, the first thing that came to mind would be blockades or examples of confrontation. That's not exactly what I think of as an example of a constructive relationship, and I am so thankful that we've come a long, long way from those days that were actually not that long ago.

I think the Premier of our province deserves a lot of credit, because I think that a lot of the change.... Actually, the member before me mentioned there has been some change in our approach, and I am so proud of that fact. I think that we're starting to see the benefits and examples of that today.

Let's talk for a moment about the New Relationship Trust Act. This act, I think, is innovative. It's establishing, if you can believe it, a not-for-profit corporation to

support capacity-building for our first nations. I suggest that's unheard of. Has anybody heard of a corporation that's been started to build capacity for first nations? Anyone heard of that? Hearing none.

So what is the objective of this act? What do we hope to achieve? Quite simply, it's about providing opportunity for our indigenous peoples to fulfil opportunities that have not always been available. In order for both first nations and our province to continue to thrive and progress, and I say "and progress," we need to allow aboriginal peoples to directly — I notice the minister emphasized that — participate in the management of their land and resources. It's also imperative that they can fully utilize the economic, social and cultural opportunities that are available and should be available to all — that is, to everyone in this province.

This \$100 million initiative will afford first nations a concept called capacity-building. Again, the minister, I thought, made great reference. What exactly is that? It is a complex term. You know what? In its simplest terms, it means providing the tools and the training so that aboriginal communities can be involved and flourish in areas concerning their social and economic development.

By providing the seed money, our province is helping B.C.'s first nations achieve greater self-reliance and independence. Hopefully, this goal will allow communities to rely less on outside consultants and companies and those living outside their very communities and more on their own initiative and their growing skills to take advantage of the many opportunities that I notice the minister referred to in his words today.

We need to allow first nations the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process concerning their own land and resources, and capacity-building will allow them to achieve this. It also provides for communities to develop their own information management systems, as an example, leading the way to self-management on economic and social fronts.

The New Relationship Trust Act was introduced after consultation with aboriginal leaders. They told us that they desire to develop their own skill sets instead of relying on others. You know, I thought about this, and personally, I cannot think of a greater gift to anyone in society — and I mean anyone — than tools to foster independence. Think about it.

While there was no legal obligation to do so, our government believed the right decision was made to consult with First Nations Leadership Council during the development of the purposes and principles of this fund. How can you forge new relationships without dialogue, without consultation? Our government has also worked in partnership with stakeholders to develop the \$100 million fund. We met not only with First Nations Leadership Council but, I believe, also with the Union of B.C. Municipalities — UBCM — the B.C. Business Council and the federal government.

This \$100 million will be well invested. It will not be squandered. That is why we insisted a board of directors be appointed whose actions will be available for all British Columbia taxpayers to see. This seven-

member board, which is largely composed of members from first nations, will not invest any money without first listening to the public and to aboriginal communities. These directors, I believe, will and should be appointed based on their skill set. It's vital that they have the training and financial management expertise needed to handle this responsibility, and they'll also be required to be familiar, of course, with first nations issues and communities.

[1620]

As the minister mentioned, the board will be required to implement a three-year strategic plan administering the fund. I think anyone who knows anything about running a successful business will know that a solid business plan is required. This is welcome news. In addition, there will be annual updates and a five-year review. All of this is mandated. While independent of government, this non-profit corporation will be — and I know that's some of the concern — publicly accountable for their progress in enhancing capacity. Financial statements will be audited and made available to everyone.

I'm pleased to see that this fund will be available for all first nations communities to utilize. In creating this fund, our government is allowing the board of directors the flexibility to define what constitutes first nations and who's a member. The definition is complex, and yet it's likely needed to include all — urban and rural, on and off reserve. It's expected that the directors will take into account the needs of the whole community.

It must be noted that it's one-time funding, and it's anticipated to be managed over the long term. It is hoped that the fund will be expanded, and I believe the legislation allows for other sources of funding that can be appropriated by the board.

In closing, I'd just like to stress the importance of this New Relationship Trust Act. It builds on our September throne speech commitment to forge a new relationship of reconciliation that's honourable, that's constructive, that's grounded in immediate and practical progress for all British Columbians. We want to push to expand that vision across the country. At the same speech we also mentioned our goal — what I think should be termed a noble goal — of eliminating within ten years the inequalities that have plagued first nations and indigenous people throughout Canada's history.

Along with our commitment to the Kelowna accord which the Premier has been so dedicated to achieving, again, as the minister revealed to us, this act is a clear and present demonstration to our commitment to help improve the lives of all first nations people. While it is necessary to provide a strong system of supports, I feel it is more important to provide all people with the skills they need to thrive independently. This act is a hand up for British Columbia's first nations. This is a great and a welcome opportunity to demonstrate good faith, and it's far too important not to support.

[Applause.]

Thank you, thank you. My heartfelt thanks to the Premier for establishing the Ministry of Aboriginal

Relations and Reconciliation. My thanks to the Finance Minister for setting aside the \$100 million for capacity-building in the throne speech last fall, or to the budget; and to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation for all his efforts in introducing this new initiatives trust act; and perhaps most of all to the many chiefs who have joined with us to support this initiative.

I'm very proud today to be part of a government team that has the courage and the foresight to do what I know in my heart is right. We all need to have faith, and I, for one, look forward to walking the path forward together.

N. Simons: It's a pleasure to rise in the House to speak in support of Bill 11, to speak in support of the work that was undertaken to accomplish this. Obviously — not obviously, but I'm sure we'll work out any flaws that might exist; we'll do that in a collaborative way.... But ultimately, I think it's a sign that the government is actually going to back up their commitment to a new relationship with legislation, with a trust and with ideas on how first nations can help themselves reach the same economic and social standards that we enjoy throughout the province.

[1625]

Having worked with first nations for most of my career, I understand some of the significant challenges that face communities, whether it be due to historical injustices, residential school systems or simply economic hardship. All of those factors can be addressed in some way with the assistance of funding and programs that may be established under the trust. I commend the government for coming through with this legislation, and I think it might explain why, when the north Island-coastal initiative fund and the other initiatives did not include representation of first nations on their boards of directors, perhaps it was in anticipation of this legislation.

So I'll take back all those mean thoughts I had about the government ignoring.... I won't take back the mean thoughts I had about the member. No, I'm just kidding. Those remain securely in the vault.

Deputy Speaker: Member.

N. Simons: Madam Speaker, I was referring to the thoughts I had for the member for Kamloops-North Thompson.

Interjection.

N. Simons: I accept that. I shall continue.

Bill 11 establishes the management of \$100 million under the auspices of a leadership council — essentially made up of representatives of the various first nations political organizations, as well as two appointed members from cabinet — and I think the accountability that's built in serves us all well. It serves anyone who's elected and anyone who's representing the people of the province. It serves us all well. I am

pleased that it is broad enough to address the various social and economic needs of communities.

It is the beginning of what is likely to be a number of other initiatives, I'm hoping, that will be able to address some of the social inequalities that exist. I'm all in favour of assisting first nations to develop their own database systems and economic initiatives. I'm hoping that included in the bill will be an ability for first nations to help to address some of the staggering statistics that show not just the historical impacts of colonization but some of the more recent policies of government. If that can be accomplished through this act, we will all be well served.

Helping first nations to develop their own internal capacity should be something that the government encourages for all communities. Coming from the social service sector, I also hope that this act will assist the first nations in developing that capacity. It's been ignored by successive governments, and it needs to be addressed.

I think first nations are all, for the most part, pleased at this first step. Many chiefs and councillors have come to me and asked when they'd actually see physical or hard evidence of a new relationship, having heard of it for many months without any evidence to suggest that it existed. This may be the first of many steps, I'm hoping, with some encouragement by the opposition, to continue in this path towards what is ultimately our goal of reconciliation — not just for the sake of reconciliation, but for the sake of equality, for the sake of better relations, and for the sake of our children and their future, living in harmony with all cultures.

[Applause.]

So, for a number of reasons, and because I got applause there, I'll end my comments now, and I thank you for the opportunity, Madam Speaker, and for your patience and indulgence. With that, I will end my comments.

[1630]

J. Rustad: I am very pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 11 — a new relationship with first nations and the teeth that this puts behind it in terms of moving forward. Who would have thought just a few years ago, and thinking back ten years ago or even more, how far we've come over such a short period of time with this? I'd like to take a moment to go back and look at history because in my riding, the history with first nations is quite significant.

Fort St. James is celebrating its 200th birthday this year. I can think back to 200 years ago when the first settlers came and lived in that area and made relationships with the first nations. They started that new relationship then in building a future and building opportunities and coordinating and working together to be able to provide joint benefits to the people of the province and to the new people that are here. They opened their arms and welcomed the new settlers that came to live in the area.

Over time, unfortunately, that relationship became very complex. It saw some very difficult roadblocks. In

particular, I think it was in the early 20th century when at one point, because of federal legislation, it was illegal for first nations to hold various cultural ceremonies. In fact, when some of the leaders in this province tried to have a potlatch, they were arrested. Their ceremonial garb was taken from them because of the laws that we had in place back in those days.

It wasn't until sometime in the '40s or '50s that, under public pressure, those laws were actually reversed. There's a history of a relationship that started off quite positive and quite strong in this province — one that was open, one that was hand in hand — which took quite a turn. It was a very difficult thing to overcome for many people, particularly in my neck of the woods, in Prince George-Omineca.

I think it was only in the 1960s when first nations had the right to vote and were given the right to vote. If you think about that, that's one of the fundamental cornerstones of our democracy. Yet for a significant portion of our population, they didn't have that right.

When you think about moving forward and you think about building a new relationship, it's so important to say that what we have done in the past obviously is not working. We need to look at being able to move forward. We need to build a bridge over that past. Building a new relationship is about just that.

The significant part of that is to be able to give some capacity — not capacity that we say you should have these skills or you should do this, but to give them the capacity to be able to build within their own communities, to be able to rebuild and to extend a hand to all of us in the province to be able to work together, to be able to build a future.

It reminds me of the words of Albert Einstein, who said that you can't solve a problem with the same level of thinking that created the problem. I see the new relationship and the steps that we are taking here as exactly that. We are stepping out of the box. We are bringing new thinking to the table. More importantly, we are bringing that in conjunction with our first nations. We're not bringing it to them; we're building it with them.

[1635]

We've seen examples of what happens when we work together, when mutual respect for cultural differences, mutual respect for the kinds of things that we need to have together.... I want to give one example. In Edmonton there's an educational facility called Amiskwaciy Academy. That was an example where, instead of us providing an education, we gave the first nations the tools to provide the education within our system. They took that opportunity, and they developed something that was quite remarkable. They entwined their cultural differences and their culture and their ceremony right within the education system. They actually provided the same level of education as the rest but at an even higher level of education.

That academy has had phenomenal success. In particular, it was in 2001 where the grade 11 class went through to graduate in 2002 with 100-percent completion rates — 100 percent. In my riding there are com-

pletion rates that are often in the 30 percents, and across the province I think it's around 42 percent. It shows the kind of opportunity that can be there when thinking goes outside of the box, when you extend outside of what we've done traditionally and are able to move forward with a new relationship.

I see some of that in my riding today. Just the other week I held a round table for skills training in Vanderhoof. In the round table I was very pleased that Chief Colleen Erickson from the Saik'uz First Nation attended, along with some other people from the first nation. They've been working with the school district, in conjunction with the community and also in conjunction with BCIT, to look at opportunities to create some trades training skills and trades training opportunities within the community.

That kind of thinking is exactly what building new relationships is all about. It's about being able to work together to find solutions that work for all of us in the province.

I know Chief Leonard Thomas of the Nak'azdli First Nation up in Fort St. James. They've always had a very good relationship with the community and with the people there, and they work hand in hand. It hasn't always been perfect. There have been difficulties, but I applaud the work they are doing and the future they're building hand in hand, side by side in those communities.

There are many other first nations communities in my riding, too many for me to mention here, but I want to mention one more. A portion of the first nation is within my riding, and a portion is within my colleagues' ridings, Prince George North and Prince George-Mount Robson. That is the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and Chief Dominic Frederick. They have made some phenomenal progress over the years. Just recently they signed an agreement-in-principle, and I'm optimistic that that relationship is going to move forward in the very near future to a final agreement.

I'm optimistic because the steps we've taken in terms of building a new relationship have created an environment where those kinds of possibilities are there. It's not just because of some words or just because of some actions, but there's such a history of mistrust. There's a history of difficulties. And what we've done is extended a hand to say that we're willing to do what it takes to come to the table to work together to mutually find solutions.

For the people in my riding of Prince George-Omineca, it is so important to have those solutions. It's not just because of the challenges that are met but because those solutions help us all. They'll help us bring stability in the land base in forestry. They'll help us to bring some stability in the land base in terms of mining and oil and gas and in other opportunities that bring benefits to first nations as well as to all the people of my riding and the whole province. It is so critical that we take these steps to put the past behind us, to be able to build towards the future so that, walking together, we are able to have a bright future and are able to bring the promise.

Building capacity in this process is critical, and I am so pleased to see that our government has made these steps that have put \$100 million on the table and said: "We want to work with you. We want to be able to find ways to build capacity. We want to be able to find ways to have those partnerships."

It's been such a long time in this province that those kind of positive thoughts and works have been in place. I'm very proud and very pleased, and I want to thank the Minister for Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation for the work he's done in bringing this forward. Yes, there are some challenges, but I know that he has done a lot of work in helping to build this and to move this forward.

[1640]

I want to close with a few comments, particularly on a comment that came from the member for Alberni-Qualicum with regard to the highway of tears and recognition of this. The highway of tears is a stretch that goes from Prince Rupert to the Alberta border, really, when you look at it. In particular, there's a stretch in there that goes right through my riding. There have been a number of tragedies along that highway with missing women, the majority of whom are from the first nations.

That's something we all share as a concern, that we all have and all need to take forward and find a solution to and find those who are responsible and bring them to justice. That is a commitment where our government has certainly stepped forward, and I know it's a commitment that all members in the House share, in the sense that when tragedies like this happen, we need to be able to rally together. It can't be politics. You can't put those sorts of things in place. You need to be able to come together and try to work to find the solutions.

I know that the Solicitor General has spoken about that, and he has made some resources available. I was pleased that steps have been taken, because we need to be able to answer those calls for justice. New relationships is just that. It's about going beyond what we have done in the past. It's about finding a new path, and it's about building something new.

I am very pleased today to have risen and to be able to have the opportunity to speak to this in support of this bill. I think it goes a long way, and I am very encouraged and looking forward to the opportunities and the kind of B.C. that this will help to build.

M. Karagianis: I'm actually very happy to stand up today and speak to this bill, because the new relationship is very good news. The commitment that has been made here in moving forward marks the real beginning, I think, of the new relationship, but I think it's fair to say there are a lot of expectations out in the province as to how the government is going to deliver on the promises to first nations communities.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the first nations communities in my riding and also those I've worked with elsewhere, outside of my riding. I would have to say that the three nations in my riding — the Esquimalt Nation, the Songhees and the Beecher Bay Nations —

represent some of those who are not necessarily going to benefit from this new trust fund. That's unfortunate, because I think these communities represent some of the greatest challenges in urban communities.

In some cases they represent some of the poverty numbers we see across the province. They represent also the communities with great pride, great hopes and, I think, great expectations as to what government is going to be able to do for them. In creating an initiative that's a new relationship, I think it's important for government to make good on the expectations for all aboriginal communities and all nations across the province.

I guess the lack of commitment here and the lack of dollars for my communities are, for me, a great concern. One of the greatest challenges that I know my first nations and other first nations communities around the province struggle with is building capacity in their communities. This will continue to be a huge obstacle to these communities in successfully working with the province and with the communities around them to take the best advantage of business opportunities that come their way and of some of the land issues yet to be settled here in the province.

[1645]

I want to support this wholeheartedly, but I also would like to see a piece of this for my communities, especially for my Esquimalt and Songhees and Beecher Bay communities and nations who actually rightfully deserve to also be part of the new relationship.

I know, also, from working with other communities here on the Island, with other first nations and with organizations that specifically serve the aboriginal community who are living in urban settings, who are not attached directly to their own home communities, that there are some great expectations about what this new relationship and this trust is going to hold for them. So it is my expectation that, coming out of this, there will be a continuing struggle as to how we in government and how the minister responsible for this new relationship is going to, in fact, make those relationships and make those overtures to these communities work. I would certainly hope, in setting the terms of reference, that all of those considerations will be taken into place.

Of great concern to me are communities like Beecher Bay, which struggles on the periphery of a thriving urban environment here but also lives in a somewhat rural atmosphere. Where do they fit into this trust, and where do they fit in the larger picture? I know they want this new relationship. In fact, they need this new relationship very much. Also, the expectations from the other first nations on exactly what part of this they are going to share.... What's in the terms of reference that is going to assist them, that's going to give them the comfort around that?

In supporting the trust, in supporting this initiative going forward, I would only ask of the government and of the minister responsible for this that the terms of reference be real and viable and reflect the needs of all of the communities, especially those attached to urban areas, those struggling with urban land issues, those

struggling to try and find a way forward for themselves in this. Many of these nations want to create good and thriving business opportunities in their community.

As the critic for Small Business, that's important to me as well. I know, in talking to several of the chiefs in my community, in my constituency, that that's a really important part of their future planning, creating those business models, having those opportunities. Again, all of that capacity-building and all of that real investment in those communities is important.

I'm going to be looking with great interest as we move forward to see exactly how those issues are addressed and how those communities will benefit, because the disappointment will be great if they don't. I know that some of the communities I've worked with outside of my own constituency also have really big expectations, and they have embraced this process quite energetically for the very reason that they believe this will be an opportunity for them to help create that capacity and become less and less dependent on having to tap into the non-aboriginal community to help bring that capacity within their own community borders.

I'd like us to continue to move forward on this and see that this is the first step in relationship-building. I would hope that the minister knows I am actually speaking in a constructive way about what I know my communities want, and I know that he has had contact with those communities and clearly understands that what I'm saying is a very relevant discussion for him to have.

I would simply say: let's continue to work. Let's continue to strive for terms of reference that allow the most excellent outcome of this so that all nations benefit and so that all nations feel a part of the new relationship, that they all actually feel that they participated in that and that their expectations around how some of the funding is going to benefit their communities do not leave them disappointed or disenchanting or disconnected in any way.

[1650]

I would encourage the minister and government to continue to pursue this — understanding the expectations out there and, hopefully, achieving for those communities all that they would hope to get out of this. It's my hope that we'll see some tangible evidence of this in the future. I'll be talking, certainly, with my community chiefs and finding out whether or not they're happy with the direction things are taking and at what point they are invited into the discussions to help cast those terms of reference. I thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to this, Madam Speaker.

J. Nuraney: It gives me great pleasure to speak today in favour of the New Relationship Trust Act. I believe this act is a landmark in our province's growing relationship with our first nations communities. As a responsible society we need to give all people the tools needed to succeed.

We know that in this country grave mistakes were made with regard to first nations people. Our past is

tainted with injustices and shameful behaviour towards our aboriginal people. Our government, under the leadership of our Premier, is committed to forging a new relationship based on trust and mutual confidence. I am convinced of the genuine intention of this government to achieve this goal.

Last September our government made the commitment to build this new relationship of reconciliation based on mutual respect and recognition of aboriginal Canadian constitutional rights. The goal is to ensure that aboriginal people share in the economic and social development of British Columbia, in line with the five great goals of the golden decade.

In order to achieve these five great goals, it is imperative that we take into account the important objectives, which are: to restore, revitalize and strengthen first nations and their communities and families to eliminate the gap in the standard of living with other British Columbians and substantially improve the circumstances of first nations people in areas which include education, children and family, and health, including the restoration of habitats to achieve access to traditional foods and medicine; to achieve first nations self-determination through exercise of their aboriginal title, including realizing the economic component of aboriginal title and exercising their jurisdiction over the use of the land and resources through their own structures; to ensure that lands and resources are managed in accordance with first nations laws, knowledge and values and that the resource development is carried out in a sustainable manner, including the primary responsibility of preserving healthy lands, resources and ecosystems for present and future generations; and finally, to revitalize and preserve first nations cultures and languages and restore literacy and fluency in first nations languages to ensure that no first nation language becomes extinct.

We are working very hard to help our aboriginal partners meet these objectives. We will advance the national goal of eliminating the inequities that have plagued the indigenous people throughout our country and in our history. Our province was also a leading party in helping achieve last November's Kelowna accord — still in progress, with many details that still need to be worked out.

[1655]

Earlier this month we announced \$40,000 in funds to support the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation Association's annual Youth Entrepreneur Symposium. This funding will help the young people become exposed to leadership, networking and financial opportunities at the National Aboriginal Capital Corporation.

One might ask: what is the overarching purpose of this act? Quite simply, it is to assist first nations to participate in land and resource management and to manage their own social programs in and for their own communities. In other words, it is to empower them and to help them be self-reliant.

Capacity-building will help indigenous people reduce the need to hire non-aboriginals and will afford them the opportunity to build and create their own

skill sets. Again, this is all about presenting the people with the opportunities to enhance their lives and communities. It is our hope that this will lead to more institutional leadership and the human resource capacity to undertake social, cultural and economic priorities and needs.

The New Relationship Trust Act is also about accountability. The appointed seven-member board of directors will publicly be accountable. With \$100 million of the taxpayers' money, this is a significant and a necessary component. I am pleased to hear that the audited financial statements and the publicly available annual report are also requirements. Also, like all good businesses, proper financial planning is required.

Recently I had the pleasure of attending the opening of a new academic facility at the IIG-All Nations university, which is now located in my riding of Burnaby-Willingdon. Briefly, the IIG-All Nations is a different kind of university, and I think their concept is rather revolutionary.

As the Chair, also, of the Select Standing Committee on Education, I have a strong desire to advance literacy right across the province. Unfortunately, the indigenous people suffer from exceptionally high illiteracy rates. This is something that needs to be addressed and rectified. Thankfully, the vision of the all nations university is one part of the solution to this problem and worthy of our praise. Their mission is to provide quality and university-focused programs from an indigenous perspective in an optimistic, opportunities-oriented environment leading to growth, enrichment, self-sufficiency, self-respect for all members of the school community. "To aspire, to dig deep and grow" is their motto.

IIG-All Nations is an entrepreneurial organization and was recently selected as a finalist by the Burnaby Board of Trade for excellence in business management. They are fulfilling the very important role of providing an opportunity to indigenous and all students who might not be given the opportunity otherwise to enrol in other universities.

Despite an open-door policy and fully qualified professors, the All Nations boasts the lowest overall post-secondary fees in British Columbia. Not only that, they are the fastest-growing university in the province, yet still manage to maintain small classes. This is truly an amazing achievement.

In my mind, all nations university is a working and flourishing example of what capacity-building is and should aspire to be. This Relationship Trust Act will allow the board of directors the flexibility to define who is considered to be a member of British Columbia's first nations community. Based on my experience in meeting with the students, professors and elders, I think this is a very important concept.

[1700]

Flexibility is a must if our first nations are able to thrive. As we all know, indigenous people are more than one single entity, and it is important to consider the needs of all — on and off reserve, urban and rural, and Métis. We are on the right path, and we must per-

sist in order to help our brothers and sisters of the first nations achieve their goals and their dreams.

C. Wyse: It indeed is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in favour of Bill 11, the New Relationship Trust Act. I wish to begin by acknowledging all the people that have worked on achieving this particular item. I support the intent of the new relationship, and hope the government will continue to re-source the new relationship.

From my perspective, this is good news that we are dealing with here. Bill 11 has the potential to make good on the government's promise of a new relationship and follow through with the ideals expressed in the new approach by the government towards first nations in our province. I see it as something tangible. I see that as a major step forward, given the initial step of having a referendum around first nations, which in my judgment was an item that was not productive. I recognize the new approach here that is being announced, and I want to acknowledge that greatly.

There are high expectations around this new relationship amongst aboriginals and non-aboriginals alike. Capacity problems are widely recognized as inhibiting the progress of first nations communities. Without addressing them, first nations won't be able to truly engage as partners with government. This extends, in particular, to treaty negotiations, to issues surrounding natural resource management and to achieving essential levels of educational attainment and health security.

Specifically, I wish to come back and put into the record some of the items here from Cariboo South — my riding — that I'm aware of that exist around the first nations groups. They are in no order of priority. I would hope that the House would recognize that I've gone from memory, and I hope that I'm able to have remembered all of them. So this list isn't necessarily completely inclusive.

As the minister here is aware, I have raised with him both in the House and in writing the issue of potable water in the Cariboo. In Cariboo South, it is of major concern. Of the boil-water advisories that were drawn to our attention here late last year, seven of them exist in my riding. I know the minister is aware of that item, and I have his assurances he is working on addressing that particular issue.

The employment issue. The lack of it amongst my first nations communities is high. It is as high as 85 percent in some of the different communities.

Housing is an ongoing concern. When you go to first nations communities in Cariboo South, you will ask yourself whether you are still here within the province of B.C., in a province of Canada, when you see the conditions that some people in some of these first nations communities are living in today.

[1705]

There are the issues around additions to reserves and the reserves that are in existence. Agreements with local governments. Land usage — both with first nations, with people that are their neighbours, amongst

first nations and non-first nations groups and local government.

Last on my list, but not necessarily least by any means, is the potential for the preservation of culture — for first nations in particular, that of language. With the loss of language goes the loss of culture, so Bill 11, in actual fact, offers the opportunity for everyone in B.C. to make improvements in this area. But for the record, I believe that Bill 11 offers the potential for some of the issues from Cariboo South.

I hope that this fund will reconcile the many outstanding issues of aboriginals in B.C. in general. It is a good first step by the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. I am supportive of the new relationship and am encouraged by this first initiative out of the new ministry. I will be looking for more to be coming out of the ministry to support the initiatives and, in particular, from the leadership by the minister to other line ministries. That is equally important, to ensure that this doesn't become stovepiped in one of the ministries, that this new relationship spreads out across all the government ministries which provide services to all British Columbians.

There is still a lot of work to be done. I wish to take a very brief period of time to point out the need for this additional work. To date, only one treaty has been signed off in this province. First nations need access to lasting, balanced settlements, not simply a patchwork of short-term agreements. First nations continue to struggle with government around natural resource management. For my area, Cariboo South, which has a large amount of open natural resources, that is an issue.

Recently I wrote the Premier with regards to involvement of first nations communities in Cariboo South around the natural resource management. First nations communities in Cariboo South very clearly have stated that they must be involved in these discussions. This tool once more provides the ability to be involved in these processes. If we are going to develop these resources, then we have to be able to get everybody to the table in a fair and equitable manner so that arrangements could be made around these items.

Aboriginal children die at three times the rate of non-aboriginal children and are more likely to be born with severe birth defects and debilitating conditions such as fetal alcohol syndrome. Aboriginals suffer traumatic injuries at four times the rate of the general population. Per capita, natives suffer more motor vehicle crashes, drownings, deaths by fire, homicides, accidental poisonings and firearms-related injuries.

As a former classroom teacher, I wish to share with the House that unfortunately, I have worked with individuals who have suffered, basically, through all of these types of events that have transpired in their lives, and I can assure this House that this is an issue of concern for my area. I will tie this together later on — where I believe we have the potential to be going.

In British Columbia 45 percent of on-reserve adults lack a high school degree, and 4.6 percent have a university degree. Among non-aboriginals, just 20 percent

lack a high school degree and 25 percent are universal grads. That shows the contrast of the situation that we're dealing with here. In a modern economy, failure to obtain a high school education is nothing but a recipe for lack of success in our society. As time has passed, we have seen the effects of lack of education and lack of training leading to individuals, whoever they may be, being less able to move in society. I want to refer back to those stats that I mentioned here, just very briefly.

[1710]

Once the trust is set up and running, there will be some challenges. I want to commend the legislation and what is contained within it. I believe there is a tremendous amount of thought and foresight that has gone into it, particularly around the area of the trust and so on, and I want to recognize the government in that area. However, there are some challenges, at least potential challenges, that will possibly require some work as this work-in-progress develops and evolves and improves as time passes.

Setting the terms of reference for the funds which will ultimately decide how money will be allocated. As in any process involving substantive funds, it is likely to be complicated and controversial. It's something to simply be recognized.

Developing a dispute resolution process. During the lifetime of a trust, it is possible that disputes on fund allocation will arise. We encourage the development of a dispute resolution mechanism for the trust that will support both the complainants and the directors. The *New Relationship* document itself makes several references to the need for impartial dispute resolution processes, an observation that I share with the House and with the minister.

After such a long period of time — and not necessarily just for the arrival of Bill 11, but for a recognition, finally, to get on with reconciliation — there are high expectations that exist right throughout British Columbia. But limiting myself more to Cariboo South, I know that in discussions I have had with my constituents, the managing of these high expectations is something I would like to share around here and likewise with Cariboo South and the community at large. They will need to be managed so that this new area of working together has a chance to grow and develop down the line.

The work must not stop with the trust. We hope that the new relationship will not stop simply with this \$100 million. We encourage the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to take the initiative to create parallel networks of support that foster and promote the work of the trust and to transition bands. A one-time investment is not enough. While I support the intent of the new relationship, I recognize that the success of a new relationship relies on continued dialogue with aboriginal people on the basis of recognizing aboriginal rights and title.

In closing, public accountability and transparency is the key to the success of the trust. Cariboo South is pleased that something tangible has developed with this act.

L. Mayencourt: I am pleased to stand in the House today and speak to the New Relationship Trust Act. I think that we as a government and we as a Legislature have come a long way.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

I have watched with great interest the development of the *New Relationship* document, and I have been inspired by the work of the minister responsible for this piece of legislation. I am inspired even by the name of his ministry. I think it speaks to the attitudes in British Columbia today about reconciliation. I think it speaks to us about coming forward and saying that we have some work to do here together to move forward and to make the lot in life for all British Columbians much better.

I am of the belief that we cannot do that in one group at a time. We have to do that in lockstep. We have to move together, we have to decide on what we're trying to accomplish, and we have to go forward with it.

I've had the opportunity to visit many first nations communities and had a great time talking with many, many people that work in first nations. I was grateful to the member from Burnaby south who was speaking earlier about the Institute of Indigenous Government. The IIG, or the Institute of Indigenous Government, actually started in my neighbourhood — down in and around Victory Square. Later it moved over to a location on Homer Street.

[1715]

I got the opportunity to spend some time with Sean Kocsis, who was the executive director. I believe he continues to be there. I've also had the chance to work with a couple of their assistant professors, Catherine Crow and Bill Lindsay

What I learned from my interaction with these folks was that they had this great desire and this great vision to make a difference in British Columbia, in concert with aboriginal folks and non-aboriginals. They had a larger vision. They understood that in order for first nations to improve their standard of living, they had to become equal partners. I think that's something that is reflected so well in *The New Relationship* document.

I think one of the most beautiful things about *The New Relationship* document is the first sentence in the first paragraph of that relationship document: "We are all here to stay." I think what that is telling us is that we have to stop working against each other. We have to start recognizing the value of each other, of different cultures, of different beliefs. We have to start working together to make sure that we respect each other, that we make a commitment to treat each other well. That is a very important statement.

There is no doubt in my mind that there has been a lot of wrong done to first nations and to our first peoples around this province. We have plenty of examples of it. I am constantly amazed when I think back to the 1960s, when we stopped with the residential schools. I used to think that was a hundred years ago, and it's not so long ago. I think we have gone a long way in the

direction of healing some of those relationships, of bringing people together.

I think of people at the Native Education Centre, for example, that I have visited on many occasions. They're up on Main and 5th. I have gone for the last five years to their graduation ceremonies and have been able to be part of that place. The guy that runs the place is Brian Madarash. He's a really great guy. One of their board members has worked with me a bit and has come over to Victoria on occasion — Jacqueline Dennis-Orr.

They have this fellow there. His name is Gary, and I cannot for the life of me remember his last name right now. His job in the Native Education Centre is a job of protocol. His job is to recognize the value of each and every first nation, every group within first nations — recognize their traditions, understand how they operate and what their belief systems are and where they come from and a bit of their language.

When I saw Gary in action, I realized that what he was doing was demonstrating respect. It was like he understood that we all had to be together somehow, and the only way that we could be is if we could communicate with one another that we cared about each other and that we respected each other and we understood each other's traditions. Even if we didn't understand the traditions, we were willing to accommodate them. I think that is the beauty of this.

We talked about some of the goals of new relationship, and I want to just go through them. I think they're beautiful. We want to restore and revitalize and strengthen first nations, their communities and families to eliminate the gap in standards of living with other British Columbians. We want to be fair. We want to improve the circumstances of first nations people in areas like education, children and family, and health, including the restoration of habitats to achieve access to traditional foods and medicines.

I will diverge for a second. I was on the committee that travelled the north coast, and we met with first nations all along the coast from north to south. They described to me how the ocean was their table. It was a concept that I didn't quite get. I didn't quite understand what they meant by it. What it meant was that we take food off of this table and feed ourselves. This is something really important to us. I thought: that's a nice thought. I thought that was really poetic.

[1720]

A few years ago I happened to go out to Nanoose Bay, and I was visiting with a friend there. He said: "Let's go out to the crab traps." So we went out, and he pulled in his crab traps and loaded up with lots of crabs. Then we went over to where the shrimp were and picked them up, and I went: "Ah, this is what they mean by their table." This is what's so beautiful about that whole idea — that they want us.... Like, we want to respect not just each other, but we want to respect the environment that we share.

I think that's terrific, and I think that's something that first nations have really contributed to British Columbians' understanding. I think they were ahead of us

on the environment. I think they were way ahead of us on the environment. We've learned lots from them, and we continue to do that.

We also wanted to help first nations achieve self-determination through aboriginal title, including realizing the economic component of aboriginal title and exercising their jurisdiction over the land and resources through their own structures. We recognize that they have a say in how the land and water and air around their territory is managed. They want to know they're partners in it, and I think that that's something we've slowly come to realize here in British Columbia. I think that we keep understanding it even better. As I listen to members that have spoken before me, just the level of understanding that we can do something very important here.... It's not everything, but it is something very important, and it is about respect and it's about reconciliation.

We want to ensure that the lands and resources are managed in accordance with their laws, with the knowledge that they have and the values they place on the resources that are in their areas. We recognize that they want to create sustainable communities, and we want to help them do that. We want to revitalize and preserve first nations cultures and languages and restore literacy and fluency in first nation languages to ensure that no first nation language becomes extinct.

I recently watched the Olympics. We know a lot about British Columbia here. What seems to really inspire people from across North America and Europe are our first nations, our first peoples. Who are they? What are their traditions? What does their art mean? What do the traditions mean? What is all that about?

We have been close to the edge of losing all of that. At times in our history we've tried to push that aside and not deal with it and not have it be part of British Columbia. Gosh, that would have been a terrible, terrible loss if that had happened. But it didn't happen. As a matter of fact, with *The New Relationship* document, with the New Relationship trust, we have an opportunity to not just stop the decline of knowledge of first nations languages and traditions and so on, but to actually rebuild them, to have them grow in stature and recognition throughout British Columbia for future generations. That, to me, is beautiful. That, to me, is very, very important.

We've talked about things that we want to achieve in British Columbia, and we've talked about the five great goals that we have set before us: to be the most literate jurisdiction, to provide the best system of support for persons with disabilities, to lead the world in sustainable environmental management, to create more jobs than anywhere else and to lead the way in healthy living and fitness. Well, the first peoples are part of us, and we cannot go there without them. We cannot go and achieve any of those goals unless they are by our side.

So how do we bring them along with us? Well, perhaps we just let them lead. Perhaps we just let them say to us: "This is what we need to do. This is where we have to go, what we have to study and what we have to offer to all British Columbians."

I am very inspired by the whole idea of first nations getting their own say about land and resource management. I mean, who better? These people are champions, as I said earlier, of our environmental movement. It's something that all British Columbians agree with. We all want to respect our land; we all want to respect each other. I think that we're on the right path with this.

[1725]

Another speaker indicated at one point in his comments that there is a distinction between the New Relationship Trust Act and *The New Relationship* document. Well, I don't think there is a separation. I think there's some interconnection here that is really important. The interconnection is that as we create the trust, this New Relationship Trust Act, as we create that bill, we're actually fulfilling *The New Relationship* document — just the beginning of it. We are at the beginning of a very long process, and we are establishing a place where we can agree on something, where we can say: "You know what? We're here, we're equals, we want to work together, we want to create a better British Columbia, and we're going to do that together." This document and the New Relationship Trust Act do that.

As we talk about the development of the new relationship, I know we've all had relationships in our lives that have been great relationships, we've had relationships in our lives that have been bad relationships, and we've had relationships in our lives that are somewhere in the middle. I have learned through a lot of time that my goal should always be to make sure that the bad relationship turns into a good relationship.

That's what we are trying to do here. We're trying to move incrementally to a point where a relationship that has been strained — a relationship that has not worked so far — steadily improves. That means we're going to have to spend a lot of time over the next five, ten, 15, 20 years in the development of the new relationship. The new relationship is not going to.... I hope it will never get old. I hope the new relationship will continue to evolve and get better, and that we will see, as a people, that we can strengthen our connections to one another, to our land and to our history, our culture, our traditions and our beliefs. We can bring all of that together as one people, and we can make British Columbia a stronger place for it.

You know, there's been a lot of talk about capacity-building in these last few hours. What capacity-building means to me is that we're giving first nations people the opportunity to take this money and teach their own people, to bring them to a point where they can fulfil their dreams about managing their land and managing British Columbia in a sustainable way. We're, actually, not saying to people: "Here is an economic development plan. Implement it." We're saying: "No, when someone develops an economic development plan, they use the following skills. Here's an opportunity to develop those skills within your own communities." I think that's so important.

Today we were talking in the.... I'm a member on the Select Standing Committee on Education, and we

had a really great guy in there this morning, a Dr. Faris, who talked to us about a first nation. I think it was the Gitksan. He was talking about the disconnection in that community between elders and the young. You know, I see that a lot. In first nations culture — as it should be, probably, in all — there is a great reverence for elders. They offer something important that we can understand, and they can pass that on to the next generation. I think that there have been times when that gap has widened between the young and the elders in first nations — just as it has, you know, in our relationships and in non-native relationships.

I think part of the reason that the gap is there is because we didn't let elders have a role in their communities such that the youngsters would look at them and go: "Tell us what you know about this." I think we've created an artificial gap, and this new relationship gives us a wonderful opportunity to reconnect elders to young, to reconnect that middle generation, to bring us all together and say: "Let's try and make a better day. Let's try and make a better week, a better month and a better year for all of us."

[1730]

We are going to learn from each other, from our past, we're going to move towards the views or goals of the future, and we're going to do this together, recognizing our interconnectedness.

We're going to do it in a way that is respectful of each other, respectful of our beliefs — respectful, respectful, respectful — because as it says in the first paragraph of the first page of *The New Relationship*, we are all here to stay. I think that's beautiful. We are all here to stay. The only way we can coexist, the only way we can make it, is if we get together and work together and provide each other with the tools and the resources to make that happen.

The New Relationship Trust puts a big whack of cash out there that allows people to develop the skills that they need to achieve their goals, which just happen to be consistent and connected with ours.

I'm glad that we're all here to stay. I'm glad that first nations are starting on a path that's going to.... British Columbia — our government, we in this House — has started on a new path that is really kind of cool. I can remember times when it wasn't so friendly between first nations and non-natives. We've come a long way, and I'm proud of that. I think that we have a great new relationship to start on, and we'll continue to move forward with it. It'll always be new. It'll always be renewed.

I thank you for the time and the opportunity to speak, Madam Speaker.

H. Lali: I rise to support Bill 11. I'm very happy that this has come forward. I'm just going to be making a few comments in terms of what aboriginal people have had to endure over centuries since the coming of Europeans and people from other parts of the world.

You know, when we look at the history of our treatment of aboriginal people in this country since the coming of people from Europe and that, it's not a his-

tory that we can actually be proud of. It's not something that you can proudly talk about with your children or your grandchildren and say: "Yeah, this is how positively we have treated the first nations of this country."

It sort of reminds me of the words that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in terms of the apology he made to Sikhs after the massacre in Delhi following the death of Indira Gandhi. It took, basically, over 20 years for the government to realize. His words were basically.... He started by saying, "I hang my head in shame," in terms of what had happened at that time and the lack of redress by any government in India. When I think of the situation here, I feel that way. I hang my head in shame as a Canadian to know that the treatment of aboriginal people was not something that we should be proud of. Really, it was for centuries.

In terms of trying to put it into my own words, the best that I could describe it is that it was centuries of subjugation of aboriginal people. Of course, over the last few decades things have begun to change. But when you look prior to that — prior to World War II, especially — that's basically what it was.

At one time folks in South Africa, when they developed the apartheid system, actually came out to look at the Indian Act and what the treatment of aboriginal people was in Canada before the apartheid system was introduced in South Africa.

It's not something that I know I'm proud of or that members in this House are proud of — in terms of all of those negative things that have gone on for centuries right here under our noses in this country. Obviously, when you look at the situation with aboriginal people and at the levels of poverty that have existed and that exist right now....

[1735]

There was a time when folks from other parts of the world came here, after the aboriginal people had been here for millennia. Some of those small communities on the eastern seaboard of Canada and the United States — and even afterwards, as they ventured through into central North America and the west coast.... For a lot of those new communities in their times of need, when they were facing starvation — especially during the wintertime, when they didn't know how to support themselves in the elements that existed in North America — it was the generosity and the kindness of the aboriginal people that helped those communities to survive in their time of need.

We often forget that that had taken place. The first nations who were here for millennia were self-sufficient, were able to look after themselves. They had a thriving economy and thriving trade, whether it was east-west or north-south. It stretched thousands of miles. They were able to survive and have communities that thrived. It was the destabilization of their society and their economy by our ancestors before us who came here that actually threw them into the situation of chaos and poverty.

When you look at aboriginal people, the poverty levels are the highest in Canada. My colleague from

Cariboo South mentioned that in some of the reserves in his riding, there's up to 85-percent unemployment. In my community of Yale-Lillooet, in my constituency, there are 27 first nations — the highest number of aboriginal bands of any constituency in this province. I see that poverty in a number of those reserves, especially the small reserves. It is, indeed, up to 80 percent, 90 percent. It's quite shameful that those of us who live in the small urban centres, the towns and villages, in our constituencies.... We're doing okay. You know, we're enjoying a middle-class living. But when you look at aboriginal bands, it's not there. The unemployment rates are really high.

Because of the economic marginalization that has taken place, what we find is that there are a lot of problems in existence on first nations reserves. Members from both sides have talked about some of the stats already — not to go into detail. The teenage pregnancies are the highest in the country. The rate of suicide is also the highest amongst aboriginal communities, especially amongst teens, when you compare it with the rest of the country. Alcohol and drug abuse is also the highest in the country. The rate of prostitution amongst urban aboriginals is also the highest of any other community. The rate of incarceration in Canada is the highest of any community in the country. That's not something we can be proud of.

When you look at that, when you look at the social and economic conditions that exist on reserves and, yes, even amongst the urban aboriginal population, the words that come to my mind are: these are Third World conditions. Even in those Third World countries, they don't even call it the Third World anymore. They call it the developing countries. Indeed, most of those countries in what was formerly called the Third World are developing their economies so that people from all walks of life are able to participate in the economic benefits that are derived from there. Places like India and China are no longer called Third World, because they have huge, thriving economies, and people are able to achieve benefits from that.

When you compare.... I go to India all the time. I've gone to Hong Kong and to China as well. When you look at the conditions that exist on aboriginal reserves in this province, so many of them in my own constituency, and compare them to the conditions that exist in some of those developing countries, it doesn't make me feel proud, because the conditions in those countries, like India, in so many of those areas, are so much better than they are right here in Canada, in British Columbia.

[1740]

The United Nations — I think, seven out of the last dozen years — has voted Canada as the best country to live in, in the entire world, because of our social and economic conditions, because of our health care and a number of other factors. But when you go to the reserve level, when you talk to aboriginal people, you think you are actually in a different country. That's how the difference is in terms of the social and economic conditions, the difference between the mainstream communities and aboriginal communities.

Of course, all of these problems I have talked about, these social problems that aboriginal people are going through, don't just pop up all of a sudden. It is because of the centuries of subjugation. The destruction of their local economies and the trade system that they had in place has actually made the conditions on aboriginal reserves what they are. I want to talk about how it starts.

It starts, really, when the children are young. If you look at the residential school system and the physical and sexual abuse and the destruction of their culture and language that took place, it is a big factor in terms of the destruction of their social fabric and the economic fabric that existed. I'm happy that the government has introduced this bill to try to redress some of that, and I will talk about that in a few minutes. But when you look at aboriginal children when they go to school, and they compare, generally speaking, with non-aboriginal students, and you know that the level of nutrition that they have is not up to par.... When they see other kids being able to enjoy some of the variety of foods that they eat, and they can't, there is an effect on them. There is a psychological effect on those aboriginal kids.

The same thing goes for the level of programs and activities. In the mainstream, kids are able to enjoy soccer and hockey or ballet or figure skating and all of those extracurricular activities. But you'll hardly find aboriginal kids. Some of the people have been able to do well, and their kids are enjoying that, but most aboriginal kids can't. There's a psychological effect as a result of that, or the quality of the clothing that they wear, or the goods and consumer items that non-aboriginal kids are able to have but aboriginal kids don't. They compare themselves with their colleagues, and there is a negative psychological effect as a result of that.

The same thing goes for travel, for instance. Most aboriginal kids, if they do travel, it is in their own relationships, relatives, within their own community or perhaps within the province — very little outside of the province or in another part of North America. If you ask among aboriginal kids how many of them have gone to Disneyland, for instance.... It is the dream of every child growing up to want to go to Disneyland, and when you look at aboriginal communities, the vast majority of those kids don't get that opportunity to go, because of their income levels. So obviously, you see the negative effects in terms of what takes place.

I want to commend the minister and the government. I want to also congratulate the Assembly of First Nations of B.C., UBCIC and the first nations who worked so hard for this in order to try to help alleviate hundreds of years of suffering they had to endure. I'm also glad that the government has done an about-face from 2001, that very divisive referendum that took place at that time. I'm also not very happy to say that yesterday we saw the Minister of Agriculture debate a bill, but there was no consultation with the aboriginal people on that. I wish there had been, so that the aboriginal people were able to give their two bits on that in terms of the new relationship that the government is trying to build.

So capacity-building — many members have talked about it — is a big problem. Aboriginal people need to be able to have the capacity, to have the research done, so that they can actually sit at the same table with governments in order to negotiate treaties or any other kind of agreements they may have.

[1745]

We've heard members talk about the new era and the success that is achieved by that. But again, I want to remind hon. members of the words.... I'm going to paraphrase, because I don't have the actual quote in front of me. I want to paraphrase the words of Tommy Douglas. If folks had a chance to actually see the television movie that was on there, at the end there were some words that were on the screen. Tommy Douglas says that when we measure success, when we talk about success — and I'm paraphrasing.... He says that success should not be measured by how well we do for ourselves but rather how well we treat those folks who are less fortunate than ourselves.

When I think of that statement, I think of the aboriginal people. When folks on both sides of the House.... When folks on the government side jump to their feet to talk about the success of the new era, I want them to keep in mind whether that success has gone to those who are less fortunate than ourselves, whether they're mainstream community or in the aboriginal communities. When you look at aboriginal communities, they have not felt any of that success.

I want to challenge the government to not make this a one-time shot, this \$100 million, but to spread it beyond that. Make it a multi-year program because \$100 million alone is not going to cut it. There are some challenges, and there are expectations that need to be managed. It is great that the name of the ministry has changed from Aboriginal Affairs to Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, but in order to have true reconciliation, it's got to be more than a one-year program of \$100 million.

It has to be able to extend beyond just that realm as well. That new era of prosperity has to extend to the aboriginal people in this province. Otherwise, if we've got people, and we do, whether they're seniors or single mothers, or they are those new immigrants or aboriginal people who are not enjoying success, or lower income levels or, indeed, so many people in the middle class as well.... It's not fair for us to say that we are successful if only a small percentage of people are actually able to achieve the economic benefits when there are so many in our society, especially on aboriginal reserves, who do not.

I know the hour is coming to an end. I wish I'd had more time, but that's okay. I will have an opportunity another time to conclude other remarks. But before I sit down, I want to commend the government for bringing this forward. It's a start. I don't think it's the end. It's a start, and I hope they do more of that in terms of bringing economic prosperity to aboriginal reserves as well.

So I rise, before I actually sit down, to support Bill 11, the New Relationship Trust Act.

Hon. C. Richmond: Noting the hour, we will take our dinner break now and recess until 6:45 p.m.

Deputy Speaker: This House stands recessed until 6:45 p.m.

The House recessed from 5:48 p.m. to 6:48 p.m.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

M. Polak: I rise in this House to proudly give my support to the New Relationship Trust Act. I wanted to spend a little time initially talking about the ways in which I've learned about trust and the importance of it from my experiences with the aboriginal community.

Around 1997 I had the privilege of being designated as my school district's representative to the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee. I went with great trepidation to my first meeting, not knowing the first thing about aboriginal education and finding out that this was a group of people who were hard-working and had good hearts but had really experienced a lot of disappointment with the education system and with governments. They were not all that ready to trust someone coming into their midst and representing another level of government to them.

It took a long time to gain the trust of the people around that table. Through that process I learned the importance of consistency, of making sure that you did the kinds of things that you said you were going to do. I learned the importance of choosing language carefully, out of respect and out of care for those around you, and of not taking offence easily. I think that was one of the most powerful lessons that I took away from that experience.

Very often relationships break down suddenly when there's a misunderstanding, and often those misunderstandings — particularly when governments in the past have worked with aboriginal communities — have been exacerbated by people more or less taking their ball and going home, becoming offended very easily.

I learned a tremendous amount through my work on that committee, but it probably took a good six or seven years before there was a real feeling of friendship and honest trust between us. I guess the outcome of that, the positive that grew out of it, was a change in focus with respect to our aboriginal students.

[1850]

It was highlighted for me when we finally held, in that district, a graduation ceremony for aboriginal students that was of the same calibre as any other high school. Up until that time there had been a separate graduation ceremony that was held in an adequately decorated gymnasium or what have you, but finally we had a graduation ceremony with gowns, with caps and with all the accoutrements that would go along with a typical graduation ceremony. On that night I had the pleasure of being presented with a special gift in acknowledgment of my participation on the committee. I say that not to highlight my role but to highlight the fact it took seven years to get to the point where they

really believed that I was going to be there, that I actually was going to represent what they said.

I would have people around me saying: "Well, my goodness. They never recognize you. You've been on that committee forever." I remember saying back to them: "No, I don't want it to happen before it's time." In some ways, I see a lot of that here. Governments of all stripes have tried and failed to meet the needs of aboriginal people, and yet we try again. I think it's in that trying again, both on the government side and on the side of aboriginal peoples, that there's a chance at a new relationship. I suppose that's the same in all human endeavours that involve relationships.

The language of this Trust Act focuses a lot on capacity-building, which for me translates as community-building. We have some unique factors that impact negatively sometimes on the aboriginal community in British Columbia. In the GVRD, for example, 40 percent of the aboriginal population is 25 or under. It's a startling statistic. It's one that speaks to the need for the building of capacity as far as youth leadership. It tells us that we've got, on the one hand, a challenge meeting the needs of a large population of youth where there's a tremendous amount of risk involved in many of those families. At the same time, it's a great opportunity. Here's a chance. If we do things right, here's a chance to impact the next generation in a very powerful way, particularly considering the proportion of the aboriginal population that is represented in youth. So, as with many things, we have a challenge. But we also have a great opportunity.

We know, too, that when we give opportunities to develop skills to youth, we solve a lot of other problems that we might not think of at first. We know that we have better health outcomes, we know we have better public safety outcomes, and we know that overall we build for them a better future. One of the greatest risk factors amongst youth, be they aboriginal or non-aboriginal, is the issue of whether or not they feel they can achieve, whether or not they feel they can learn and whether or not they feel they can accomplish something. It sounds very airy-fairy, but in reality, that's one of the biggest determinants as to whether or not a youth engages in risky behaviour: whether or not they actually believe they can accomplish something.

I think we have tried in many ways to get at supporting aboriginal populations, but we haven't spent a lot of time working toward inspiring youth, and particularly aboriginal youth, to the point where they really believe that they can accomplish things. Part of that is due to the history that we have with aboriginal peoples that, unfortunately, still impacts generation after generation.

It's really incumbent upon us in this House — and I'm glad to see the support of the members opposite on this Trust Act... It's really incumbent upon all of us to lead and to inspire so that we can create an environment where those youth, those young people, really believe that they can get somewhere, that they can do something different and break the cycle that they are many times trapped in.

I'm glad that this fund is there and will be there to support the kind of ideas and ideals that are put forward within the *New Relationship* document. I know from my experience on various government and caucus committees in just the last number of months that I have been an MLA that as we now seek to enact the principles and the ideals of the new relationship, one of the struggles is the response of aboriginal communities. They say: "We want to be involved. We want to participate in land use planning. We want to participate in resource use decisions in our communities. We want to be full participants in things that affect the economic future of our areas, our regions, our reserves, and yet we don't have the people with the knowledge. We don't have the people with the skills to do that."

[1855]

Yes, we can provide them with people. We have done over many years. But it's been recognized — particularly in the last couple of years and maybe even more so in the last few months with the implementation of the *New Relationship* document — that in fact government has a role to play in assisting aboriginal communities so that they can fully participate. In some ways, the opportunities that we've attempted to offer to aboriginal people, while I'm sure with the best of intentions, really have been rather hollow offerings without the attendant support to ensure they could fully participate.

One of the other positives I notice about the New Relationship Trust Act is that the model for the trust and the model for the legislation that enacts it were developed in a manner that's consistent with the spirit of the *New Relationship* document. This is a piece of legislation that was developed in consultation with representatives from first nations. That's a really significant step forward when you consider that up until only very recently it was felt by Canadian governments, provincial governments that in fact we had to babysit first nations, aboriginal people, that we needed to tell them what was going to work in their communities. This represents a recognition in action that aboriginal communities have a role to play in determining their own futures and that we are there by their side. We are there participating, and we are there helping them to lead their own people.

We have a vision in this government of economic prosperity for British Columbia. One of the things that the *New Relationship* document, and now the New Relationship Trust Act, does is show that we want to include first nations. We want to include aboriginal peoples in that vision. We want them to experience the same kind of prosperity that other British Columbians are beginning to experience now that the economy is turned around. We're seeing a takeup of that within the aboriginal communities, particularly with those who are part of first nations and those who are on reserve.

Now when we have discussions about land use plans, about resource management, we have aboriginal people coming to the table — not just to explain and extend their cultural and historic rights around the land and what their beliefs might be about it but to say:

"You know, when it comes to future development, we want to be part of that. We want a piece of the action, so to speak. We want to be full participants, and we want to be raising the level of economic status of our people, who we are representing." That's a huge step forward.

One of the jobs of government, really, and of politicians in general is to inspire, to create a vision, to lead in a vision. Too often in the history of our work with aboriginal people, politicians and other leaders have instead acted as administrators, as managers, and have said to themselves, probably with the best of intentions: "What we need to do is make sure that we're managing things for aboriginal people. We need to make sure that administratively, things are going along fine, that we're meeting the different criteria we need to meet."

There really was no vision for the future. There was really no ability to inspire those people to believe they could achieve, because in all honesty, governments of the day did not believe that aboriginal communities and aboriginal people could succeed and achieve. We believe that they can. We know that they can. We've seen their commitment, and we are joining ours to theirs.

With this New Relationship Trust Act, we're putting resources behind that that really speak to the belief of, I think, everyone in this Legislature that aboriginal people are there at the doorway of this new opportunity and are ready to walk through it. We want to assist them by allowing them to do that — not to take them through; that's not our job — and to inspire, to lead and to give them the support they need so they can do it themselves.

We want to share what we've got in this province. It's something that doesn't belong to us. Indeed, it doesn't belong to the aboriginal peoples, and they recognize that. They believe that this is a province that is here for all of mankind, just as the world is. It's something that in our colonial history we haven't often recognized — that this isn't a matter of ownership. It's a matter of sharing with the Earth, with those resources around us. That's something that we've learned from the aboriginal people.

[1900]

It takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of commitment, and it takes a consistency in support. That hasn't been there in the past, and I'm hopeful, with the structuring of this trust and the structuring of the board of directors to govern it, that that's in fact what we're seeing here.

We're seeing a commitment to take the time. We're seeing a commitment by this government to say: "We are ready to take the time. We're ready to work with you, and we're ready to give that support in a consistent way so that you can move forward." For many, they may look from outside this Legislature and say: "Here you are targeting \$100 million to areas of skills development and capacity-building, and what does that really mean? What about dealing with the students in the K-to-12 system? What about dealing with the

small numbers of aboriginal students who go on to post-secondary? What about those things? How can you possibly look at this as moving forward when you are still not doing anything about that?"

There are a lot of resources going into that, but there is an area that this New Relationship Trust Act is going to get at that we haven't done before, and I've got personal experience with hearing those stories. In the last number of months, because I am the convener of the Select Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, I've been talking with aboriginal support workers who work in the K-to-12 system.

In particular, I've focused on speaking with those who have decided not to do that any longer — who used to be stars, the best of the best of aboriginal support workers, and who have decided not to do that work anymore. I wanted to know why. There was a consistent answer. They all said: "I'm really tired of seeing what I do in school with these kids fall away as soon as they walk out the door. I'm tired of making a difference in school and not seeing the support in their community, of not seeing their community able to provide the things they need."

That's what this trust begins to get at. It begins to get at giving those communities the tools they need to support their youth and to continue them on the path — that they can start in school, that they can start in sports. All those things require family support and community support in order to be truly successful.

As we start to build the capacity, give the tools to those communities so they can support themselves and their young people, that's where we're going to see some huge impacts, some huge crossover into K-to-12 and into post-secondary for those aboriginal young people, who are the leaders of their communities in the future. We need to support them through looking at a holistic approach, and that's another thing that skills development does. We know from educational research that if you want a student to be successful, there are two fundamental elements. That student needs to experience membership and engagement.

If you think about the history of the aboriginal people, those are two areas where we have been particularly poor as governments in providing to them. When we look at the *New Relationship* document and now the support of the New Relationship trust, that's what we're providing. We are saying: "We want you to be members. We want you to be a part of decision-making. We want you to be a part of constructing your own future." That's membership.

And we're saying: "We want you to be engaged." We've got something that says: "Here, come and experience this. Take these tools, and do what you think is important for your community." That's engagement. That's involving those communities in solving their own issues in the way in which they feel will best meet their needs. That building of capacity builds pride. It builds pride.

When those young people have pride, when those communities have pride, that's when we can start to get at some of the underlying issues that have been so

hard to tackle for so long, because of the lack of trust and the lack of feeling of belonging and self-worth amongst these people. By allowing involvement in the decisions around the use of these funds, we're saying: "We believe you should have ownership of this. We believe that you have the ability to make those decisions. We want to relinquish that control, and we want to bring you into this and give you the ownership over your future."

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

I'm glad to see that there's three-year-long planning sought on the part of the committee that will be overseeing the fund. Too often, when it comes to issues of a heightened political nature such as relationships with aboriginal communities, it has been the popular thing to conduct one-off activities — those that would get some popular press, those that would get some attention, but really didn't have any sustaining ability within a community.

[1905]

To engage that committee in three-year, long-term planning is something that I think bodes very well for the start of the committee, and it certainly will ensure there are clear expectations around the workings of this fund and around how it will be used to support these communities. It means that there will be a clear focus, and with that, I believe, it ensures that they will be able to accomplish more with the funds they receive.

I'm glad that we're responding to the kinds of needs that first nations leaders have expressed, particularly in the areas of involvement in governance. It is they who have come forward and said: "We need to be able to do these things ourselves." They have certainly expressed the value of having outside experts participate in areas, but clearly, that was never satisfying, nor should it be. They are entitled and certainly ought to be the ones who are engaging in determining their own futures. By establishing this fund, we are indeed responding to what we've heard from first nations leaders, who've said: "We're making these decisions. We need the people with the skills to be able to assist us with that, and we need them to be our own people. Help us to do that."

I'm glad that this recognizes the complex nature of the definition of aboriginal and first nations identity. Certainly, there's discussion of that in the legislation, by allowing the committee to determine how they will consider Métis, how they will consider first nations and aboriginal people living off reserve. That's going to be an important issue for us to grapple with over the coming years.

There has been a lot of attention to treaties and treaty discussions. There has not been a lot of discussion in the last number of years around the urban aboriginal population. Yet it's probably one of the most challenging areas for us to deal with, and maybe one of the ones with the most promise, because these are folks who obviously are wanting to be involved, wanting to be engaged, or they wouldn't be living in urban envi-

ronments. It's something where their families have been attempting to do something, perhaps have run into troubles — a variety of different issues. It's certainly very complex. It's important and significant that the legislation recognizes the need for the committee to consider different ways in which they might define those people who will see the benefit from this fund.

I'm glad that the first nations reps will be participating in developing the measures and the outcomes. That's very important. One of the things heard frequently in discussions around aboriginal education is that aboriginal representatives will speak of a concern around the way in which we disaggregate data to separate out aboriginal students and report on them, while at the same time, there's a need to collect that data and make some decisions around it.

It is a very sensitive area, yet very often those of us from a Caucasian, European background really don't understand the sensitivity to that. I'm very glad that it's the first nations reps who will be involved and participating in developing those measures and outcomes. It's very important that what outcomes they determine are sensitive to the issues that aboriginal people feel very strongly about — as far as how their people are examined and prodded and listed and expressed in data. It's going to be very important for them to express their views on how that's done.

It's very important that we come to terms with the fact that when we are trying as governments to be the supporters, the assisters, the facilitators, sometimes we can feel very put-upon when it seems as though the help we give isn't satisfying to those to whom we're giving it. I think we always, when we're engaging in these activities, need to step back and realize that there is such a long history of mistrust that sometimes even our best intentions don't quite do the trick.

As we engage in developing the work around this fund, I'm glad to see that there's lots of room for flexibility. I'm glad to see that there's going to be a lot of listening happening around the table.

As I give my support to this legislation, I would hope that for all of us in this House now and for those who will be dealing with these issues in coming years.... I hope legislators will always take the time to sit back and think very deeply about the issues and the complex nature of the issues that they're dealing with when working with aboriginal people and, in our best hopes for this, when aboriginal people are finally achieving the representation that they deserve and the representation that we hope to provide to them through various efforts like this.

[1910]

C. Trevena: I rise to speak in support of the bill. A few weeks ago I was at a Treaty Commission dinner in Campbell River. It was very interesting there to sit with the B.C. treaty commissioners and some of the first nations bands from Campbell River to talk about the new relationship. There was a lot of support, a lot of words, a lot of discussion about what the new relationship meant. From the Treaty Commission it was very

moving, very inspired about the sense of purpose, the sense of creativity, the sense that there will be a move on treaties and that we will see treaties signed in people's lifetimes and that first nations can move on.

From the chiefs and councillors who were there, there was a different view of the new relationship. There was a view of the new relationship that was for respect, for support and for assistance. That's one of the reasons why I welcome this act, because this act does provide the financial support that is needed to underpin the new relationship. My colleagues earlier on have been talking about the fact that this is the first sign of the new relationship. Well, I believe it is the first financial sign of it, and this is what is fundamental.

In Campbell River there are three large bands who have territory there and are operating there. We have the Campbell River band that has a number of economic plans, including building a cruise ship terminal which will change the face of our community. It will be bringing in thousands of people every year to Campbell River to see the north Island and to use it as a gateway for tourism. The Campbell River band has been pushing ahead with its plans and has had support from the provincial government, the federal government and Campbell River city council, but it knows it will need more support. These initiatives now have a place where they can look for assistance.

The Cape Mudge band also has economic development plans and frequently comes to me and says: "How can you help? We want to do this. We have a development that we're doing at Quinsam Crossing on part of our land. How can we move ahead? How can we push ahead? How can we make sure our interpretation of the new relationship has an economic base?"

What these bands know — and these were the ones among those at the Treaty Commission dinner — and what they said very clearly that night was that they do need support. They have ideas. They want to make things happen for their communities, but they also know that they have been shortchanged over these many years. I use the word advisedly there. They do need the money, because they need to make sure that their kids can get a good education, that their kids are going to get the support and that their kids are going to be ones going to university.

I think it's very telling when you look at the figures of the number of first nations who are able to graduate high school and, therefore, the even more limited numbers who can move on to post-secondary education, which is so necessary now for any further development. I hear this, time and again, from first nations in my community — that they want to see the new relationship, but they want the new relationship to have a real meaning.

They want to see that there is the economic support, that there is the base there — whether it is the Homalco, who have tourist initiatives and are developing tourism and fish hatcheries and other initiatives in their territories; whether it is the Quatsino, who are also working on economic development; or the 'Namgis. Across the constituency there are first nations who

really want to make things happen but know that they do need economic support.

[1915]

They also need to know that this new relationship is being made in good faith. It is a new relationship which really needs the financial support we can give through this. But it also needs to provide a substance and an intent that we aren't going to just pass off the money — give it to first nations and say, "That's it. Go"; that we are taking it further, are looking at treaties, are trying to make sure there is a tangible result at the end; that it isn't just more words; and that a new relationship has something that the first nations will be able to take for generations to come.

I think that the first nations have been very severely impacted over many years, particularly in the last few years. They have borne the brunt of cuts, with cuts to women's centres, income assistance, support in the court system. The first nations have been suffering, and this is why, again, they look for a new relationship that will have substance, something solid.

There are many needs and many challenges, and we can offer the supports that we can. We have to also give great respect to aboriginal peoples, because the new relationship is a new dialogue. It's taking things forward. It is moving issues along. It is, hopefully, moving treaties along.

It is through this giving of some financial support, but it is also, I hope, moving us away from, at times, a paternalistic approach into an approach of equals. Giving the first nations the financial assistance through this and the ability to manage this very much on their own is an essential foundation for any new relationship. I hope that in its action this will not just be the first step but it will be a good economic foundation for future developments so that we have a real new relationship that encompasses treaties, economic development and our approach to one another — that we are treating each other as equals.

V. Roddick: I rise in support of Bill 11 because we're all here to stay. We agree to work together in this new relationship to achieve strong governments, social justice and economic self-sufficiency for first nations.

We have five great goals to achieve in British Columbia. This can only be done if first nations citizens attain these goals as well. The New Relationship Trust Act is to build capacity, to provide first nations with training to support their communities on matters both social and economic. First nations can enhance their ability to participate in land use planning and the land and resource management process. It is to provide a way for first nations to develop their own information management systems, which will lead to their ability to manage and plan for social and economic opportunities.

In Delta South, for instance, the Tsawwassen First Nation under Chief Kim Baird has an agreement-in-principle and is now in treaty talks. They want the expertise and the experience in their own community to deal with, for example, a B.C. Ferries terminal, urban

and agricultural planning, the Vancouver port expansion at Roberts Bank, road development and transit access — all services that are required by any operational municipality: sewer, water, police, fire, health, etc.

[1920]

We have made the commitment to work together, demonstrating mutual respect and principles of recognition and reconciliation under the vision of the new relationship. The province has worked collaboratively with the First Nations Leadership Council, the B.C. Business Council, the federal government and UBCM — UBCM, who at their last fall AGM, hosted an excellent presentation by Shawn Atleo, B.C. regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs and Grand Chief Edward John, all three of whom were present yesterday at the tabling of this bill.

A three-year strategic plan will be developed to guide the administration of the fund, which will provide benefits over the long term, whereas a contribution agreement is often a short-term agreement. This funding focuses specifically on first nations institutional and community capacity to engage and participate in land, resources, cultural and social opportunities in the province, both for on- and off-reserve, urban and rural members.

This is not an endowment where only the interest can be spent, because as first nations develop their capacity over time, the need for the funding will diminish. The fund will be appropriate to the needs of first nations. Delivery of funds will be simple, efficient and effective and will lead to the achievement and specific outcomes as described in the three-year strategic plan. Together with the First Nations Leadership Council, a mechanism is now being provided to ensure that this funding is driven by outcomes.

The status quo is not working. This is the time for bold solutions. Together we are going for the gold. Again, I support very enthusiastically this bill.

M. Sather: It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 11. I guess one can only say that it's high time that there is a new relationship with our first nations, because we're talking a lot about reconciliation, and there's an undeniable need for reconciliation. The list of transgressions against first nations since the coming of non-aboriginal people to this continent is certainly long and by no means illustrious — other than that it illustrates, I suppose, a long history of what I will charitably call misunderstanding between cultures other than those of first nations and the first nations themselves. So we certainly do have a need to reconcile.

[1925]

I'm not sure whether in fact we can ever fully reconcile the wrongs that have happened to first nations, to aboriginal people in this country. The systematic — and one cannot describe it any other way than systematic — subjugation of a people that has occurred over the last couple of hundred years is indeed a shameful

history that we bear responsibility for. So it is a great opportunity, I think, to learn to relate in a different way — is how I like to think about it — to try to better understand our first nations neighbours.

I think there's too often a misunderstanding amongst us in what is to be gained for us in this relationship, in this new endeavour. I certainly wouldn't want to assume in any way that I understand first nations any better than anyone else, because I certainly don't. But I just wanted to talk a bit about my experience with first nations people, my perception of those experiences, what it's meant to me and what I think, perhaps, points somewhat to some of the lack of understanding that may be there about what we can gain out of this relationship. I think there is now becoming an understanding that we have a lot of making up to do, as it were. But on the other hand, I'm again not sure that we fully comprehend what we can gain from this relationship.

I want to talk about a few areas that I found in my relationships with first nations. I'll start by talking about an area that the member for Vancouver-Burrard mentioned earlier today — the environment. It certainly is a different relationship that first nations have with their environment than we've had and that we seem to in large measure still have.

I remember back in the 1970s when I had the good fortune to spend some time with B.C. Parks working in Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park. There I met a number of first nations who were working in the guide-outfitting industry. We spoke with the guide-outfitting folks this morning. They were involved in those activities.

I particularly remember one man — I think I could safely say elder, as he wasn't a young man at the time — by the name of Alex Jack. What struck me about him was that his history was so completely different than my history and my family's history. My father was an immigrant to this continent from Norway. My mother's family were United Empire Loyalists who had been here a bit longer. But Mr. Jack was from Bear Lake, I believe. The Bear Lake people were some of the last people — certainly the last of the people from Bear Lake — to have had first contact, if you will, with white people, and it wasn't that long ago.

Just being around him, there was a different aura. It was a different feeling of.... Antiquity, in a way. It's the only word I can come up with. It's the kind of thing that is hard for us to grasp because we just don't have the same history. We have our own history as non-aboriginal people.

[1930]

What I have been most touched by, oftentimes, is listening to first nations — elders, in particular — talk about the environment. They have a very special relationship — there is no doubt — to this planet, and it's not a romantic type of relationship. In fact, if you follow some aboriginal people around, some of the activities they engage in might be ones I have found I'm not comfortable with. That's not the issue. The issue is one of deep respect. I think that's the best way I can put it,

and it's even more than that. It's like being a part of. It's not being in the environment; it's being a part of the environment.

So we can't grasp their history. We can't have that history, but I think we can stand back and look at them and see their experience in the words they use to convey those experiences, which to me have been the most deeply moving speeches, often, that I have ever listened to. I think that is one of the benefits we stand to gain from a new relationship with our first nations brothers and sisters.

It's a sorely needed reorientation, I think, because the challenges are great with regard to our existence on this planet. We need to come to some different kind of relationship with the natural environment and with other species on this planet if there's going to be a positive future for all of us. The way, also, that first nations people, or some of the folks I've met with, communicate is different than our way of communicating.

I remember, before the last federal election, going down to the Katzie band, which is our first nation in Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, and meeting with the then chief Peter James. I brought the candidate of my political persuasion along with me, and we had a great discussion. We had a great talk. It was very comfortable — words passing back and forth, ideas passing back and forth — and then the conversation came to an end. We sat there, and we sat there, and we sat there a little longer.

For white folks.... I could feel within myself the immediate discomfort of sitting there with somebody and not saying anything, but it was just so nice, actually, to let that go for a moment and to take in the fact that this is a different kind of communication. This is a different kind of relationship than we're familiar with, than I was familiar with — especially since I've been involved in politics, but I won't blame it on that. It's a quietness, being centred in yourself.

Then, of course, anybody that has spent any time with first nations will know that they have a very quirky, I guess I'd call it, sense of humour. You definitely have to be on your toes, and you have to watch out for their humour. I remember, again before the last provincial election, that I was at the Katzie First Nation sitting there with a group of the band members, and one of them said to me: "Michael, would you like to learn the owl dance?" I look around, and every face is totally solemn. There's not a hint of anything.

[1935]

So I thought: the owl dance. What is she talking about? I have no idea. So trying to think fast and trying to make up something to say, I said: "Well, that would depend. How long would it take?" She said: "About five minutes." I said, "Oh, okay. Well, I guess so" — feeling highly uncomfortable, wondering what exactly I was in for. Then finally, a little smile came on her face, and she said: "You took me seriously — didn't you?" And I said: "Yeah, I didn't dare not. I was afraid not to take you seriously."

They have a really engaging sense of humour and I ended up actually.... What she really intended to tell

me or ended up telling me was they wanted me to go in the Katzie Days dunk tank, so that's what I ended up doing out of that particular interaction, that part of the relationship. So we do, indeed, have a lot to gain in the relationship, and certainly we hope to better relationships with our neighbours.

Moving on a bit to a different area, to a specific that was mentioned earlier by the member for Alberni-Qualicum, talking about relationships between first nations, our government and the federal government. He made reference to the Kelowna accord that the Premier and the then Prime Minister, Paul Martin, participated in not too long ago. Some fulsome agreements were made with promise to them, and we are certainly hopeful. As the critic for Intergovernmental Relations, I'm hopeful that it will continue and bear fruit, that the new Prime Minister will follow through with those agreements and that it will take place, because I think first nations and our government and the federal government at the time had a strong belief that something good was coming out of that.

I wanted to say a bit more about the Katzie First Nation that I made reference to. They have a reserve in Pitt Meadows. The reserve also extends on to Barnston Island and to a bit of Langley, and their traditional territory encompasses our communities and beyond. The Katzie First Nation have a really great relationship with their non-aboriginal neighbours. They have had for the 20-some years that I've been in Maple Ridge and, as I understand it, long before that. They're a very cooperative people. They work very, very well with the non-aboriginal community, and I think it's an exemplary relationship.

For example, Willie Pierre, who is one of the spiritual leaders of the Katzie First Nation, will appear at any number of community events, where he will lead in the prayers and the drumming. He will go virtually anywhere he's asked, it seems. He has participated in our annual Rivers Day event. The Katzie First Nation used to have a salmon barbecue there. They've since discontinued because of some regulations, but their givingness to the community is really great, really admirable.

They just recently had elections at the band, and I'd like to congratulate Chief Diane Bailey as the new chief. Diane was the previous chief, and I recall working with her in the '90s, and that was a very good relationship. As I mentioned before, Chief Peter James, who gave a lot to the community and to his people, is the outgoing chief. They also elected incoming councillors Leslie Bailey, Donna Leon and Debbie Miller.

[1940]

I mentioned in this House.... A short time ago, I did a statement about the aboriginal agreement with the school district in our area that is another manifestation of the cooperation and the cooperative relationship that exists between the Katzie First Nation and the non-native part of our community.

They certainly also do have issues and challenges. There's an area in Maple Ridge called Blue Mountain which is the subject of some discussion right now amongst various parties with regard to the future of

that part of the traditional territory. There is a forest harvesting agreement that has been reached — as I understand it, it's been reached, although I'm not sure of all of the details — between the Ministry of Forests and Range and the Katzie First Nation. I've talked to them about that, and they're very cognizant of sustainable forestry. They have a sustainable forestry protocol in their band and are committed that any harvesting they do there will be in a sustainable manner and respectful of the viewscapes, because that particular property is right across from the campgrounds of B.C.'s most visited park, Golden Ears Provincial Park.

The Katzie First Nation, actually, speaking of Golden Ears Provincial Park, has applied in the past, I know, when the contract has come up for the park facility operators, if I've got that right — the folks that run the park in large measure and do the campgrounds and so on. They haven't achieved that success yet. I think they have interest in bidding again when that should come up. They're cognizant, again, of the fact that their harvesting operations would be opposite the park that they hope to have a hand in the operation of.

Some of the other issues that they're dealing with.... At the head of Pitt Lake, their properties there were leased for some considerable period of time to, largely, non-native residents, and that was discontinued a few years ago. There were some challenges for them around that transaction, which I think has resolved itself, largely. Other challenges are such as mentioned earlier by the member for North Island, about things like income assistance and access to income assistance. As band members, that's a concern and a challenge for them.

I guess one of my concerns is that the Katzie First Nation, who are in the treaty process and have such a cooperative approach to negotiations and, as I said, to community-building and to community relationships.... I just hope that they in no way will be taken for granted. Sometimes in this world the loudest voice is the one that gets heard, so I'm just hopeful that as we carry on with the new relationship, their interests will be fully considered and respected by this government. I'm hopeful that that will be the case.

I think that's all I want to say about the New Relationship Trust Act, which I stand here to speak in support of. Thank you very much.

Hon. P. Bell: I am very pleased to stand in support of Bill 11. I think this is an exciting innovation that will be embraced broadly throughout our province, as is clearly evidenced by all members of this Legislature speaking in favour of this bill.

[1945]

What is it about, Madam Speaker? This is about capacity-building. It's about creating new opportunities for first nations people around our province who have been unfortunately left behind over the last number of decades. It's time that we catch up and find a way to work forward.

There has been great leadership that has come forward as a result of the hard work of many different

members of this government over the last three or four years — people like Ed John, who have showed very real leadership for first nations communities. One of the challenges that we hear consistently is the need for more leaders in the aboriginal community to come forward. That's part of what this fund is about.

It is a significant amount of money. There's no question that \$100 million is a good start, a good step, a good move forward in the right direction to develop that new relationship with first nations, but we need to develop the capacity within the communities. I have four different first nations located in my riding. We have the Lheidli T'enneh, the McLeod Lake Indian band, the Tsay Key Dene and the Kwadacha first nations, and all those first nations have leadership in the communities that are desiring to move forward and build their communities.

Some are having tremendous success. A good example would be the McLeod Lake First Nation, who have worked very, very hard to build capacity within their community over the last number of years. They're seeing real results as a result of those efforts, and I think it's a success story that can be modelled in other communities around the province. But if you're going to do that, you have to have the technical skills and have to have the expertise that's necessary to really do the work, to build the capacity within the community, and that's been largely lost.

It's been lost because many of the bright young individuals in these communities have moved out of their local communities. They've moved into some of the larger centres — just as we have lost that capacity in rural B.C. at times, although we're regaining it back now. It's important that we build the capacity within those local communities. I remember that about four years ago, I guess, I went up to the communities of Tsay Key and Kwadacha, which are located about an 11- or 12-hour drive north of Prince George. They're very isolated communities, and it's very challenging to get in and out of the communities by road. Oftentimes, air transportation is the only mode of transportation.

There are about 600 people who live in the two communities, and to say there was a need for the development of capacity-building in those communities would be an understatement. I went to the local school, and on the wall they had pictures of all the graduates that had come out of this school. There were, I think, five or six kids that had actually graduated from this school over quite a number of years.

That's not capacity-building. That's not a good example of what's necessary. Those weren't the types of steps that are necessary to build strengths within the community so that young people can take on the challenges of leadership that are absolutely critically important. This particular community — Chief Emile McCook, the village of Kwadacha, which is probably better known, certainly on the maps of British Columbia, as Fort Ware— is a community that's located in a very isolated part of British Columbia.

Chief McCook and his council and everyone else have been working hard to build capacity within that

community, and they're starting to see very, very real results. That's exciting for me. They need support. They need financial resources to continue doing that work. This fund, this \$100 million, is a great opportunity for people like Chief McCook and the councillors and the village of Kwadacha to start building those capacities internally from within. They have tremendous resources right around their community, yet they live in poverty, and that's unacceptable.

It's something we need to move beyond. We need to find ways to provide them with the resources they need, but they have to do it in a way that is sustainable, and you only do that by building the strength from within the community. Too often, you know.... Anyone who has kind of driven through different reservations around the province will see that you'll drive into a community and see homes that were built and not maintained, not looked after, over a period of time.

[1950]

The results are devastating, because people have put significant resources into the community, but the strength wasn't built from within. I think that's the real key piece for me around this. You have to build the strength from within the first nation because then they appreciate what they've done, they appreciate what they've got, and they start to build some real pride and real accomplishments that are just so important.

I visited the community of Kitasoo a number of months ago — last fall, I guess it was — and there was a great example of a community that's starting to build capacity and starting to build community pride. They had a beautiful new longhouse that they had hand-crafted themselves. You could just see tremendous pride in this longhouse and the hard work that everyone went to. The elders would bring the young people from the village into the longhouse and tell them stories about the rich history that that particular community of Kitasoo has, and it is a tremendous history. They're starting to build their economy from within, and they're starting to work with their young people.

They have a vision and the leadership, Percy Starr. They all have a vision of how the way forward would look and an opportunity to tap into these resources of this new relationship fund. I think it's just tremendous. It creates a very, very real opportunity to see Kitasoo, Kwadacha, Tsay Keh and all these communities build from within and demonstrate the strength and the personal power they have to build their communities.

I was on a flight, actually, with a gentleman that I have very much come to respect, Ray Gerow, who is a development officer with the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council out of Prince George. Ray said there just wasn't enough of him, and that was his big challenge. They just couldn't spread Ray around enough, and he needed to develop more Rays. We talked about that and how to develop that capacity from within. It takes resources.

The Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council and the Native Friendship Centre in Prince George are very effective at doing that. They're targeting.... They're identifying young people. They're starting to work with them.

They're building the culture, but they're also building the skill sets that are necessary from within that first nation for them really to move forward as a group, as a family, as a first nations band that allows them to develop those capacities and make sure that they can clearly understand what's going on in the rest of society around them so that they can work with society.

I heard an individual.... A first nations leader said to me one day: "You know, we're not going anywhere, and we know you're not going anywhere either, so we've got to start learning how to work together." This new relationship fund, \$100 million, is a key piece of that equation.

I mentioned Kwadacha, and if you move just slightly to the south of Kwadacha, you get to Tsay Keh Dene, which is a small community on the edge of Williston Lake. Here's a community that's been moved a number of times over the years as a result of the flooding of Williston Lake, and yet they've been able to hold together as a family. They're very, very close. They're a very close group, and they work very hard together, and they've got tremendous pride as a group. It's really great to see, when you go into the community, the elders in the community working with young people at the school. The school is a collecting place. It's a real melting pot for the community that pulls people together.

The volleyball team. Think about this: the kids get in a school bus, and they'll ride eight hours to get from Tsay Keh to Mackenzie to play the only other school within that eight hours. If they travelled another further two and a half hours to Prince George — so ten and a half hours — they'd be able to play a number other schools. They have a tremendous volleyball team and a tremendous amount of excitement.

Think about what these folks go through, actually. I remember, just before I was elected, when the school bus was coming out, and it went off the side of the road. The teacher had to walk 20 miles to get to a logging camp to actually come and get someone to pull them out of the ditch and continue on the road. Yet that's what they live with, and they deal with that on a day-after-day-after-day basis. So when you develop a fund like this, this \$100 million, it's so exciting to think about the potential of what that can do for different first nations, because there's tremendous pride.

Johnny Pierre, the chief of the Tsay Keh Dene band, is a great leader — someone who's really trying hard to lead his first nation forward and really trying hard to think about economic development potential. Last fall I actually had some of our staff, at Chief Pierre's behest, looking at the potential of an agricultural development in the area.

[1955]

They've identified about 400 acres of very high quality agricultural land. Keep in mind that this is a long way north. This about 300 miles north of Prince George — something like that — so it's a long way north. Yet they've been able to find this little microclimate, and they're very excited about their agricultural opportunities in that particular area.

They're also interested in mining. They've got a potential mine that they're thinking of developing there, as a first nation. They've got their own forestry licence that they're working with as well. They're interested in converting that, potentially, to an area-based tenure. They're interested in back-country tourism, guide outfitting and trapping, all kinds of different potential things that they can do.

That's what this capacity fund does, because how can you ask them to go out and look for mineralization in mining, as an example, if they don't have that capacity? Last fall we were very fortunate to be able to actually send up a group of geologists and build some skills within the first nation community to go out and start doing that exploration work. They're very excited about the potential of mineralization around that. Chief Pierre is a great leader, someone who is really trying to take that group forward.

I mentioned the McLeod Lake Indian band that's located in my riding, as well, that signed off, actually, on Treaty 8 about three or four years ago and have really seen significant progress. Chief Alec Chingee is, again, a very strong leader, someone I've been able to build a tremendous relationship with.

I have great respect for Chief Chingee. He's very balanced in his views. He's looking not only to develop economic opportunities in his community.... They're very effective. They have the largest aboriginal logging company in British Columbia, and it's probably in the top three logging companies in British Columbia by volume — a very large organization. But he's also thinking about something as unique as developing a seniors lodging facility located at Summit Lake, which is in between McLeod Lake and Prince George — a unique opportunity. It's an opportunity to build a facility that would house elders from not just the McLeod Lake Indian band but also other Indian bands, and would really be built around the model of the right development for first nations' elders. So Chief Chingee has, I think, tremendous leadership skills.

We need to continue to build that from within the first nation. There are others that are stepping up now and starting to take on a greater leadership role. Vern Solanas is a good example of someone who is doing a great job there as well — now, a little bit younger. But we need to develop that youth, and you only do that by creating capacity.

If I move a little bit further south in my riding, there's the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, who are on the doorstep of signing a treaty at this point. They've had an agreement-in-principle for a couple of years now. Chief Dominic Frederick, recently elected about a year or so ago, has shown real leadership in taking his nation forward.

They have tremendous plans for economic development. They're working with their young people. There are a number of their young people there going through university, developing skill sets so they can go back into their local community as well. Again, that's what this capacity building is all about, and what this fund is all about.

The Lheidli T'enneh have had a number of different interesting business ventures over time and are in the process of proposing and developing a sawmill, which looks very intriguing and something that will work, I think, very effectively for that particular first nation.

If I think about the remainder — even though it's not in my riding directly — the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council I mentioned earlier, under the leadership of Grand Chief Harry Pierre, are again starting to develop real success in their communities. There are some very, very exciting things going on in the community of Fort St. James. My colleague from Prince George-Omineca will know that. Many, in fact, most of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council come from my colleague's riding, in that general riding. They've got some very positive things coming forward.

It's been interesting to see the evolution for me. You know, I've been elected now for almost coming up to five years, and it was very challenging in the first couple of years, working with first nations. But I think we've all come to this consensus agreement that they're not going anywhere, and we're not going anywhere, so we need to find a way to work together. The New Relationship fund under the leadership of our Premier, I think, is a very positive step.

I want to close off with a few words about that, because I think this is really important. I've been talking and focusing my comments tonight on leadership, on the leadership of the different first nations chiefs in my riding, but this is about vision. That vision doesn't come by accident.

[2000]

Our Premier has the vision to develop that relationship going forward with first nations. It is truly courageous, in my view, because it is a step completely outside of the box to develop this kind of relationship going forward. And it does not come without risks. There are risks when you make significant change of this nature.

Our Premier is prepared to take that risk. He is prepared to be bold. He's prepared to invest significantly, a hundred million dollars, in this new fund, and I think that we should all show a debt of gratitude to our Premier for the fact that he's been prepared to take such an incredibly bold move here. I think it is about leadership. It is a very positive step forward. Certainly, I think the building of this capacity and this new relationship is going to be a real hallmark going forward over the next number of years.

I'll close with this, Madam Speaker. I think that people will look back 20, 30, 40 years from now, and even a hundred years from now, at this bill and see this as being the most significant shift ever in the development of relationships with first nations — perhaps even beyond just British Columbia and in all of Canada. It is a tremendous step forward. There is no question I support this bill, and I'd like to thank our Premier and the minister for bringing it forward.

J. Kwan: I rise to join in the debate around Bill 11. It is my pleasure to join in the debate. It was very inter-

esting for me to be listening to the speakers in the House around this issue, particularly the government MLAs. I can't help but think back, though, to when I was first elected. That was back in 1996 in this Legislature. I remember that during that time much work was underway by the then government to work on the new relationship with first nations. In particular, the government of the day was interested in treaty settlements. We wanted certainty. We wanted an ability to recognize the aboriginal community, to start a new beginning and to really address long-term issues on aboriginal rights for the future.

That was the premise in which I entered into this Legislature back in 1996. I have to say, though, that the work around addressing aboriginal issues and historical injustices with the first nations community started way before the 1996 administration. It started, well, with many MLAs who have come and gone through this Legislature.

One person who comes to mind is Frank McKenna, a former NDP MLA who brought the aboriginal issues into this House with passion, experience and — you know what? — tenacity, like we've never seen before. He fought the issues day in and day out as a New Democrat MLA in this Legislature. He also did work in the court system, as we now know, with the Delgamuukw court decision. That was groundbreaking in terms of setting the stage of the future of the change that needs to come for the aboriginal community.

Then, the other person that comes to mind in terms of fighting this fight... I remember, of course, and pay tribute to Mike Harcourt, the former Premier of this province. I recall I was just a city councillor then, and I didn't know very much, entering into politics very young, really, in the scheme of everything. I recall having a conversation with Mike. I was consumed with all sorts of local issues with our local government in the city of Vancouver — concerned about housing, which is my hobby horse, I must admit. It is my passion, as well — affordable housing, safe and secure affordable housing for people in our communities.

[2005]

I remember having a conversation with Mike Harcourt. He said: "You know, councillor" — I was a Vancouver councillor then — "I understand what you're saying. But you know what? There are lots of issues that are very important on a provincial and national scale." He whipped out a napkin, as he always does. Somehow he's got napkins with stuff scribbled all over them. It's his plan. He said: "You know what? It's a disgrace to see what's going on with the aboriginal community. We have got to do something about that, and that is my priority." He read off a whole bunch of stuff from the napkin about issues around the aboriginal community, and then he set off to do that work as the Premier of British Columbia. He laid the groundwork for treaty-making.

Some would argue that all those years, all those negotiations, all those talks and all that relationship-building amounted to nothing because there was no treaty to show for it. I argue the opposite, because it

was about relationship-building. It was about building trust. It was about bringing people forward to advocate for change. It was about advocating for change not only amongst the political players in the system in terms of the provincial government or the federal government; it was also working in the broader community and bringing people to a place where they could understand the importance of addressing this issue.

That work was done by Mike Harcourt, the former NDP Premier, in the early 1990s. Then later on that work was continued with another NDP Premier, Glen Clark, with the Nisga'a agreement.

I think it is important to recognize this history today as the government members talk about the new relationship with aboriginal people, because — I will say this, Madam Speaker — they weren't there for all those years. They were not there for all those years; in fact, they fought it every single step of the way.

I will never forget in my life as an MLA the privilege and honour of having the opportunity to listen to Joe Gosnell, who spoke at the Bar of this Legislature when the Nisga'a agreement, the Nisga'a treaty, was brought to this House. He recounted the stories of himself as a young man and of how his father and forefather before him talked about the fight and the challenges of the aboriginal people. He talked about how his ancestors paddled across the channel with their canoe and came to the steps of the Legislature and were not allowed into this building. That's what happened and how the aboriginal people were treated. The day in which he had the honour to come into this House to speak to all of us as equals was something that I will never forget as a legislator in this lifetime.

It was significant, not because of any credit that I had to do with the issue but rather as a reminder of the tenacity, the hope, the belief and the fight for social and economic justice for aboriginal people — the fight for them to be recognized as the first nations of our community, the fight for them to have government and subsequent governments admit that they were wrong in the way in which aboriginal people were treated and that future of many generations robbed as a result of that process.

We all know about residential schools. And you know what? To this day in my very own riding of Vancouver-Mount Pleasant I still see the effects of residential schools on members of the aboriginal community. I happen to represent, with great honour, a riding that has some of the greatest challenges — one of the poorest neighbourhoods in all of Canada. In our community we have many aboriginal people who have been so traumatized in their lives that all they could do on a day-by-day basis is survive for another day.

[2010]

They do it with such strength and spirit that I don't know how they get through the day. Some days are better than others; make no mistake about that. But the fact that they had the fight in them to survive all of that abuse, to come and tell their stories, to educate us and to believe that we could be educated tells you something.

And you know what? This bill today speaks to that, because it is the aboriginal community who worked so hard to educate this government at every step of the way about these issues.

It did not come easy. The Liberal government, led by the current Premier when he was the opposition leader, fought against the Nisga'a treaty at every turn on issues around self-governance, certainty and sharing the wealth with the aboriginal community. That is the truth of it. All of that is on record. In fact, before this debate I went to refresh my memory by looking up *Hansard* — thank goodness we have *Hansard*. *Hansard* reflects all of that, with the speakers from the government side who spoke against Nisga'a.

Not only Nisga'a, though, because after the 2001 election this government brought forward one of the most unbelievable moves in this Legislature. They brought forward a referendum against the rights of aboriginal people and they did it, I would dare to say, proudly. The then Attorney General, Geoff Plant, stood in this House and defended that referendum.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

The Premier, who launched the referendum on behalf of his caucus, defended that referendum. The Premier, when he was in opposition, took the aboriginal people to court because they felt that they did not deserve the right to self-govern. That was back in 2001.

How times have changed, and thank goodness for the aboriginal community and their resilience, because that is what it is that's brought us to today. They managed somehow, either by guilt or some other method — I don't know — to change the minds of the government with a new beginning with the aboriginal community on a new relationship, now called the New Relationship Trust Act, that this government has brought forward.

So let me say this: welcome to the government in joining the chorus of cries from all quarters of the province with a new relationship with aboriginal people, by recognizing them as equals and treating them as equals and with respect. It is about time. It took them ten years minimally, to say the least, to get there, but at least they got there — at least with step one.

That's what this bill is about: step one only. It does not mean the government has actually addressed all of their wrongs in the past with their attitudes and approach in dealing with aboriginal people. Let us be very clear about that. There is still much more work to be done.

This government, let's be clear, has been in government for five years now, and they have yet to produce a treaty. I look forward to the day when they will. I look forward to the day to see yet another chief standing at the Bar and speaking to us with that accomplishment for all British Columbians. I honestly do.

We on this side of the House will work with the government at every turn to try and achieve that, because we believe in the fundamental rights of the aboriginal people, and we believe that they deserve much,

much better. We could never take back the wrongs that have been inflicted on them. One could never imagine the pain, anguish and agony that the aboriginal community went through, for we are not aboriginal people, and we will never know that. But let me say this. We on this side of the House will work with anyone — anyone — to achieve the goal of true equality and justice. The aboriginal community more than deserves that.

This bill here is step one. There's still much more work to be done, and whether or not the government will live up to that expectation remains to be seen. We will be watching that very closely at every turn.

[2015]

Before I step down from my speaking capacity here, let me also just say this. I earnestly urge the government to also work on a parallel track in addressing urban aboriginal issues, because they are not part of this New Relationship Trust Act. They are not a component within it

Something needs to be done with urban aboriginals. I see them in my community — not just in my community, but in many communities, as well — and they, too, deserve respect. They, too, deserve the government working with them in building capacity. They, too, deserve recognition in that sense.

I challenge them today to also begin working on a parallel track of addressing issues specifically for the urban aboriginal community throughout British Columbia. I will extend my hand, and I know the opposition MLAs will extend their hands, in working with the government in achieving that goal, because it is the right thing to do and it means that it is the future — not just for aboriginal communities, but for all of our futures. It means telling the world that we can work together in a united way to make a difference that's long-lasting into the future and break the cycle of poverty, break the cycle of discrimination, break the cycle of the wrongdoings and start a new beginning.

With that, I will take my seat and urge the government to take a parallel track on urban aboriginal issues. This side of this House will work with the government. We will remind them where they went wrong, lest they forget, but we will also work with them and extend a hand to move forward for the future.

J. Yap: My thanks to the member for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant for her complimentary remarks. I'm sure I heard her say "well done" to the government, and I am just so proud to stand here and speak in support of this bill: Bill 11, the New Relationship Trust Act.

It is, in my mind, another opportunity.... Just as there was the opportunity earlier this week, when all of us, whether we were on this side or that side of the House, were able to speak — essentially, with one voice — in support of a motion that day. But today — this bill will truly have a generational impact.

I'm proud of the transformative approach our government is taking. What we have here with the establishment through this act of the New Relationship Trust is really, as has been said, one step — but a cru-

cial step, an important step — down the road of reconciliation and creating a true respectful partnership with the first nations who live with us, among us, throughout British Columbia.

For too long, first nations people have not participated fully in this great and wonderful land we call British Columbia and Canada as full partners in our economic prosperity. This bill, with this fund established and functioning — as has been referred to by other speakers — will help to build capacity for our brothers and sisters in the first nations communities.

I want to back up first, and to echo what was said by the Minister of Agriculture with regard to the vision of our government: the vision of taking a bold step, of thinking outside the box, of taking a transformative approach with our relations with first nations. Something as simple as naming the ministry, the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation — just simple words, yet powerful words and words which have great meaning, great import. A previous speaker talked about not just having words but actually taking action, and with this bill our government will be taking tangible action down the road of reconciliation and helping and working with our first nations people to help them fully participate in British Columbia.

[2020]

In my community of Richmond, the first nations Musqueam band are on the threshold of an exciting new opportunity. They have entered into a three-part memorandum of understanding with the city of Richmond and the federal government to develop the last large piece of land, virtually in the centre of Richmond — an exciting opportunity, over 100 acres of land to be developed collaboratively. That's one example with the Musqueam First Nation and all the first nations in British Columbia.

With this fund we will help our first nations brothers and sisters build capacity, train and develop expertise to be able to participate in work in order to fully become partners with all British Columbians for their future and our future. British Columbia, with our new relationship, is really a shining example to people around the world. It is truly remarkable if we think about it: where we as a people can work together, can collaborate and can come to a path of transformation and reconciliation, where we respect each other's cultures, each other's traditions and — through, perhaps, challenges — come to a point.

We're coming to this point with this bill, with this opportunity to create a true impact and lasting legacy for first nations people in British Columbia. It makes me proud to be a member of this Legislature, a member of this government which is making this bold step, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in support of this act. We all want — every one of us — to come into this chamber, to become members of this great institution, in order to make a difference.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

I believe that our government and all of us participating in this debate and supporting and passing this

bill will truly make a contribution to making a real difference for the people of British Columbia and for the first nations people — so they can, over time, fully participate with all of the diverse cultures and people that make British Columbia, that make Canada the best country in the world.

I fully support the spirit, the intent and this tremendous opportunity that's presented by this first nations trust fund, this New Relationship Trust Act, that is before us. I thank and commend the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation for all of the hard work that he and his team have done to bring us to this stage. With that, I'll say once again: I support this bill and look forward to its passage in the coming moments.

J. Horgan: It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the debate on Bill 11 at second reading. Before I get into the core of my remarks I have to say that an about-face is certainly better than being two-faced, and that's the history of the party on the other side, although I commend them for coming to their senses at this late date.

I think it's important for all of us to remember and recognize that the road to reconciliation is not a short one, and 30 bits of silver will not solve the problem in the long term, although this is a commendable piece of legislation. I laud the government for finding the resources to take this small step.

I have to tell, as you can well imagine, hon. Speaker, a short anecdote — as I have been wont to do. Two weeks ago, I met with the elected chief of the Tsartlip people of the Saanich Peninsula, Chris Tom. It was interesting to meet with Chris, because when we were kids, when we were 12 years old, we played lacrosse together. Both of us were laughing at the same bad jokes last week that we were laughing at 30-odd years ago.

[2025]

Chris and I — he is the elected representative of his people, the Tsartlip people, a proud people of the Saanich Peninsula; I am the elected representative of the Malahatians and the people of Malahat-Juan de Fuca.

We went for a walk on their ancestral territory, and we came across a number of burial cairns — hundreds and hundreds, maybe thousands, of years old. All the money in the world will not help the Tsartlip people when the bulldozers come and push all this stuff over in the coming weeks and months in my constituency, as development overtakes the processes that we have put in place for these people to reclaim their territory and their rights on the land.

The other tragedy we have on the south Island, of course, is that we have the Douglas treaties. I know the minister is listening intently. I'm hopeful that in the process of our reconciliation, we'll find some way to deal with the injustices of the Douglas treaties that were signed some 150 years ago, putting in place the gravest injustice imaginable for the Songhees people, the Esquimalt people, the people of the south Island, Beecher Bay band and many, many others.

As much as this is laudable.... It is a great day for the Liberal Party to say: "We do stand for something that is positive and right." Rather than opposing, as they did with the Nisga'a treaty, rather than opposing, as they did, the Treaty Commission, rather than opposing interim measures agreements throughout the 1990s, they've come to their senses, and they've started on the road to reconciliation. I'm happy that they're joining us on this side in that direction. I applaud the minister for his leadership in this regard, and I hope that one day he will be able to walk with myself and the chief of the Tsartlip people on his ancestral territory, and it won't cost us a cent if we just do the right thing.

K. Krueger: It is an honour to stand in the Legislature this evening and speak about the New Relationship Trust Act as debate winds to a close. It's interesting to follow the last speaker, who, off and on, I regard with some interest and some respect for the things that he says, but I thought some of the things he just said were regrettable.

I was elected in 1996. I find it hard to believe, but I've been a member of this Legislative Assembly for ten years now. I was elected halfway through the reign of error, the NDP years — the best decade economically that this continent has ever experienced and a decade where we went backwards in every way.

I grew up a farm kid. My dad was a war veteran. Because of that, he had the opportunity to be a homesteader, and he was granted 1,600 acres of land in northern B.C., way north of Fort St. John. It was moose pasture, as people referred to it somewhat sneeringly at the time. He logged it down, he knocked down the bush, he cleared it, and he broke the land up. It was brutally hard work, and I helped with that. We spent my childhood turning that into a farm.

The people who came to help us, the labourers we had who wanted to make some wages, were first nations people. They belonged to a band that called themselves the Blueberry Indians at the time.

We lived near a place called Buick, which was really just an intersection of gumbo roads in the Peace River country. If you went 73 miles north on the Alaska Highway, 18 miles into the bush on a mud road, you reached this little place called Buick, where, happily for us, there was one gas pump, a service station and a so-called little store that wasn't open very many hours of the day. That's where we all went for supplies.

We developed this farm. The first nations people would come and buy a few of the essentials of life there and often didn't have cash for those, so they'd come to our farm, where my dad, who was always in debt — he borrowed money to develop that land and clear it — would hire them, and we worked together. They actually used travois at that time. They towed their children and their belongings on a pair of poplar poles dragged behind a patient horse, with a moose hide stretched across it. They'd come and work for us, and they'd pick roots and rocks along with me and my dad. We were trying to turn that into agricultural land. It was really tough going.

[2030]

Buick Creek, Beaton River — I'm amazed how many people I still run into who came from there. I met a scientist recently, a PhD, who works for Genome B.C.; he's their fish guy. I had met them the first time, and I asked them if they had an expert on fish. They introduced me to him, and it turned out he and I were in grade five together at the one-room schoolhouse at Buick. I was amazed that our paths crossed again after all this time.

But we had a common bond then. We were really poor. The first nations were poor, and so were we. We had mutual interests, and we worked together. We were developing that land as agricultural land, and we didn't even really grasp the wealth of petroleum resources that was underneath it. They belonged to somebody else.

In the end, to their great credit, they've extracted economic benefit from it. To my mother's great credit, she was very cagey, and she extracted economic benefit from oil companies, too, by way of leases for pumping stations and roads and so on. In spite of the fact that you really couldn't grow much up there because it froze before it ever turned into a crop, mom helped us survive by extracting money from oil companies. We left that area long ago. They're still there, and they're doing well.

Many speakers in this House over the last day have talked about the fact that there were great inequities, great misunderstandings, and there was great poverty at the time amongst those people. I've always felt a bond with them.

As I said, I was elected halfway through the reign of error, the NDP decade — the 1990s. They were really hard times in British Columbia. We went from being the best-performing economy to the worst-performing economy in Canada, and everybody suffered for it. Frankly, the first nations people in my constituency were very suspicious of me. I represent five first nations communities and bands, and I don't think any of them voted for me in the great tidal wave of 2001. If you look at a colour-coded map, the whole map is the B.C. Liberal colour except one area, which is the North Thompson Indian band area. That's orange because they voted for NDP.

Interjection.

K. Krueger: I see an NDP MLA exulting over that. But the fact is their chief is a brilliant man. His name is Nathan Matthew. He has a master's degree in education. He is regarded as a leader not only by first nations people but by all of us, because he is very, very wise, and he is a legitimate leader.

He and I have grown to have a relationship over the ten years that I've been the MLA for the area. They always lived on a really pathetic road to their settlement in the North Thompson, which is known as Chu Chua, and they used to be known as the North Thompson Indian band. Now they're known as the Simpcw people. They are Secwepemc. They are a proud people.

There are 13 Secwepemc bands in our area, and Chief Nathan Matthew is the chair of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council. He's their leader, and legitimately so. He is a very wise, very good man.

We've achieved a lot of things. They don't live on a potholed, muck road anymore. They live on a paved road because he told me that was a priority for their people. They have a sawmill of their own, and he has been very successful as an entrepreneur in turning that into a money-making venture. I've helped him with that. He's come to me time and again about their needs, and they're legitimate needs. Gradually, we have built a relationship. I notice they still vote NDP, which seems really strange to me. But that's the way it is.

We have a friendship regardless, and we have a mutual respect. I represent the people of the Neskonlith. Their chief is Art Anthony. I represent the people of the Adams Lake Indian band, and their chief is Ronnie Jules. I represent the people of the Little Shuswap Indian band, and their chief is Felix Arnouse. I represent the people of the Kamloops Indian band, and their chief is Shane Gottfriedson; before him, Bonnie Leonard; and before her, Manny Jules. I count them all as my friends.

I represent the people of Whispering Pines/Clinton Indian band, and their chief is Mike Lebourdais, and before him Richard Lebourdais. We all work together, and we work for a common purpose.

One of the things that I wondered as a little kid growing up in British Columbia.... I was born in Alberta, but I took grade one here. I wondered: what's it all about? What is it really all about? Why are we all so poor — when I was a little kid? Now we're all doing a whole lot better.

[2035]

One of the reasons we're doing a whole lot better in the year 2006 is that we have this wonderful thing called the new relationship. We have a Premier who, although people thought he was a Vancouver boy, born and bred in Vancouver.... People imagine he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he actually grew up under some pretty tough circumstances. When he lost his father at a young age, his mother raised the family of four, and he was the man of the house. They went from a nice big house to a little house, to an apartment and eventually to a one-bedroom apartment — with four kids. He worked in a cafeteria to put himself through college and university.

He was by no means raised in the life of Riley. He is a researcher and a thinker and a reader. He thinks about things, and he talks about things, and he cares very much about first nations people and the things that they have been through.

We decided together as a caucus when we were in opposition that we wanted to have the referendum that members of this opposition have lampooned. They talked about that publicly as a racial thing, a problem thing, as we brought it on. But the fact is that I saw a fantastic change in my electorate, in the people of my constituency, over the course of the campaign for that referendum. I saw a lot of the racist talk, the negative

talk and the wrong things that people thought, dwindle away.

People realized how ridiculous that thinking was, and I haven't heard much of that since. I saw people realize that it was time that we all moved forward, as a number of my colleagues have said, with the recognition that we are all here to stay, that we are all equal and that there have been a lot of errors and a lot of hurts and legitimate grievances of the past. Those things fell away during the referendum process. We have emerged, with this Premier as a leader, into a genuine new relationship where we are all here to stay.

Now we are debating this bill that we are obviously all in favour of, where we are allotting \$100 million to empowering first nations for capacity-building. Chief Nathan Matthew — who I referred to with his master's degree, with his obvious leadership capabilities — is overwhelmed with requests, with opportunities and with people who want him to be in their consultative processes and want him to take part in moving things ahead. But like all the rest of us, he only has 24 hours in a day, he puts his pant legs on one at a time, and he simply cannot be in all the places people want him to be.

It's high time that a government step forward to say that we recognize that the resources are needed, and we have to empower first nations to actually take these roles in the new relationship and to take part in leading us into the whole new era. That's what we're doing.

I'm very pleased to support this bill. I'm thankful for the minister and the Premier that we have and am grateful that at last we're putting those things behind us. We're moving forward into a new era, a new era of empowerment and a genuine new relationship with first nations. I'm proud to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, the Minister of Aboriginal Relations closes debate.

Hon. T. Christensen: First, let me thank the many members who have risen and spoken in favour of Bill 11. I can tell you it's encouraging to see the expanse of the support for Bill 11, and I want to thank the members, who for the most part were able to stay away from some of the rhetoric that often comes into the debate in this House. I want to thank the members for relaying some of their own personal experiences with first nations in their own ridings, identifying in many cases the successes they're seeing on the ground but also identifying the challenges and recognizing that we do have a great deal of work still to do to ensure that first nations around British Columbia are participating in the progress that the province is making both economically and socially as well as culturally.

This is a historic bill. It's the first time in the province of British Columbia that we've allocated \$100 million to establish a fund that will be controlled by first nations to build capacity for first nations.

[2040]

There are just a couple of minor issues I do want to comment on that arose during debate. One of those

was that I was left with the impression from some of the speakers that there is an impression that this funding won't be available in an urban context. That is not the case. This is a fund that will be controlled by first nations. I can tell you that in the discussion with first nations to this point, there is a very keen awareness of the plight of their first nations citizens who live in our urban settings and are struggling, where there is a distinct need to build capacity. I have every confidence that as the board of directors of the corporation, in controlling the fund, looks at how those funds should be applied to build capacity, the urban context will be a critical part of that.

Many have said this is a good start. It's not a start. We have been engaged in this discussion around the new relationship for a number of months already, and significant progress has been made. But there is no question that this is a significant moment. This is a considerable contribution to moving the new relationship forward.

What Bill 11 does is establish the New Relationship trust, which provides us with a tool. It is essential that first nations in the province, in looking forward now, ensure that we're working collaboratively so that we can take the greatest advantage of this tool that has been provided to ensure that we do reach those goals of building capacity for first nations.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of the bill.

Motion approved.

Hon. T. Christensen: I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House to be considered at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 11, New Relationship Trust Act, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. M. de Jong: I call committee stage debate on Bill 12.

Committee of the Whole House

TOBACCO SALES (PREVENTING YOUTH ACCESS TO TOBACCO) AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

The House in Committee of the Whole (Section B) on Bill 12; S. Hawkins in the chair.

The committee met at 8:43 p.m.

Section 1 approved.

On section 2.

J. Horgan: I'll just wait, perhaps, for the minister's staff to find their places.

An Hon. Member: Tell us an anecdote.

J. Horgan: An antidote? "Mares eat oats and does eat oats...."

Could the minister tell the House whether the prescription in this section is similar to what you would see in liquor stores in the province to this point in time?

Hon. G. Abbott: I thank the member for his question and comment.

To introduce my staff, on my left is Deputy Minister Penny Ballem. On my right are Assistant Deputy Minister Andy Hazelwood, who has responsibility for this area of the ministry; and Helen Morrison, who is a legal adviser with the ministry.

The answer to the question is yes.

J. Horgan: Would vendors of this product have been confiscating false identifications previous to this bill?

Hon. G. Abbott: Previously there was no prescription with respect to identification. Now the expectation is that comparable identification would be provided for the purchase of tobacco as would be contemplated for the purchase of alcohol.

[2045]

J. Horgan: Section 2.1 says "that appears to have been altered." That speaks to the fake IDs. If youth are addicted to this substance and are anxious to get their hands on it, then one assumes they would be finding ways to do that around the law. I'm wondering what powers the vendor would have or what requirements are on the vendor to address those altered identifications.

Hon. G. Abbott: I thank the member for his very good question. The type of identification required will be articulated in the regulations but will be similar to, as I noted previously, the kind of identification required for purchase of alcohol. If the vendor of cigarettes has the apprehension that he may be confronted by fake identification, he should use the same care and discretion that a vendor of alcohol would take. The test, I'm advised from a legal perspective, is what a reasonable person would contemplate in these instances.

J. Horgan: Would there be an information campaign or any public advertising accompanying the passage of this legislation, in particular on issues around identification and what would be required to purchase this product?

Hon. G. Abbott: There will be a very strong information campaign directed both at the vendors and, of course, at the public.

J. Horgan: Would that be funded out of the existing anti-tobacco resources within the ministry, or would this be new money?

Hon. G. Abbott: There is provision in the current Ministry of Health budget and in the regional health authorities' budgets for this purpose which will be expended for this purpose.

J. Horgan: Those are existing funds, then? Had this bill not been introduced, there's no lift provided to the anti-tobacco programs that the ministry has or that are in place in various health authorities to contemplate a vigorous campaign on this issue?

Hon. G. Abbott: We've had a \$100 million lift in our budgets for prevention programs, and certainly, this was contemplated as part of those programs.

J. Horgan: Just for the minister's benefit, the reason I'm concerned about this is that I'm concerned that smoking cessation medications are a higher priority, and I would hate to see funds that were potentially allocated for those expenditures go to a campaign on this front. I'm hoping that you will find a way and that authorities will find a way to enhance those programs that are getting people off the drug and that the enforcement, the advertising and the promotion of this new legislation, which I support, won't diminish those programs. I guess that's the thrust of my question.

[2050]

Hon. G. Abbott: We're not sure whether we got the member's question entirely right. The province does not nor has it ever, I believe, funded tobacco cessation programs in terms of the nicotine replacement and that sort of thing. That might be contemplated for the future but would only be contemplated for the future. In terms of the array of anti-smoking programs or tobacco cessation programs that exist on the World Wide Web and elsewhere, there are a number of those programs. I'd be glad to share them with the member, but certainly none of those will be negatively impacted by the expenditure here.

J. Horgan: I guess I was actually putting in a plug with that question for the minister and his staff to contemplate promoting smoking cessation medications as a useful undertaking and one that I know he will take away from this place tonight. That would be the end of my remarks on section 2.

Sections 2 to 4 inclusive approved.

On section 5.

J. Horgan: My concern in this section is that we're moving to a different... Wait a second. There we go — administrative penalties. I think I wanted to say section 5 can pass.

Section 5 approved.

On section 6.

J. Horgan: This is with respect to monetary penalties. I'm wondering if the minister could explain why this figure was arrived at. Are there other jurisdictions that have this level? Is it comparable? Is it high? Is it low?

Hon. G. Abbott: The member's question is a good one. There was considerable thought expended before the maximum figure of \$5,000 was arrived at. The important thing to note is that in this legislation, as compared to previous legislation, this will permit a daily fine of up to \$5,000. It will allow the tobacco enforcement officers to move from what would likely be, in the first instance, a warning through to lower-end fines and building as repeated infractions occurred, to a maximum of \$5,000 per day.

What we have found in other jurisdictions where far higher daily fines or overall fines have been put in place is that the larger you make the fine, the more it becomes a disincentive to actually follow through on prosecutions, because it becomes more difficult to sustain the prosecutions. We believe this model will be effective because it's also combined with the opportunity for prohibition for periods of time on the sale of tobacco.

We believe this will be effective. Of course, we'll look at the experience that flows from this, and if it's seen that the penalty should be higher or lower to produce the desired outcome — which is to not have those few irresponsible retailers selling to minors — then we will take whatever actions are necessary to produce the desired outcome.

[2055]

J. Horgan: I thank the minister for his response. I guess it takes me back to section 5, which was the change from court to administrative.

Interjections.

The Chair: Order, members.

J. Horgan: I'm not going to go back on my friend. The Minister of Revenue is on me there. I'll just spend more time on section 6 instead.

What would the average fine be prior to the passage of this legislation, and — while you're flipping pages — how many fines were imposed in the last fiscal year? And what was the revenue to the province?

Hon. G. Abbott: The key to understanding the approach here is that the previous approach — and I guess the existing approach until this legislation is passed — is one that very much depended upon the availability of court time and the availability of Crown counsel time. As a consequence of the demands on those particular elements, there were only, on average, three to five successful prosecutions under the existing legislation during the time that this was in place. As well, there wasn't a fine involved. What was involved,

if one were successful in court, would be a court-imposed sanction or prohibition against the sale of tobacco for a specified period determined by the court.

J. Horgan: I thank the minister for answering my section 5 questions and keeping the Minister of Revenue happy. So there were no fines in the past? It was only a prohibition of sale?

Hon. G. Abbott: I want to clarify one point so that I don't mislead the member here — just so we get this right. When the tobacco enforcement officers saw an infraction occurring or, after investigation of a complaint, felt that an infraction had occurred, there was a ticketing process, and subject to the payment, it could be up to \$575 — the ticket. What one found, though, if the ticket was not readily paid by the person who was alleged to have committed the infraction, the process was again to take the matter into court, which again involved court and Crown counsel time.

J. Horgan: With the passage of this section, then, the ticket process no longer applies, prohibition no longer applies, and the fines begin on the first day and every subsequent day.

Hon. G. Abbott: The member's summary is correct, with the addition that the tobacco enforcement officer could issue a warning initially to the offender.

J. Horgan: Again, I just want to reiterate what I said to the minister in debate at second reading, that I would be quite happy to help him and his staff in any way I can to eradicate this toxin from our society.

[2100]

I applaud this bill. It does not go far enough, in my mind, and there's much, much more that the minister can do. I know his staff are certainly aware of that, and they're going to leave this place renewed and invigorated that everyone in this House supports them in their work. Certainly, if the minister sought extra resources to pursue the eradication of this toxin, they have the full support of myself and many of my colleagues on this side of the House.

Sections 6 to 21 inclusive approved.

Title approved.

Hon. G. Abbott: I thank members on all sides of the House for their constructive comments. They're much appreciated.

I move the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 9:01 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

**Report and
Third Reading of Bills**

TOBACCO SALES
(PREVENTING YOUTH ACCESS TO TOBACCO)
AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

Bill 12, Tobacco Sales (Preventing Youth Access to Tobacco) Amendment Act, 2006, reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

Committee of Supply (Section A), having reported progress, was granted leave to sit again.

Hon. G. Abbott moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

**PROCEEDINGS IN THE
DOUGLAS FIR ROOM**

Committee of Supply

ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
(continued)

The House in Committee of Supply (Section A); H. Bloy in the chair.

The committee met at 3:05 p.m.

On Vote 19: ministry operations, \$1,234,026,000 *(continued)*.

H. Bains: My understanding is that the only support network for parents, caregivers and professional communities — which advocates and attends meetings, provides expert knowledge to courts and has 24-7 crisis lines to deal with children with fetal alcohol spectrum syndrome — has been closed since August last year. My question to the minister is: why was that closed? And was there another one in place to replace it at that time?

Hon. L. Reid: I'm pleased to respond to the question, because the member opposite may know that we've had an ongoing dialogue around fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and how we process the best research of the day in terms of providing that more directly to families.

Our challenge regarding this service — in that it was only a three-day-a-week service — was, frankly, to expand it into the regions and put it closer to families. That work is underway, and that is probably a \$4 mil-

lion investment that will lift to \$6 million over time. Our challenge is to have the service available in each the five regions of the province, and there are a number of pieces that will link to that as we go forward.

I'm more than happy to have a detailed discussion with the member on the work that's been underway in the province on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. We have engaged with other provinces, other jurisdictions. We have a Canada-Northwest Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership in terms of not duplicating the work that happens in other areas but in fact learning from other jurisdictions, taking that information forward and bringing that practice to bear.

What we have found is that local service delivery makes better sense. Having a centre in one location in the province that every family in the province phones in to is not the best way to support families who are attempting to parent children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It is in fact more useful, more productive and more helpful to have someone on the ground in communities closer to where they live, who indeed cannot just respond to a telephone call but can actually mentor them, provide supports to them, be engaged with other families that have children with similar difficulties. That is the parenting-strengthening piece that we've attempted to put in place to wrap around this service, and that work is well underway.

H. Bains: I guess my question is that... While this work is underway, there are children who are suffering from this disorder. This support network, the FAS/E Support Network of B.C., was providing that service to the children, to the parents and to the teachers. If there's nothing to replace it with, what was the need to close the one that was providing the service?

[1510]

Hon. L. Reid: Indeed, our challenge has always been to build capacity in the regions, and I'm pleased to assure the member that that work is underway. Probably two weeks ago there was a well-attended, well-funded session in Prince George that was all about professional development.

The member's point was about professional development for teachers and for supporters in the system, for social workers and for all those who would work with that population. It brought together a tremendous training opportunity for the Prince George region, for the northern region of the province. You will see that and have seen that, frankly, in different regions of the province in the last number of months, and that work will continue. That capacity is being built in those regions, and those communities are creating opportunities to support families more directly. That work is underway.

H. Bains: That's where the issue is. The work is underway, planning is underway, but there are children. Since August there was a support network for them that provided the support they needed on a daily basis — whether it was going to the courts to explain to the court system, whether it was to go to school to talk

to the teachers and principals. That support is no longer available since the funding was cut to this support system by the ministry in August last year.

Now, wouldn't it be prudent for the ministry and wouldn't they be more sensitive if they put something in place before they closed the system — the only system that they had in place to support these children?

Hon. L. Reid: If the member opposite is attempting to suggest there was a loss of service, that is absolutely untrue. If he knows particularly of an instance that he would wish to bring to my attention, I will absolutely assist him in that regard. But this opportunity that we have made available across the province is to list in every region the agencies and the providers that have stepped up to the plate to provide assistance to families who have children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

The member may be aware of the increased diagnosis around that, the increased attention being paid by school districts around that. The linkages that are happening across government, in terms of a cross-government integrated strategy to respond to this area, are better than they have ever been. We are well on the way. This is a work in progress.

Certainly, I do not believe today that this is an opportunity to suggest that that capacity is not being built in the regions of British Columbia. I believe that it is, and I'm on the ground often in those regions. I attempt to be there at least monthly to ensure that those linkages are being built. Certainly, there's opportunity to continue to build family-strengthening programs and family support programs.

The member may well be aware that the challenge of parenting a child with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is an ongoing challenge. Our attempt by this administration to support that parenting challenge and to support those teachers in the system, to support those foster parents, to support those social workers.... We're attempting to link that service in ways that have never been attempted before, and I believe we're having extraordinary success in that regard.

H. Bains: There are quite a few correspondences between FAS/E Support Network of B.C. and one of my constituents whose child is suffering from this disorder, trying to talk to the ministry to try to get some support for his daughter. The only thing they have received is a list of e-mail addresses that they could click on to find help. They are advising me that they have tried all of them. You know what? They are referring them back to FAS/E Support Network of B.C.

[1515]

Something isn't working, and this child is not getting the support that this child needs. As you know, this is a very specialized expertise around this particular disorder, and not just anyone can go in there and handle these situations. Since August how many social workers have been trained to deal with these disorders?

Hon. L. Reid: If the member opposite wishes to provide me with the detail of that case, I will certainly

assist him in that regard. There are opportunities. I am not clear from what he has said if any have been explored in any detail, but if he is happy to share the name, the family name, the contact and the age of the child with me following these estimates, I will absolutely assist.

H. Bains: I think it's the policy issue rather than this individual issue. This is one example that I'm using. There are many others who are in similar situations. Their children, who are suffering from this disorder, do not have the support that they need and that was once available through this organization.

I think it is uncaring. I think it is irresponsible for any ministry or any government to leave children with these types of disorders on their own — to cut funding and close those operations down that once provided them this support — without having something to replace it with. As the minister said, right now they're still in a planning process. They still are in a consultation process, but there are children who need help right now.

I think my question, again, is: what is available for those children who need help now?

Hon. L. Reid: For the member opposite to suggest that the work is not underway in the province, perhaps he does not understand the regional work that is underway within British Columbia. The telephone service that he is speaking of was telephone advice three days a week. What is operational today is on-the-ground training in the five regions of this province. It's professional development, with supports in place for teachers, social workers and parents. It's ongoing training for foster parents. There are on-the-ground deliverables in each of the five regions. That is what we have in place today.

You have my commitment that ongoing professional development is a priority. Indeed, we will take the work that we have underway with the Canada Northwest Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership and bring that to bear. This is about going forward with the best science of the day. We have done that, and the best science of the day tells us that local delivery makes the best sense for families parenting children with challenging difficulties. This is one of those examples.

Again, I will reiterate. If the member opposite wishes to provide me with the name of that family, I will provide that level of support. If he doesn't wish it, on behalf of his constituent, that is his choice.

H. Bains: I will provide you that information, but I think it's a bigger issue. That's what I'm trying to get to, but I will provide you that information so that we can get the help that this child needs, for this parent as well.

Now my question is: as this planning goes on...? I fully understood the minister's answer that planning is underway. The work is being done. I understand that, but what is there in place for these individuals — for

these children and for these parents whose children are suffering from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder? What help is there for them? Who goes to school to explain it to the teachers for a child who has this disorder? Who goes to the court to explain to the court system what these children's behaviour is like and what kind of help these children need?

[1520]

That's the kind of question I'm asking today. What is available for these parents and these children today? Who goes to school to talk to the teachers, to explain to them these situations? Who goes with them to go to the courts? This organization provided that service at that particular time. Who does it now?

Hon. L. Reid: Let me reiterate. There has been no loss of service in this province. For the member opposite to suggest that the list he's just read off was, in fact, performed by a telephone advice line is simply not true. What I have described for him in lots of detail is an expansion of service, and I will attempt to give him some examples.

Not knowing the age of the child that he's referencing.... If it is a preschool-aged child who has fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and who's transitioning into the kindergarten classroom, as an example, that child today would be supported by a supported child development worker. It would be that person who would work directly with the family, frankly.

If it was an infant, a development worker first, in the child's home; a supported child development worker in the community; followed by a child care setting, if that were the family's choice; followed by a transition plan; followed by support for the family that would lead that child into the kindergarten classroom. So that example.... That work is well underway in the province. Frankly, it happens on a daily basis across British Columbia.

An elementary-aged child. It may well be that that teacher has attended regular professional development on behalf of this topic area and may be very skilful. It may be a very skilful special education teacher who has a particular skill set and passion regarding fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and will be writing individual educational plans for children in his or her care that have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

If it is an older child, it's that same elementary teacher, having been well trained through the Justice Institute, having attended professional development sessions around the province, having attended sessions funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. A number of conferences happen across British Columbia on a regular basis, through the University of British Columbia, through continuing education. That level of support may well see that elementary teacher transition that child into the high school program.

There is an array of family support programs — other families who have children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Training for foster parents is in place today, and has been for a number of years, to

engage them in behavioural strategies to better foster children with difficulties. So that work is underway.

The blanket of service is expanding across British Columbia, and it's being delivered region by region today.

A. Dix: The question has been consistently simple. I'm going to put it in as simple a way as I can for the minister. It's specific, and it's specific to the ministry budget.

For ten years successive ministers funded the FAS/E Network. I think the minister will, hopefully, acknowledge and respect the enormous sacrifice people involved in that network made over this period of years to provide service and assistance to people. Then, in the middle of last year, in this past fiscal year, the government announced that they were cutting the grant. They announced that.

[1525]

The question is very simple: why did the government decide to cut the grant?

Hon. L. Reid: The answer is equally simple. The service is now regionalized to the five regions of the province.

A. Dix: I should say to the minister that in fact the story, as her officials will know and as she will know — because we raised this issue yesterday and gave quite a bit of notice for these questions to be asked....

The grant was announced in May. The FAS/E Network was given three months' notice that the funding would be closed. The ministry made a late attempt to keep the agency functioning at a much lower level of grant, which the agency said they couldn't keep going on. Surely the issue is actually more complicated than that.

Part of the problem is that what the minister is talking about is something in progress. They were providing a service then, and it was a very significant service. You know, regardless of what one thinks about the particular agency, I think that just calling them a telephone answering service.... They are really involved in the community. I met these people.

It's not a political question. Successive governments, successive ministers and the ministry have funded this agency over ten years. I would have expected the minister to say: "The work and the contribution that they made was extraordinary. We decided to change tack. We had services ready on September 1, and that's why we said we would cut off their contract August 31."

With great respect, I think the answer is a little more complicated than that, so I'd ask the minister just to say that and, hopefully, to acknowledge on the part of the Ministry of Children and Family Development the real work that both volunteers and staff did at this agency for the ten years when they were a funded agency of the Ministry of Children and Family Development — under successive governments, successive ministers and successive political parties.

Hon. L. Reid: The member opposite perhaps needs to be reminded that there has been no reduction in funding for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Did we make a choice to put services into the regions? Yes. No question. The best research of the day will tell you that that is where it makes the most sense for families — no question about that.

In terms of this particular agency and their ability to assist in the transition, frankly, they declined the opportunity to participate. Do I appreciate the work that has been undertaken in the province? Absolutely I do, and there have been great opportunities for us to partner extremely well in the past. They, too, will tell you they believe in a regionalized service delivery model. They have shared that directly with me, and they have probably shared that directly with you.

Many of those individuals who received their training at that agency now reside in the regions of this province, leading those professional development initiatives. I have met them in my travels around this province, and they have moved, very clearly, to those centres to support families where they live. That is a good decision on their part, and it's a good decision on behalf of B.C. families.

D. Thorne: I'm pleased to be here today to continue the estimates debate for the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Today I will be asking questions about child care and early childhood development, and I look forward to having a dialogue with the minister on this subject, one which I believe in very strongly and one which will benefit all British Columbians.

I think it would benefit British Columbians right now to be reminded of this government's track record on child care. From 2001 to 2003 the Campbell government cut subsidies to low-income parents, and it lowered income thresholds for the program so that fewer people could qualify. Many good child care centres had to close. This government's record of addressing child care has been less than perfect.

As one of its first acts, the new B.C. Liberal government cancelled Child Care B.C., the NDP government's universal child care initiative, eliminating the \$7-a-day before- and after-school care program that was already up and running. Since taking office in 2001, this government has cut a total of \$40 million of provincial funding to child care, only to backfill its cuts with federal dollars.

This government has also funnelled federal dollars designated for child care into a range of provincial health programs such as pregnancy counselling and midwifery, until the federal government tied the funding, forcing them to put some dollars back into child care.

[1530]

This government has dragged its heels in signing the early learning and child care agreement. It was one of the last provinces to sign on to the deal. Had this government been more proactive in signing and finalizing an agreement with the federal government, B.C. might actually have a child care program in place. Finally, this government did not even try to fight to keep

its share of the federal child care money when the new Conservative government announced it was scrapping the Liberal program.

I was fortunate last night to attend the annual general meeting of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates across the province of British Columbia. The meeting was held in Vancouver, and I was the guest speaker at that meeting. There were about 120 people at the meeting. There were child care providers from across the province, child care advocates and parents — I would say the majority of people who were in the audience.

I have to tell you that I heard some stories last night that only back up the kinds of comments that I'm making today, the kinds of concerns that I'm expressing and the kinds of questions which I will be moving into very shortly. It was actually quite timely that the meeting was held last night. It was just a coincidence that I would be doing my estimates today on child care, but it certainly put a lot of issues and information fresh into my mind for today.

I just want to make a couple more comments before I go to my first question. From the Premier all the way to the Minister of State for Childcare, the only thing that British Columbians saw from this government, mainly, in the last five years has been a wait-and-see attitude. This government was supposed to release its child care action plan by January 31. The deadline just slipped by.

The Premier outlined his four critical areas when he stated his government wanted to move forward with the new federal Conservative government: the Pacific gateway project, the national transportation initiative, the pine beetle initiative and a national training strategy. The Premier was silent on child care as a major issue.

This minister even told the press that B.C. was doing fine when the new federal government announced that provinces would receive only second-year funding from the cancelled agreement. This was while Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba continued to argue for the new government to honour the full five years of the previous agreement.

Throughout the past six months the NDP has raised these issues time and time again with this government — and actually even before that, in the previous four years prior to my time being in this government. The NDP has opposed the dismantling of the before- and after-school care and the Campbell government's rejection of the goal....

The Chair: Excuse me, member. This is the second time. I'd remind you that no personal names are to be used, and there is to be no abusing the word "you" in referring to the other people. You're referring to a committee.

D. Thorne: Sorry, I didn't realize I was doing that.

The Chair: Thank you, member.

D. Thorne: The NDP opposed the dismantling of the before- and after-school care and the government's

rejection of the goal of making child care affordable for families in British Columbia. We remain committed to reintroducing universal child care based on the principals of quality, universality, accessibility, developmentally focused and accountability.

We have repeatedly called on the government to reinstate funding to the child care subsidy program, a move the Liberals only made when the Chrétien government forced their hand under the 2003 federal-provincial child care agreement. We have opposed moves by the government that hurt both the affordability and the quality of care that is available to British Columbia children. We called the government on its robbing Peter to pay Paul when it funnelled federal dollars designated for child care into provincial health programs.

Most importantly, we have been asking this government to publicly announce its plan for child care in B.C. So far all we have received is silence — silence on the reluctance to lobby for the new Conservative government in Ottawa to preserve the five-year funding for an early learning and child care program, silence on B.C.'s child care action plan and silence on the results of the public consultations the ministry has been promising since November.

I'd like to pick up where we left off yesterday in question period. Yesterday I asked the minister when this government will table the B.C. child care action plan as well as the results of the public consultations on child care that were held last fall. The ministry committed to providing both the action plan and the consultations by January 31 of this year. Again, I would like to know when the minister plans to table the action plan and the consultations.

[1535]

Hon. L. Reid: I'm pleased to begin these estimates on the child care file and to put my thoughts on the record as we begin. Certainly, I'm happy to share with members of this chamber our commitment, the fact that we're resolute on the opportunity we have before us to create the best possible environments for B.C.'s youngest citizens as we go forward.

In order to achieve this vision, British Columbians identified the following objectives for early learning and child care. Children will enter school better prepared to succeed, B.C. families will have access to quality child care, families will have access to a range of early learning programs and services, children with special needs will be supported in order to be included in quality community-based child care settings, children will be cared for by qualified child care workers in regulated child care spaces and B.C. families will have access to community hubs where a range of integrated family services are located.

The member opposite will have heard the Premier speak on many occasions and certainly members of this administration speak about B.C.'s goals. What is it that we wish for this community and province? Where is it that we wish this province to be in terms of its place in Canada and on the globe?

British Columbia's goals are to make B.C. the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent — that figures prominently into the discussion of how our youngest citizens begin their lives; to lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness; to build the best systems of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, special needs, children at risk, and seniors; to lead the world in sustainable environmental management with the best air and water quality and fisheries management; to create more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada. All of those are guiding principles which take us forward when we have a discussion about what is best for youngsters.

Indeed, I think there is opportunity for us to continue to fold in what it is we envision to be the best possible environments for youngsters, understanding completely that this is about how we support British Columbia families. Children reside in families within the province, and our opportunity, our obligation, our responsibility is to support families to make the best possible choice for their youngsters.

When we come back to the discussion about how to do that, we have the opportunity — and we have taken some great opportunities, I believe — to put in place building dollars, capital dollars. We've put in place support dollars and a range of services.

The member opposite referenced the 2003 early childhood development agreement that the federal government put in place, and that is the correct title for that agreement. Those dollars were invested in programs to assist in the delivery of early childhood development programs. That is an overarching theme across this jurisdiction, this administration, and our challenge is to create the best possible level of programming as we go forward. We believe we have done that, and we have indeed put in place the programs that will matter in the lives of children as they go forward, as they age through the process.

Let me talk for a moment about the work of Dr. Clyde Hertzman at the University of British Columbia. When we talk about solid early childhood development, we are leading the country. Our work is informed by the best science of the day. The early development indicator work in British Columbia is the best in the world. It can't be better today. That, I think, is worthy of enormous recognition and enormous accolade on behalf of every member of this chamber, because it's important work.

If indeed you're going to create a baseline and understand what a measurement tool is, and you're going to revisit that measurement tool every three years, you're going to have the opportunity to lift graduation rates in the province of British Columbia. This is an enormously important thing to do.

Every member of this House has said how important it is to be literate, how important it is to graduate, how important it is to have an opportunity to seek further post-secondary education, to be an informed decision-maker and a thoughtful human being. All of that work begins as a very young learner in this province and every province in Canada. For us not to understand the

importance of that research and why we take it forward with such pride is simply a missed opportunity. That benchmark today is available to British Columbians. It's available to this cabinet and this province. We are indeed making the best possible decisions.

Did they inform the decision-making, the spending we took based on the early childhood development agreement of 2000? No question they did. The early learning and child care agreement of 2003 — no question that that research was guided and guided our decision-making as we went forward. All of that work is an opportunity to layer and leave a legacy that matters in the lives of children.

That work is before us. It's important to understand that every single child in this province — and there are 42,000 born each year.... They, five years out, will cross the threshold into their first kindergarten classroom. Five years beyond that, five years beyond that and five years beyond that, they may be having their own children, and how we parent them will matter. How we educate them will matter. Building the society we want to live in will matter.

[1540]

All of those things are part and parcel of this discussion. It's about building a child care system for the lifetime of a child. That is a big, broad discussion, and all of these pieces are inextricably linked to that discussion.

So the member opposite is more than welcome to have a detailed discussion about particular aspects — that's the purpose of this debate — but the overarching theme is how we improve the lives of British Columbia's children and how we do that in partnership with their families and their parents. That is our goal.

In terms of the report she references, the consultation that is underway in this province with the Minister of Education — happening in the past November, December, January, February and March — on the Friday before last we had yet another dialogue about how to meet the last statement in our goal.

B.C. families will have access to community hubs where a range of integrated family services are located. We wanted very much to fold that discussion point into that round of consultation, because it makes sense to families. It's a kindness to families that we would do that, that we wouldn't ask them to go to four or five different points to receive service on a given day, that indeed we would consciously co-locate the service so that they can have service in one centre. That might be a child vaccine, that might be a public health visit, or that might be child care. There will be an opportunity to link services together more effectively. That is a commitment across government.

The Premier has asked, and we are delivering, on a cross-government integrated strategy. So in terms of the particular question: when will that report be released...? As soon as we can fold in the discussion we had ten days ago on hubs. That information will continue to inform us and guide us as we go forward. We will continue to be guided by the work of Dr. Clyde Hertzman, by the universities we have in this province

and by the leadership chairs we have in early childhood development.

All of that continues to guide us as we go forward, and all of that is vitally important. It's not a disparate piece of work that any one of us does. This piece of work happens across government because this cabinet, this administration and this caucus believe that it has to be linked. If you're going to commit the delivery of integrated service, you have to link those decisions at the cabinet table and at the caucus table. I'm proud of that work, because I think it is something that every single person in British Columbia can be proud of — that the children who are born in these years will go to school better equipped. They will be more adept learners. They will be in a better position to take advantage of the learning that's before them, and that's what we want. We want responsiveness and receptivity.

I don't believe any member of this chamber wants something different. They want learners to be able to be in a position to qualify, to have the best possible opportunity, to be open to the best possible learning opportunities and to focus on the learner. That is our challenge, and we as an administration rise to meet that challenge every single day. I know there will be opportunities for us to work together as we go forward on this file, because I think it's vitally important. I can't imagine there's a person here who doesn't believe in the necessity to support young learners. I won't believe that, so there have to be ways to advance the agenda on behalf of British Columbia families.

D. Thorne: Well, of course I agree that we all have the same goal. Of course I agree that Dr. Hertzman and his people do wonderful work and that we should be paying a lot of attention to it. In spite of that, there are aspects to the whole child care portfolio other than the work that's being done by Health and by university researchers and by linking to education as a focus.

In terms of the money that has been spent in the past from federal dollars and the areas where it has been spent, I think there were some concerns expressed by the federal government. That is one of the reasons why they have gone to all the individual provinces in the last couple of years and started tying more dollars to child care services per se, rather than being spent across the spectrum of services to children under six.

Certainly, I'm not at this moment absolutely aware of how that worked. It was before my time. All I know is that the federal government did come into the provinces and say that they wanted more money spent, specifically on child care.

[1545]

So if possible, I would like that information — as to what those negotiations or that information is — from the federal government in the last two or three years. I would like to know something about those negotiations and why there were concerns expressed by the federal government — how that all happened.

Hon. L. Reid: I am happy to assure the member opposite that there was not a single issue or concern

brought forward on behalf of the federal government to this province or this administration on behalf of the expenditure of that dollar.

I know that the Hon. Jane Stewart, when she was minister, received much correspondence from a handful of individuals in this province suggesting that. Each time, she responded to them and said that is simply not the case and that they would be wise not to continue that course of action.

It is not a worthy course of action because it certainly was not true. It would have been wrong to do that, and it was never engaged in by this administration. I'm more than happy to put it on the record for you.

Expenditures for the 2000 early childhood development agreement for 2004-2005 totalled \$65.8 million — an overexpenditure of \$164,000 — expended in full for the purposes for which it was intended. For the 2003 multilateral early learning and child care framework, reported expenditures totalled \$34.9 million for 2004-2005, an overexpenditure of \$15 million. What they continued to carry forward is that that dollar was not spent — again untrue, absolutely untrue. I leave that for your consideration.

D. Thorne: Then I guess we have no idea why they started requiring provinces, including British Columbia, to sign that they would spend specific amounts or percentages of dollars on child care specifically. That was just an across-the-board....

Hon. L. Reid: The original agreements, separate and distinct.... We met the requirements as set out. When the original discussion began around this particular fund, early learning and child care 2005, it was a multilateral agreement; i.e., it was the federal government and all ten provinces collectively. It did not contain that information in terms of specificity.

In terms of where we are today, they're bilateral agreements — the federal government and individual provinces. It may well have been that there are provinces that they have an issue with over that. British Columbia was not one of them.

D. Thorne: I think this goes to the heart of some of the issues that I'm hearing from the general public and as a critic. And you know, it's right that I should hear that. That's my job as a critic — to hear those things and to come into estimates or whatever and ask the questions.

Last night at the CCCA AGM, I heard again from so many people that the whole ECD, child care, early learning.... I mean, we must admit that it's a very confusing area for an awful lot of people, and it's been very vague in the past while.

People have been waiting for the plan. There are all kinds of rumours out there, and people are wondering why they haven't heard about the consultations, why the plan hasn't been posted on the website. There's basically been no information. What happens then is that people get concerned — not just caregivers and

people running child care services in the province, but parents and advocates and interested people in general.

[1550]

I'm happy to discuss information contained in the documents, as the minister just referred — and she referred yesterday and again today — to the hub delivery. I have to tell you, as you probably already know, that this is one of the areas where there's a lot of concern, misunderstanding and confusion in the community. I wonder if the minister could explain to me specifically or in simple terms, so it will be on the record, what is meant by hub delivery.

Hon. L. Reid: I'm going to respond to your first question first in terms of the ongoing reference to the field who believe that somehow there's some confusion between early childhood development, child care and early learning. It's the same child, so let me be as clear as I possibly can. I'm certainly going to take a few moments to have this discussion, because there has to be a way to put this issue to rest. This is an opportunity for us to understand that the terminology is not an opportunity for individuals to disengage. Early learning should happen everywhere. It shouldn't be the domain of any particular geography or setting, and yet that seems to be a conversation that happens regularly in the sector.

Child care happens across a variety of domains. Early childhood development should happen across a variety of domains. We want children developing, learning, being cared for in quality places, quality settings, by quality people — hopefully professionally developed, hopefully well-supported parents, families, caregivers. That's what we would wish for children.

The fact that there are those in the sector today and in communities today who see that as an opportunity to disengage and somehow suggest that it's child care versus early childhood development versus early learning.... It's a troubling commentary. Even for me, I'm troubled to be repeating the dialogue, but hopefully this opportunity will put it to rest. Hopefully, between you and me, we can have a conversation and clear up what is indeed, frankly, unhelpful misinformation.

This is about the same child. This is not an opportunity to continue the debate that has taken on a life of its own, which doesn't allow the work to go forward. Frankly, some of this is about mud thrown, ground lost. We are attempting to serve the same child — someone who is under six years of age — across a variety of settings.

I know, and you probably heard it yesterday, that there are people who say child care versus early learning versus early childhood development. For the record — for this discussion, this debate — they are inextricably linked. All of those things happen for any given child at any given time. That is the reality. People may not be comfortable with the particular phrase or terminology, but they are used by many people today

interchangeably. So if it's about folks crafting a better comfort zone around what that might be, let's craft it.

Let's move beyond the terminology and move to what is best for British Columbia babies, youngsters, toddlers, children, families, because this is not a worthy stumbling block. This should not be the impediment to some of the most glorious work we can do as a province. It simply should not be that the language has slowed down what should be and what should have been for you last evening a glorious celebration of some of the most fabulous programs underway ever in British Columbia.

D. Thorne: I agree. This is about the same child. I think that some of the confusion out there.... I'm sure the minister already knows everything I'm saying anyway, and a lot of what I'm saying, I'm doing for the record because I am the critic. As I said before, it is my job.

I think a lot of the confusion comes from the financial aspects. We have had child care centres cut. We have had closures. We have had very few increases in wages for child care workers. We're looking at, possibly, fees having to be raised in the future because of the federal agreement going down — or being cancelled, I should say. All of these things are bringing fear into the child care community, all aspects of it.

[1555]

When new language is introduced and people don't necessarily have a good handle on what the government means by the language, like hubs and things like that, the very first thought of people working in child care and parents — possibly parents who are on one of the ever-expanding waiting lists at a lot of our child care centres — is fear over what this is. Will dollars go out of the child care system and into some other system? Will it mean that more centres will close? Will it mean that wait-lists will grow even longer and faster, that once again we won't be able to properly compensate the workers? Those are the kinds of fears, and it's like most things in life. It does come down to our well-being and dollars, and how we look after the areas that we work and live in.

For instance, several people have said to me — and long before last evening; a couple of people in my community have phoned me, people that the minister probably knows, in fact, or knows of — have I heard of something called hub money? I had not. I did not know what was being mentioned. Again, last night one parent came up to me and said.... I think she has a small family day care in her home, and she asked me if I had heard of it. She has heard that there's already, in some communities around the province, the start of some competition around getting hub money. I don't know if it's official RFPs or whatever it is, but there's misinformation and a lot of worry and concern over hub money.

I believe, as I just said, that finances and not enough information about this out there are causing a lot of the concern and the worry with parents and caregivers.

Hon. L. Reid: Let me put some thoughts on the record. The terminology is not new. In fact, Britannia

Community Centre was probably the first neighbourhood hub, and it's going to be 30 years old. This is something that people have been aware of for a long, long time.

The examples we brought together when we had the discussion: Yellowhead Community Services in Clearwater, Kla-how-eya in Surrey, family services in Saanich. Co-location: do you offer more than two programs at the same address? Co-location — it's not something that's new this year in British Columbia.

[V. Roddick in the chair.]

A lot of these programs.... I mean, Britannia Community is the oldest at 30 years of age, but lots of them are ten or 15 or 20 years of age. They continue to exist in that format because they work well for families. So when we talk about expansion of service, do we want to see stand-alone service delivery? Sometimes that may be a useful approach, or is it possible to also consider co-locating services for families that makes sense? That's the flavour of the discussion: does co-location make sense for a range of service delivery?

I'm happy to tell the member that we are not the only ministry exploring this opportunity today. The Ministry of Health, certainly, is engaged in a number of different hub models across the province, because they are multiservice centres. You will see today dietitians, baby wellness clinics, vaccine clinics and screening centres that are considered neighbourhood hubs, but they are funded through the Ministry of Health.

So are they in existence today through other ministries? Yes. The person who spoke with you yesterday — was she maybe referencing something from the Health Ministry? Perhaps. Not being there, I have no way of knowing that, but if the angst is about MCFD, at this juncture we're not formally in the field. We are at the discussion stage in terms of understanding more clearly what is there, and we have many existing hubs in British Columbia today. We will very soon, in the next number of months, have a very clear inventory of all of them that exist and, frankly, family satisfaction levels with them.

The reality is that if a program has existed for upwards of 20 and 30 years, it's because families are very well-served and believe in that service delivery model. So is it possible for us to understand better the geographic distribution of those programs, to look carefully as to where they currently are and to perhaps be informed by Clyde Hertzman's work as to where we may wish to situate yet another, should that opportunity come before us....? That's the level of discussion we're having today. The opportunity for us to have a more detailed discussion is yet before us. I will certainly happily share the inventory with you, when it becomes available, to know how we address expanded service delivery from a co-location perspective across British Columbia.

[1600]

You and I both represent lower mainland ridings. It's a different discussion in the lower mainland than it

is points further north — sometimes the north Island, as an example; northern British Columbia, as an example. For us to expect families, who would drive six or eight hours to a particular service, to go in two or three different directions.... That's a different discussion. If there are better ways for us to localize service delivery, I would welcome your thoughts. I would welcome those who were speaking with you to share their thoughts with me directly.

Certainly, we have had some good response in terms of those who have enjoyed the services currently delivered through neighbourhood hubs. What we've done, I think, is put on the record just a very general discussion and a very general set of principles around what a hub looks like. I've put that on the record, I believe, in my throne speech. I'm more than happy to give it to you again at this juncture, if you like. Why don't I do that? It'll just take me a second.

Key components and principles that are part of a neighbourhood hub model. They include direct provision of, at least through early childhood development, family-strengthening services under the same roof. They have relationships or connections with other ECD child care family-strengthening services in the community. They include a community development component, which we touched on earlier with one of your previous speakers, around capacity-building. They include a community development component, because that's what we're looking for: resiliency and capacity-building.

Neighbourhood hubs make use of available space in the community in terms of location of community centres, schools, neighbourhood houses, libraries and public housing complexes. Can we better utilize public space? I'm sure the member opposite has heard the Premier speak of better utilization of public buildings. Indeed, the taxpayers have already paid for a whole array of buildings that sometimes are underutilized. Can we co-locate some services?

Our neighbourhood hubs are accessible. Neighbourhood hubs evolve from local collaboration and partnerships and are designed to further the collaborative process, not duplicate service or create competition. Neighbourhood hubs are hosted by local organizations in partnership with the intersectoral coalition. Neighbourhood hub programs are based on research and are developed based on promising practice.

Though very broad, very general guidelines, as we go forward in terms of what we would look for, the reality is that's what we look for today. If we're talking about constructing a new child care centre, that's what the Ministry of Health would look for. If they're talking about building a new vaccine centre for babies, is it in a place where people can find it? Those are very general principles. I don't think there's anything that should alarm the sector, should concern the sector unduly. These should be services that are driven by respect and kindness for families.

D. Thorne: Well, I certainly understand the hub model, because you are talking about neighbourhood

community centres, community schools, neighbourhood houses — whatever we want to call them. I know many child care centres. Frog Hollow is another example of that kind of community centre. Some of the suburbs also have centres that function that way, but I don't think quite as many as they do in Vancouver.

When you point out you're replicating these kinds of services, it isn't so much that anybody is opposed, I don't think, to the idea of co-locating services. Having services located under one roof for any sector in social services is always valuable for the clients, because often the clients find it difficult moving from service to service. I think it does underscore, perhaps, where the concern is coming from in the child care providers community. Certainly, it sounds as if the minister has no plans — certainly not at this point in time — to close any current centres. I think what we're talking about is opening more centres in co-located areas.

I'd just like to clarify once again if the term "hub money" means anything in that context today to people in communities outside the lower mainland — possibly, that it's new money and that it's out there.

Hon. L. Reid: In terms of your specific question — do we have active hub dollars in the field today? — the answer is no. We have an exploratory discussion. We're preparing an inventory of what that process looks like across British Columbia. But if the fear is what's happening with the existing child care space, absolutely, I have responsibility to build child care space in British Columbia. I also have responsibility for cross-government integrated strategy.

[1605]

So let me speak to the child care space creation responsibility in some detail. We have created a great deal of space, and I'm particularly proud of it. We have had two intakes in the six months since we had the first announcement of how we would engage and put forward RFPs for capital construction in British Columbia.

The first round brought us 236 spaces under active construction, and the November intake, which was adjudicated very recently, brought us 621 spaces — so 857 spaces. I am more than happy to tell you where they are in the province and to give you some detail as to who they will serve.

This was Bowen Island Preschool and Community Daycare Society at Bowen Children's Centre. They're preparing a number of spaces created. They're going to create five 30-plus months to school-age group child care spaces. Some of these are enhancements of existing centres, where they have created new opportunities or had new floor space requirements added so that they could create some additional spaces.

The Bridge River Indian band in Lillooet is creating 20 spaces for 30-plus-month-old children to school-age group care; the Capital Families Association in Colwood, 25 30-plus months to school-age spaces; the Langley Meadows Community Association in Langley, 20 preschool spaces; the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, 20 preschool spaces; Mon-

tessori Training Centre in Vancouver, Society of British Columbia, 15 preschool spaces; Seabird Island band in Agassiz, 12 spaces for under 36 months; Spare Time Child Care Society in Vancouver, 30 out-of-school child care spaces; Step By Step Child Development Society in Port Coquitlam, 25 out-of-school care spaces; Tsawwassen First Nation in Delta, eight spaces for under-36 months, 24 spaces for 30-plus months, 12 preschool and 16 out-of-school care spaces; Young Women's Christian Association in Vancouver, four under-36 months spaces. That's the first list I referenced. Those are the 236 spaces.

The second list: Beecher Bay First Nation in Sooke, 16 spaces; Campbell River Child Care Society, 35 spaces; Central Island Independent School Society, 32 spaces; Children's Circle Daycare Society in Kamloops, 56 spaces; Young Men's Christian Association of Prince George, 50 spaces; Gingolx village government, 32 spaces; Halfway River First Nations, 20 spaces; Kids Cottage Daycare Society in Coquitlam, eight spaces; Langley Children's Society, 20 spaces; Laxgalts'ap village government in Greenville, 32 spaces; North Vancouver School District, 60 spaces; Oak Avenue Neighbourhood Society in Surrey, 32 spaces; Pemberton Childcare Society in Pemberton, 56 spaces; Penticton and District Community Resources Society, 12 spaces; school district 47 in Powell River, eight spaces; Spare Time Child Care Society in Vancouver, 30 spaces; the evangelical association, which is on Gabriola Island, 18 spaces; West Coast Montessori Society, 84 spaces; Yellowhead Community Services Society, 20 spaces — for a total of 621 spaces.

There is some good, active child care construction underway in British Columbia. There is one more round that closed and is currently being adjudicated. There were a tremendous number of applicants, and there is going to be some opportunity for us to build in corners of the province that, frankly, have tremendous need.

I referenced earlier in my remarks the work of Dr. Clyde Hertzman. What his work — the early childhood development atlas, which is very recent work — has identified for us is 87 priority communities in the province where the children have the greatest vulnerability, where they are vulnerable on two or more scales of the EDI.

What we're attempting to do in terms of getting to our eventual, ultimate goal, which is a lift in graduation rates, is to build family-strengthening child care in these 87 priority communities. So we are going to take a look at the work that's underway across ministry — whether it's in the Ministry of Health, whether it's in the Ministry of Education or whether it's in this ministry — and see if we can reconcile that work with these 87 priority communities and ensure that we have in some way touched the under-six population in each of these 87 priority communities.

I'm more than happy to put them on the record for the member opposite or to share them directly with the member opposite.

[1610]

D. Thorne: Thank you to the minister for that list.

I wonder: would any of these new spaces be considered to be part of a hub model? Also, are these capital dollars federal or provincial dollars initially, originally?

Hon. L. Reid: The first round of spaces I indicated — 236 — might shift a space or two, but for the most part that would be provincial funding. For the November intake — the 621 — that would be federal funding.

D. Thorne: By "shift a space or two," since I asked about the hub model, I'm assuming you mean into a community centre. Or do you just mean shifting out of one child care to another? Or into a hub model or out of a hub model?

Hon. L. Reid: No, I believe your last question to me was: which space would have been funded by provincial dollars and which space by federal dollars? To be clear, the 236 spaces, give or take a space was provincial dollar expenditure, and the 621 was federal dollar expenditure. In terms of your question, "Do any of those spaces operate in a hub model setting?" many probably do, which is why we're doing the inventory.

Britannia Community Centre has child care on site. The presenters we had at our hub meeting, Sooke Family Resource Society, had child care on site. Yellowhead Community Services had child care on site. The College of New Caledonia children and family community programs had child care on site. Chilliwack Community Services and central gateway project — child care on site. Definitely, the Britannia Community Centre and Klahowya Aboriginal Centre. All of those had child care on site.

If you remember that the definition is two programs coexisting.... A hub could be a toddler program and a preschool program. A hub could be a preschool program and a before-school and after-school program. We are not defining it beyond that at the present time because we're simply interested to know how many there are that co-locate and how many in the province operate as a single-program child care centre.

You will know from your work in this area that many societies, many providers operate a whole range of programs. They may have their infants on one site and their toddlers on another site and their before- and after-school on yet another site. To collate that information better is the work that we're engaged in, because for lots of families, that means they may go to two or three places on their way to work in the morning. If there are ways for us to better utilize vacant classroom space....

[1615]

School enrolment is declining in British Columbia. Is there classroom space we can use where families are already going to drop off, maybe, one of their youngsters at a classroom in the morning? Is there building space we can use that's underutilized today — where families are already on their way to work and would go by such a building?

I don't think you'll find many instances today where child care is solely provided, you know, distinct

and separate. I think most folks are attempting to co-locate. For us to have a clear picture of that makes perfect sense, and once we have that, again, I'm happy to share that with you.

D. Thorne: Essentially, I have no problem with co-locating services. I don't think anybody actually does. I think that potential problems come up when you talk about competition for funding, and that's the case with many different kinds of change in programs or with a move in one direction away from another direction. I think that's where you get....

This has been an interesting discussion, and I may go back to this later. Right now I'd like to go back to the consulting. I'm wondering why the consultations are still going on when the deadline had been set for January 31 for the plan to be released. I mean, I'm assuming these are new consultations. Does that mean they're different from the ones that were done before Christmas? If they're addressing a different topic, I guess they're new.

Hon. L. Reid: This is always going to be an intriguing question, I think, for the members opposite, but they will know that the federal election took place and that each province had a different time line presented to them. Each province was not asked to respond by January 31. When the federal election was called, the federal government communicated with us and said: "There will be no one to send that report to on January 31. When we wish it, we will ask for it."

We complied with that, so we have in fact not missed a deadline, which I know the member opposite is confident of and wishes to continue to say. But we have not missed the deadline. When they wish that information — should they wish that information from us — we will absolutely provide that. The landscape changed. When the federal election was called, we were not asked to provide anything at a particular time and were told, in fact, that there was no one to receive it at that particular juncture. So that is the answer. You're happy to continue to ask the question, but that is the answer.

D. Thorne: I am happy to continue to ask the question. My feeling about this — and I think the feeling of most of the people in British Columbia that are concerned about this issue — is that the child care plan and the report on the fall consulting was as much for the people of British Columbia, who are very interested and who gave up their time to participate in it, as it was for the federal government. I don't think anybody saw it solely as a report to the federal government regarding the five-year agreement.

[1620]

I absolutely understand that the election came in the middle, and of course the landscape changed. Everybody has now been disrupted, and plans have been disrupted. But I believe that the consulting and the plan — which is how the province plans to proceed with child care and early childhood development and

learning in British Columbia — is the plan. I don't think that's necessarily tied to getting the money. Of course, it might have to be changed a bit if we continue to go down the path that it looks like we're going down now.

But the plan still should have been put out for the public on the date that it was supposed to be. The consulting ended. The interactive website, where people could respond last fall, was closed on the date.... I forget. It was the end of October or the end of November. Whenever it was, it was closed as planned, and people could no longer respond. As far as the people of the province were concerned — the stakeholders, we could call them.... As we know, in the area of the under-six-year-olds, the stakeholders make up probably more than half the people in B.C., when you consider parents as well as caregivers and advocates.

You know, I remember last fall when I did my first estimates and I asked: were the consultations public? I was told that yes, they were on the website. I was immediately informed by one of my staff members that no, in fact, they weren't. The minister and her staff will remember this: there was nothing on the website. The consulting had started in several areas. The public had not known about it. It was virtually by invitation only.

I pointed out to the minister and her staff that in fact it was not up on the website, and then it was immediately rectified, within days. Then the public started to attend, and everything went along as it should.

I'm wondering now, with this further consulting: have the stakeholders and the public been informed that we're still consulting? I'm also wondering who is participating in these new consultations. Is it a new set of consultations? If so, are there new terms of reference? How is that happening? People are wondering about this — stakeholders who participated, the opposition and the critic.

I'm wondering about those three things. If there are new terms of reference, I'd like to see them. If there aren't, I'm wondering why not. If the public and its stakeholders haven't been informed about what's going on now, I'd also like to know why.

Hon. L. Reid: Just to put the actual detail on the record, in the fall of 2005 the provincial government conducted a two-pronged public consultation, jointly facilitated by the Ministries of Children and Family Development and of Education, on early learning and child care. The purpose of the consultation was to share B.C.'s vision, principles and goals for early learning and child care, to seek input from stakeholders and interested parties from across the province on their priorities for investing ELCC funds and to solicit feedback on the Ministry of Education's expanded mandate.

MCFD, with the Ministry of Education, held meetings open to the public. The meetings were advertised on the ministry website and through community newspapers to encourage a broader community participation. In addition, specific participants were in-

vited to ensure representation from a wide range of early-years programs and services.

MCFD, with the Ministry of Education, held eight community meetings; a web-based consultation process; and five consultation sessions with specific stakeholder groups, including parents, early childhood educators, provincial child care advocacy groups and members of the province's francophone community. We also had two aboriginal consultation sessions hosted by B.C. Aboriginal Child Care Society. The Ministry of Education, with MCFD, have had consultations related to the early years and the expanded mandate for education in B.C.'s 60 school districts.

The member will recall that there was some disruption in those sites, in those school districts, in the fall, which extended the time line for this consultation. Will we continue to have ongoing consultation?

[1625]

Interjection.

Hon. L. Reid: Member, well, no. My door is always open. We will continue to have discussions as we go forward.

This particular piece of consultation documentation, I believe, will be available very shortly. We have had the opportunity to have the Provincial Child Care Council, the membership, attend the meeting we had on hubs, because we wanted to have their feedback as we went forward. As soon as that is folded in, we are basically going to take the information forward.

I don't think it is going to be anything other than an ongoing four-year dialogue, if you will, in terms of how best to create opportunities that best meet the needs of British Columbia's families. Frankly, that's the Premier's expectation. We agreed at the outset that that's what the communities and families wish: to create the best possible opportunities.

Are we ever going to say that this government is no longer interested in hearing the opinions of the public, the stakeholders and the providers on what they would wish to see happen on this issue, in this area of child care delivery? We are never going to say that.

D. Thorne: All I remember from the estimates last fall — and I imagine it's all in *Hansard* — is that it wasn't on the Web. It wasn't public until we did estimates. I asked if it was public and on the Web, and I was told it was, and in fact it wasn't. I'm not going to spend any more time on that. It's all there for the public record that up to the point where we did estimates, it was not as public as it should have been. Whatever the intent was, I'm just saying what the actuality was.

I'm still wondering: who participated in the hub consultations? Was it with the Health people? I mean, I don't know. If I don't know, I'm assuming that the other stakeholders and general public who participated last fall also don't know that these extra consultations are taking place. That's all I'm asking: who knows about these consultations? Who was involved. Was it part of the same public meetings that were held in the

fall, or is it in fact a different, new set of consulting? And if so, what are the terms of reference around it? How long will it go on? Basically, I want to see a plan. So do the stakeholders, and so do a lot of the public of B.C.

The YWCA report that came out — I referenced it yesterday, and I know the minister has read it because she came back with some very good comments to me in the House yesterday. They have said that governments need to establish the necessary mechanisms for funding legislation and accountability. That's a plan.

You are going to have confusion. You are going to have people who are worried about what's going on — stakeholders, parents who are waiting on these ever-growing waiting lists, as I referenced a few minutes ago. You're going to have fear until there is a plan and people know what's happening in the future, what the plans are. And it must be tabled.

Hon. L. Reid: Suffice to say, I will happily share the early years framework with the member opposite as soon as it's available.

D. Thorne: I'm assuming that means we will be sharing it with the public as well. I really would appreciate a date so that people will know exactly when the new date is that this is going to be made available.

Now, back to the consultations. I'm wondering if the changes that have occurred at the federal level have been incorporated into the new consulting. Are we still operating as if we still had the five-year plan?

[1630]

Hon. L. Reid: The opportunity that we had to be the second province in the door to meet with the hon. Minister Diane Finley in Ottawa was one that we fought fiercely for. Because the reality is that our job is to advocate on behalf of British Columbia families, and we certainly take that obligation very, very seriously.

Is it appropriate to make a determination for the next 12 months based on a single meeting? It's never appropriate to do that. But in terms of beginning a relationship that we trust will bear fruit for this province, we want very much to build a healthy relationship as we go forward, and frankly, the success that our Premier has had in terms of federal-provincial relations has been extraordinary.

We are at the place where we intend to have Minister Finley come to British Columbia. She has agreed to come during the month of June and to make herself available to us so that we can show some of the programs we believe to be extraordinary programs in British Columbia. So in terms of if we have taken a decision about what happens into the future, it's premature, in our view, to do that — absolutely premature to do that.

There are two signals yet to come in the next number of weeks. One will be the federal throne speech, which is now slated for, I believe, April 4. They return on April 3. They bring down the throne speech on the fourth. The date for the federal budget has not yet been

determined. Both of those will give us some great insight as to how we proceed. This will be an active, alive, on-the-ground debate, dialogue, negotiation as we go forward, because our challenge and commitment is to deliver the best possible program we can for British Columbia families.

D. Thorne: Well, you know, the whole point of doing the consulting last fall was that those consultations would be what the plan was made up of — the public consulting, the stakeholder consulting. That was the point: to have the plan based on those consultations. If we're still doing consultations, this has to be made public.

I'm not the only one that feels this way. This is the feeling of parents and stakeholders out there. They want the consultations made public. We don't understand why the ministry is not putting the consulting up on the website as promised. As you say, consulting will continue. When will the consultations be put on the website?

Hon. L. Reid: I believe that the member opposite just asked about federal-provincial relations. If she's now returning to the previous question in terms of the consultation, please know that I will continue as long as I'm in this role to meet with anyone who wishes to discuss child care. She heard me moments ago — and the *Blues* will reflect this — commit to make the early years framework document available to her as soon as it's available.

D. Thorne: I was referring to the report on the consulting itself, not the plan. I mean, I understand that you are still working on consulting, so the plan is not ready. I understand that's what you've said to me. If that isn't correct, you can tell me so.

If you are going to continue consulting with people for the next four years or however long we're going to do it — and that's what I understand the ministry to say — I can't disagree with that, because of course it's an ongoing file, an ongoing document. But does that mean that prior consultations will not be put on the website for stakeholders and parents to see?

And yes, you're right. I did slip from federal back into.... Because I didn't quite finish what I was thinking about there.

Hon. L. Reid: The answer to both questions is yes. As soon as the consultation document, which will be a joint response from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, is available, we will make it available to the member opposite and to the public at large. We have no difficulty doing that.

The early years framework document — again, the same answer: yes. As soon as it's ready, it will be made available.

[1635]

D. Thorne: I wanted a date, but I guess you don't know the date. I'm assuming that you can't even give

us a possible date that this might be up on the website for people.

Hon. L. Reid: The coordination that's required for two ministries to put this forward.... I will commit to the next number of weeks. If I learn a particular date, I will happily provide that to the member opposite. That is the consultation document. The early years framework document, again, may take a few weeks longer beyond that date, but I'm more than happy to share it with the member opposite as soon as it's available.

D. Thorne: Okay. I'd like to move on now to the death of the child care deal and what I consider to be a lack of action in the face of that. Since the election of the new federal government, it has become quite clear that the child care agreement will be cancelled. In fact, it has been cancelled. Diane Finley has said the deal is dead.

The Premier outlined the four critical areas — which I mentioned before, when I started — the Gateway, the transportation, the pine beetle and the national training strategy. But he was silent on child care. I am wondering if the ministry and the minister can tell me why child care was not a priority for the Premier and his government, seeing as B.C. stood to lose up to \$541 million for its child care program. Why did the Premier not show more leadership in advocating for child care in British Columbia?

Hon. L. Reid: I am happy to put this on the record again. This province was extraordinarily successful in terms of being the second province in the door to Minister Finley's office when this discussion came to light, the second province managing to have a face-to-face meeting in terms of putting forward what we believe to be vitally important on behalf of British Columbia's children and families.

That dialogue is there; that commentary is there. The fierceness we bring to advocating for this file and our commitment to this file are resolute. The member opposite references the Premier's commentary. I don't think it gets clearer than this quote. Obviously, the question was that someone was comparing what was happening in Quebec to what was happening in British Columbia. "Well, Quebec's done everything, and they're getting everything," was the comment put to him. His response was: "Well, if Quebec's getting everything, we'll get everything."

[1640]

There's no question that the Premier is not fighting fiercely for what he believes to be important for this province — no question. This is not about somehow allowing members of the opposition to suggest that the provinces across the country have decided where the hierarchy is and that British Columbia is not on a level playing field with the other provinces in this country. My colleague minister is co-chair and will take this issue forward to federal-provincial-territorial meetings with some fierceness. I can tell you, hon. Chair, that this issue will continue to be a prominent feature at any table in this country.

The member will know that the first time child care has featured prominently in the portfolios, priorities and platforms of any federal political party.... In this last federal election it featured prominently in the platform of every single one. Every single federal political party believed child care to be important enough to take it forward as a major issue. So there's energy and there's discussion yet to be held around this issue.

I signalled to the member earlier the two dates within the next number of weeks that will give us some further information that we will need as we engage and go forward: April 3, when the House comes back federally, and April 4, when the throne speech is read. That will be a signal. When the federal budget comes down, that will be a signal.

We cannot and should not — I would caution the member — decide the future of this province's child care plan and whether or not we receive federal support based on a single meeting. That would, frankly, be foolhardy.

D. Thorne: Well, I'm wondering how the minister can be so pleased with her government's record on child care when her own vice-chair resigned due to B.C.'s stand-back approach, which is what I'm referring to. I mean, it was early in January when the child care deal started to go south, and it was quite a while before we heard anything from British Columbia.

Certainly, I say again that the Premier was noticeably absent from the federal scene when other Premiers were very, very much there fighting for this plan. It definitely was a wait-and-see approach. You know, no meetings that I'm aware of took place until after Diane Finley had said the deal was dead. I'm wondering how you can praise this record with this stand-back approach.

Hon. L. Reid: The member opposite would have individuals believe that somehow this was a delayed approach. We were in Ottawa, I think, on the day that the minister was in office at the end of her second week, the start of her third week in cabinet. It doesn't get better than that when it comes to someone brand-new in their role hosting a delegation from another province. I mean, I believe that today we are one of three provinces that have been in the door with the federal minister. There are still seven provinces and three territories that haven't been. For this member opposite to suggest for one second that we haven't taken every opportunity and advanced our case with huge urgency is simply wrong and an unworthy comment, frankly.

[1645]

There are opportunities for us to continue the dialogue, and that dialogue needs to continue on behalf of British Columbia families. Minister Finley's willingness to come to British Columbia and to be in a position to explore our programs with us, to tour our programs with us, I took as a very good sign. I took it as a good signal that there was an interest and some willingness to have an ongoing discussion about what child care

looks like in different parts of the country and why child care is important to British Columbia, why we need ongoing support as we go forward. I don't take those as negatives. Her willingness to be in this province, I take as a great sign. For the member opposite to suggest anything else is unfair and, frankly, wrong.

The expertise that our Premier has brought to federal-provincial relations is evident. I appreciate that this member was not a member during the ten years that this government was in office, but horrendous — absolutely horrendous — federal-provincial relations cost this province enormous dollars, cost this province an enormous sum of money — not very much to be proud of on that front.

We have had the opposite experience. We've had good success. We intend to build some relationships, and we cannot be premature, as the member opposite would wish to be, in terms of determining the next 12 months based on a single meeting. We will continue to have the dialogue and the undertaking that will give us the ongoing opportunity to demonstrate what it is that British Columbia is doing on the child care file and why it is that we're extraordinarily proud of what British Columbia is doing.

D. Thorne: Well, I appreciate the minister's optimism in the face of Finley saying the deal was dead. However, I still maintain that this government has taken a wait-and-see approach that could prove to be dangerous down the road.

When asked about his approach, the Premier stated that he would make his move after the new federal government and B.C. met to discuss Ottawa's child care plans. However, when the meeting was called, the Premier did not attend the meeting and instead sent the Minister for Intergovernmental Relations to attend in his place.

I'm wondering what the Minister for Intergovernmental Relations discussed at this meeting and what he learned. What was the outcome of the meeting in terms of moving ahead an agenda for child care in British Columbia?

Hon. L. Reid: To clarify for the record, because the member opposite was actually incorrect when she put her numbers on the record earlier, the actual agreement was for \$633 million. So \$92 million received in year one; \$85.6 million received in year two — \$456 million, not the number that the member opposite quoted.

D. Thorne: I appreciate that information. Actually, I don't recall. I thought it was \$466 million. I'm happy to know it's \$456 million. I'm assuming that's the money that we possibly or probably are not going to get. Sorry if I made a mistake on the figures, but I'm wondering....

I'll ask again my last question, which was.... The meeting that was called to discuss child care with the federal government.... The Minister for Intergovernmental Relations was sent to the meeting. The Premier did not attend. I'm wondering what we learned from

that meeting, what the outcome was. Was there any change in what we know about the plan being dead?

Hon. L. Reid: The member should be aware that discussions at a first ministers table are private and confidential.

D. Thorne: I'm assuming that means there hasn't been any change, that the plan is still considered dead by the federal government.

On March 1, 2006, the Minister of Children and Family Development and the Minister of State for Childcare finally travelled to Ottawa to discuss funding for B.C.'s child care program. I'm wondering who the ministers met with, for how long. And what did they discuss?

[1650]

Hon. L. Reid: The member certainly should be aware that meetings — federal and provincial discussions — are not usually conducted in the public domain. This is no exception. This is an opportunity for our representation — ministers, officials, delegations — to take forward what we believe to be in the best interests of our province. Are we going to have that negotiation in the public domain? Sensible people wouldn't proceed in that way.

D. Thorne: Well, I appreciate that there's some confidentiality. I guess all these meetings are in-camera meetings, but I'm wondering why it's not public information. I mean, why wouldn't it be public information — what our province was taking forward? Surely it's in the best interest of all of the stakeholders and parents to know what has been taken forward, especially in light of the fact that there is no plan. I've been told that the plan is not complete. There is no plan, basically, for the future of child care in the province. I'm wondering what would be taken forward to the federal government if there is no plan.

Hon. L. Reid: Certainly, the member will know what I've shared with her earlier today in terms of what our vision for child care is. That is something that the federal minister is now more than aware of.

In terms of the more detailed discussion, no, we don't have that in the public domain.

I'll more than happily put it back on the record for you. Children will enter school better prepared to succeed. B.C. families will have access to quality child care. Families will have access to a range of early learning programs and services. Children with special needs will be supported in order to be included in quality, community-based child care settings. Children will be cared for by qualified child care workers in regulated child care spaces. B.C. families will have access to community hubs where a range of integrated family services are located.

That will always underpin any discussion we have in any forum, whether it's British Columbia or Ontario, because that is what we wish to underpin how we deliver service in this province. The detail of that discus-

sion is not something that is discussed in a public forum.

D. Thorne: The Minister of Children and Family Development is reported to have said that he argued for a larger program during the meeting. What does the minister mean by a larger program? Does this mean the minister wants to see more money transferred to families, or does the minister want Ottawa to honour its five-year child care commitment to B.C.?

Hon. L. Reid: I am more than happy to put back on the record our vision for child care, if that is the member opposite's wish, but that is the extent to which we will engage in what was a discussion held directly between the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada.

[1655]

So allow me to do that. Children will enter school better prepared to succeed. B.C. families will have access to quality child care. Families will have access to a range of early learning programs and services. Children with special needs will be supported in order to be included in quality, community-based child care settings. Children will be cared for by qualified child care workers in regulated child care spaces. B.C. families will have access to community hubs where a range of integrated family services are located.

That was the frame for the discussion. The detail of the discussion is not for the public domain.

D. Thorne: My last question actually was more specific than that. I was referring to what the minister meant by larger programs. I'm hoping that the minister is not reluctant to say that the ministry wants Ottawa to honour the five-year child care commitment to B.C. That's a question.

Hon. L. Reid: I understood the question the previous three times you've raised it. The answer is not forthcoming. That dialogue is the dialogue between the province of British Columbia and the government of Canada. We are not prepared to dictate, predetermine the outcome of this ongoing discussion we will have with the federal government based on a single meeting. We are not prepared to do that. So you will not see that detail on the record no matter how many times you choose to ask the question. You will not see the detail on the record.

D. Thorne: Well, I will probably go back to that question again later, but for now.... I want to finish up this section, and I have a colleague who has some questions to ask for a few moments.

Now that the ministers have met with the federal government to discuss Ottawa's child care plans, has the government — and I know I'm probably going to get the same answer — any idea of the effect this will have on the government's child care plan?

Hon. L. Reid: Happy to give yet another answer I've previously given. This is going to definitely be a

work-in-progress, but there are two signals yet before us in the next number of weeks. One is the federal throne speech, which comes down on the fourth of April — so a couple weeks away — and one is the federal budget. Again, we will take that information, that insight, and then determine what our next steps might be.

D. Thorne: This is slightly different but just moving on with the federal government, with the child care deal. Yesterday the federal Liberals and the federal NDP were definite. They will oppose Harper on child care. The Bloc have said they've got a promise from Harper that he will find a way to respect the Quebec child care system. The Prime Minister had previously told Ontario that he would not do a one-off deal with the Parti Québécois or with Quebec. The child care deal is not as dead as the Conservatives would like it to be, it appears. What is B.C. going to do now to fight for its share of the early learning child care funding?

Hon. L. Reid: Basing our next steps on a press report is not how one builds a sensible, productive relationship. So in terms of how we go forward, I think we've been abundantly clear. We are going to take the next two signals that come before us — one of which is the throne speech and one of which is the budget — and continue to be informed by that as we engage as we go forward. The discussions between the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada — and both ministers will continue to have that ongoing discussion when the minister comes to British Columbia — will unfold as they unfold.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

D. Thorne: To finish this up section now, and let my colleague ask a couple of questions. The Premier stated yesterday that the reason this province has \$178 million over two years for child care is because of the strong economy. The only reason they have that money is because of the former federal government, and the Premier and this ministry have let the balance — well, I have \$420 million here; so I guess it's \$456 million for child care — slip through their fingers. Unlike other provincial Premiers, this province didn't think child care was enough of a priority to be bothered to lobby the new Harper government.

[1700]

Why has this government still not made a very big effort to secure the federal funding for child care, and now won't make a statement saying that they will join with the federal opposition and fight like heck for this — for the remaining dollars for this province?

Hon. L. Reid: I appreciate the question, but I think it's the same question I've now answered probably a dozen times. Let me say that the approach we have taken — to be diligent and fierce on the question, and to go forward and build a relationship that we believe will have some durability — is where we are today.

And we were, and will be, at that table. We were the second province in the door — before that government was a government, before that cabinet was three weeks old.

So for the member opposite to suggest that that action was not taken is wrong — frankly, just plain wrong. Interesting script. Don't know who provided it to you, but frankly wrong. That work is well underway, and that urgency that we took to that meeting has not lessened. We are resolute in our commitment on the child care file. You may have yet another person who has provided you with that same question in a different frame. Enjoy.

D. Thorne: Well, I appreciate that the minister opposite and her ministry have done what they feel they can to try and keep us in the game of securing the federal dollars or revitalizing the deal or doing whatever, and that they intend to do so in the future.

The thrust of my questions, though, and I will repeat — this isn't a question; I'm just finishing up — is that it's the Premier of the province who was so notably silent — our leader. That's in my opinion and the opinion of a lot of people — stakeholders and parents. Apparently, from what I've been hearing, that was just not good enough — that silence. I'm hoping that it won't be repeated if and when we do see some movement by the federal government when they start sitting next month in Ottawa — by the opposition parties to try and overturn the cancellation of the plan. I hope we will see the Premier jump on board in a vocal way and represent all of us to his best ability, and right now.... Oh, sorry.

Hon. L. Reid: I am happy to put on the record that I'm extraordinarily proud of the Premier's ability to foster very effective federal-provincial relations. For any member of the New Democrats to suggest that that is simply not the case is again, frankly, wrong and perhaps misinformed — if they were not members of this House when this New Democratic opposition was in government.

It was dismal failure, a dismal failure at the federal negotiating table. The disservice that was done to this province in that ten years.... Any member who believes they can get to their feet and suggest that it was anything but a dismal failure under their administration is, frankly, wrong. We have done amazing things at that federal-provincial negotiating table as an administration. For this member to repeat otherwise — unworthy statement that she has made yet again....

D. Thorne: Well, I would not stand up and even suggest that any government is perfect and doesn't make mistakes. We all know that's not true.

You're right. I was not around until very, very recently, so I am new. What I'm working on now is a deal that only came into existence in September, when I was an MLA. It's mainly what I'm interested in, and it's what I'm worried about because of what's happened on the federal scene.

I don't think my worries are misplaced. I don't think I'm alone in my concerns. In fact, I know I'm not. I do believe that, in spite of all that the minister has done and the ministry staff, our Premier was noticeably absent. I'm sorry if it's felt to be untrue by the minister and her staff, but I do believe that. I will continue to believe it, and I think history and the public records will bear me out if anybody wants to see it. With that, I'm going to stop and let my colleague....

[1705]

R. Austin: I would like to start by asking a few questions. The minister referred earlier on to the work of Clyde Hertzman, and as the minister is probably aware, I represent a region and a district that has very high needs and is identified as having great vulnerabilities for children under the age of six.

The minister mentioned earlier on that there are 87 communities identified around the province that will have special priorities of her ministry with regards to looking after children from zero to six. Can I ask whether there are communities in my riding that are included on that list?

Hon. L. Reid: Rather than miss any of the communities in your riding, tell me the ones that you're particularly interested in, and I will tell you if they're on the list. How would that be?

R. Austin: Well, Terrace is broken up. So I'm interested in Thornhill, Terrace centre, Terrace Horseshoe, Kitimat. I take it that none of the first nations communities have been, underneath this.... At least the first nations communities that are not within the Terrace school district.... So those three, anyway.

Hon. L. Reid: You're referencing Coast Mountains school district?

R. Austin: Correct.

Hon. L. Reid: Correct. So the Hazeltons and Terrace Thornhill are both on the list. Is there another school district that your riding encompasses?

R. Austin: No, minister. But what about the Terrace Horseshoe area and the Terrace centre area — city centre.

Hon. L. Reid: If they're the same school district, they're not reflected on this list. But I'm more than happy to have you come and meet with me directly, and if there's a different referral pattern, a different residency pattern, certainly we have been, I think, very accommodating in terms of how we approach the data. It's not cleanly school district data. Oftentimes it's individuals who reside in particular communities that are bused in as well, and we should know that. If you can bring some particular insight to the discussion, I'm more than happy to receive it.

R. Austin: So am I to understand that when a community is designated as having children with a large number of vulnerabilities, or a higher percentage of vulnerabilities, that it's the entire community and not broken down into the actual regions that the EDI system uses?

Hon. L. Reid: The reality of this particular list is that it's very rough. The detailed information is contained in the early childhood development atlas, and that material is now available on line as well on the HELP website. I don't know if that's the material you're holding.

But there are certainly opportunities for us to have a more detailed discussion about that particular level of detail. It's simply not possible to take the entire province and put it on a single map. We have taken and broken it down to a particular cluster of nine houses in a particular aboriginal community, as one example. It just doesn't lend itself to a single sheet.

Consider this the rough list. If there are ways for us to take a look at this and reconcile it to the more detailed information, we certainly will, and I will happily meet with you to discuss that.

R. Austin: Once a community is on that list, how will it benefit?

[1710]

Hon. L. Reid: The opportunity and the expertise that I believe Dr. Hertzman has brought to this area was in taking the early childhood development indicator work, which looks at those four quadrants, looks at cognition and how that vulnerability works.... Our challenge — and I shared this with your colleague earlier — is to ultimately lift graduation rates.

What is it we want to understand by what it is to be the educated citizen, if you will, and how do we get there? What do receptivity and responsiveness look like in a three-year-old, a four-year-old and a five-year-old? Indeed, can we take the five-year-old data and match that to the FSA — the foundations skills assessment — in grades four, seven and ten and understand what kinds of gaps we may need to address when they are preschool youngsters so that they excel at grades four, seven and ten? That is why I think we have some good linkages underway today with the Ministry of Education in terms of understanding what early learnings — plural — are required that children can then demonstrate in the school system at four, seven and ten.

It may be a whole array of different opportunities we attempt to put in place. For some of these children it may be a health opportunity that's required, which was an earlier discussion in terms of how we get a cross-government integrated strategy. It may be that some of this is health-related, so the Minister of Health and I would have some more-detailed discussions about how we support that aspect of this delivery.

It may be that some of it's an early learning piece, and we'd have more-detailed discussions with the Min-

istry of Education. Maybe some of it is a parenting piece, and maybe for some of it the Ministry of Children and Family Development would in fact strengthen some of the parenting programs we have in that area. It may be that it's teenage pregnancy, as an example, and we would be guided by the work of Dr. Perry Kendall, as the public health officer, in terms of creating new pregnancy outreach programs.

The response isn't going to be a one-size-fits-all, because the need is absolutely not one-size-fits-all. The sophistication in the early childhood development atlas allows us to respond individually to community need. What that need looks like... We're going to be guided by ongoing discussions that we have with Dr. Clyde Hertzman and the human early learning partnership team.

It's now a consortium of four universities, and we have researchers on the ground across British Columbia. Oftentimes they are invited in by the aboriginal leadership, by the school leadership, by the community leadership and by the school district or by the city council leadership to say: "This is a particular area of vulnerability. We don't understand what the best response would be." They receive that information, they write to one of the ministries, and they ask for some type of support or programming to be brought to bear.

There's a whole array of possible responses. We're attempting to respond as favourably as we can to the ones we've received to date, and we're doing that. Some of this work is around the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder question for school districts. You will know that recently we put in place the \$10 million fund at the foundation to have an application process so that districts and communities and agencies can apply for particular funding to respond to fetal alcohol, as one example. In terms of your question, the program may be different because the need may well be different.

R. Austin: If a proposal comes across the minister's desk from a community that has been identified as having very high rates of vulnerable children, will it get priority if it is on that list — as opposed to, say, another part of the province which doesn't have such high vulnerabilities?

Hon. L. Reid: The answer to the question is yes, and I'll give you a really good example: the recent RFP process that went forward for capital construction for child care spaces. We crafted a process where if you were a vulnerable community, if you were reflected on this list of 87, you were indeed eligible for 90 percent of funding to assist in the creation of a child care centre. Heightened vulnerability sometimes means less ability to have the opportunity to craft 50 percent of the dollars that some communities are able to raise or to bring forward or to glean or create the stream for that level of funding. Indeed, they had a greater opportunity by virtue of being on this list than by not being on this list — i.e., they got access to 90 percent of the funding required as opposed to 50 percent of the funding required.

We are prepared to receive and listen and learn from anyone who wishes to give us guidance as to how best to meet this need as we go forward. We will put in place and track and monitor and evaluate any approach we take. There's no point in taking the best evidence and the best research of the day if you're not going to listen to it. Clyde is going to take what it is we do and monitor the result, the product, the effect of that as we go forward.

[1715]

I'm trusting that we will indeed make better-informed policy decisions that will in fact see children born full weight, full term in British Columbia — better able to handle the responsibilities of learning as they reach kindergarten, better able to transition from primary to intermediate, better able to transition from elementary to secondary. All of those pieces are about building a continuum of learning that makes sense. If there are ways we can assist you to do that in your riding, please, come meet with me.

R. Austin: One of the difficulties we have in the north — and I'm sure you've heard this as you've made your travels around — is that it is very hard to find trained early childhood educators, particularly in the Terrace area. One of the challenges of this is that when somebody is sick — and obviously people who are working with young children tend to get sick because they're in the proximity of that — it's very difficult for them to even call in sick, because there's no one to replace them.

Currently in our area a qualified ECE worker is, at the top end of the scale, making \$15 or \$16. That's at the very top end. Most are working for, you know, \$12 to \$14 an hour. I'm wondering if the minister has any plans to try and help to increase training in our region. And yeah, that's basically it.

Hon. L. Reid: The answer to the question, generally, is yes. Our challenge, and again we canvassed this earlier with your colleague, is to attempt to regionalize service. The likelihood of someone travelling to the lower mainland to take advanced training in early childhood education, given the cost of travel and the cost of accommodation, is slim. Our challenge is to do outreach better in terms of providing good beginnings training, early toddler infant training in areas where people can actually access the training and not have additional travel costs and accommodation costs. No question.

We've done things around professional development in terms of taking that training around the province. We have student bursaries in place, and I can give you an example. In 2005-2006, B.C. awarded \$50,000 for student bursaries. This was for the infant development and supported child development certificate and diploma program at the University of B.C. Bursaries are awarded to eligible students, with preference for people in underrepresented minorities, such as aboriginal students and Aboriginal IDP consultants enrolled in home visiting and family-centred care courses. In 2005-

2006, B.C. awarded almost \$70,000 for early childhood education bursaries for students enrolled in basic early childhood education programs.

Certainly, the will and the dollars are there. Our challenge is to ensure that we actually put programming closer to where people live, because it's not just a challenge for travel and accommodation, it's a challenge for who cares for their children while they're attempting to take this training.

I think you will find that there's a lot more versatility than there has been in the past. Lots of programming is offered in the evenings now. Lots of course work is offered, as an example, one weekend a month as opposed to three days, where people simply cannot leave their centres and cannot find someone to do coverage for them.

We don't have an effective locum system in early childhood education. We, frankly, have just grappled with and been successful around a locum system for physicians, so there's work in place to ensure that we find ways to cover off individuals, because peer support is just as important for early childhood educators as it is for any other profession.

So there is a whole array of irons in the fire, if you will, and all of them, frankly, are linked.

R. Austin: The minister mentioned earlier about working across ministries to try and build on a whole array of support services for children zero to six. Northwest Community College, which is in my riding, has campuses, as you know, right across several communities from Prince Rupert all the way to Houston. Do you coordinate plans when you recognize that an area is lacking early childhood educators? Do you then have a plan with the ministry of post-secondary education to put dollars in to create new programs within a college that has such a broad mandate across the northwest?

Hon. L. Reid: The question is a good one. I can tell you we have grappled with it and, I think, found some extraordinary successes across the system. I'll give you the example of behavioral intervention for children with autism. We, in fact, have crafted a behavioral intervention program that we've worked on very closely with the Minister of Advanced Education and his ministry officials in terms of how we deliver that through the college system and, hopefully, through BCcampus on line.

[1720]

If your community college has a particular interest, come see me, because there are all kinds of ways to ensure that that programming becomes more available and more accessible to all the regions of this province. BCcampus on line is a fabulous tool for us, but direct college instruction is also very, very useful for us, and there are often ways we can work together to more effectively partner as we go forward.

R. Austin: I would like to just come back for a minute to the child care deal that may or may not go

ahead. If — worst-case scenario — the Conservatives do stick with their plan to send everybody a hundred dollars a month rather than put the money forward in a deal that both ministers signed here...? What is the minister's plan for replacing the \$456 million if it doesn't appear?

Hon. L. Reid: The member opposite is quite aware that the people of Canada have indeed elected a different government. Our challenge is to take the issue forward. We are at the juncture where, frankly, it's premature for us to speculate. We are not going to determine the next 12 months based on the single meeting we've had with Minister Finley in Ottawa.

Again, I shared with your colleague earlier that we believe there are two important signals yet to come: the federal budget in about two and a half weeks' time and the throne speech. We will have two very clear signals, I believe, in the next three to four weeks, and then we will continue to have some dialogue and some discussion.

Let me say this. The opportunity we have to demonstrate to Minister Finley when she comes to British Columbia — and I trust that is going to be during the month of June — is before us. We have a great opportunity to demonstrate, to show, to tour what I believe to be extraordinary child care programs in British Columbia. We're going to take every opportunity to advance the notion that this is the quality that we as British Columbians have experienced and will continue to advocate for.

R. Austin: Well, I hope the minister is successful in changing the new Prime Minister's mind on this one. You know, it is a minority government. They have to recognize that. Certainly, most British Columbians — I'm sure the ones you speak to, just as the ones we speak to — did not vote in favour of the Conservative child care plan. They certainly voted in favour, right across the board, for the original plan that was put forward by the federal Liberal government. I hope that you'll continue to fight for that.

At this point I'm going to go back to my colleague. I want to thank the minister for answering these questions, and I will take the opportunity to come and speak to her about some more direct issues with regards to some of the issues in Terrace and Kitimat.

D. Thorne: I just have some general questions now on the budget. During the last estimates the minister indicated that the government spent \$32 million on the child care funding program, the operating funding, child care program subsidies and the supported child development pieces. At that time in November the government had budgeted to spend \$55 million of the \$92 million available.

[1725]

The minister stated that the next round of announcements would be guided by the consultations that have not been released. Can the minister tell me what happened to the money? How much was spent last year? How much was federal, and how much were provincial dollars?

Hon. L. Reid: The member will know that we're not yet at fiscal year-end in terms of last year. Preliminary, unaudited statements don't give us the actuals, but I can certainly tell you where we're headed. In terms of child care and supported child development, for the '06-07 budget \$387.7 million is the expenditure.

I wasn't clear from the member's question if she's interested in a more detailed breakdown. We can certainly provide that in terms of the provincial share of that \$199.8 million — the 2003 ELCC framework, \$40.5 million; the 2005 ELCC bilateral agreement, \$85.6 million — if that might be sufficient information.

D. Thorne: Based on this year's budget, the \$55 million was not all spent. In November, as I just stated before, the government had spent \$32 million — this is just for child care. The remaining \$23 million was supposed to be spent according to consultations that have not finished, have not been released. If you look at this year's budget, it shows that \$62 million was rolled over into this fiscal year. I think, probably, those are the figures that I was hoping to have confirmed or clarified.

I'm also wondering why \$62 million was deferred from '05-06, why so much money was left unspent, and if it was all federal dollars — the \$62 million that's been rolled over in the new budget.

Hon. L. Reid: Just to revisit a point earlier, the member is correct, and the point I made earlier is correct. It was not possible to get that level of funding into the field.

[1730]

The member will know that the dollar was received after the deal was signed. The dollar was not available to us for expenditure after the deal was signed, which was September 30, six months into the fiscal year. Given the policy that was required — the plan, the program and the announcements that were required — there was a deferral. That dollar will be reflected in the spending that is yet to come, but receiving the dollar halfway through the fiscal year creates a set of challenges that one does not have if one receives the dollar at the beginning of a fiscal year — if that assists.

D. Thorne: I'm assuming that it's all federal dollars. That does explain why so much was rolled over.

Now moving on to this year, B.C. is set to receive \$85 million in federal funding under the ELCC this year. How much of this money has been budgeted for this fiscal year? As well as the \$62 million, I'm assuming.

Hon. L. Reid: The answer to the question: for this coming year, \$147.4 million has been budgeted, which is the \$62 million plus the \$85.6 million.

D. Thorne: What are the plans? What will this money be spent on? Do we know that?

Hon. L. Reid: The member is correct. We are confirming receipt of \$85.6 million in year two from the

2005 ELCC agreement, and our current early learning and child care programs remain in place, including the enhancements we made to subsidy, capital, operating funding, supported child development and CRRs.

D. Thorne: This is a question that I asked in the fall, and I'm going to ask it again: I'd like to have a breakdown of how the money is being spent, broken down into the five program areas that she just mentioned: supported child development, child care operating fund, child care capital fund, child care resource and referral, and child care subsidies. I'd like it broken down into the provincial dollars and the federal dollars for this year, please.

Hon. L. Reid: This is the federal, and we are going to procure for you the provincial piece. The child care subsidy, '06-07, \$18 million; child care operating, \$14.7 million; supported child development, \$21.1 million; child care capital, \$12 million; child care resource and referral, \$5.5 million.

[1735]

D. Thorne: I can't add it up now, because I'm talking, but I'm assuming that's \$147 million for the federal portion — is that correct? — that you just called out.

Hon. L. Reid: We have, and I apologize. We have other initiatives yet to be determined for \$76.1 million. That then gives us a total of \$147.4 million. That dollar is the federal dollar.

D. Thorne: Can the minister tell me if there are any federal dollars left over from the 2003 or 2004 federal child care agreement?

Hon. L. Reid: In fact, we've put the answer on the record for you earlier. We indeed have expended an excess of both of those previous agreements. We will certainly locate the note and put the exact dollar value on the record again, if you desire.

D. Thorne: The 2006-2007 service plan shows an increase of \$112 million to the "Early childhood development, child care and supports to children with special needs" budget line. Where did this money come from? How much of the \$112 million is federal and how much is provincial?

Hon. L. Reid: Of the amount that the member opposite is referencing: \$7 million additional funding for children and youth with special needs to add to the \$3 million increase announced last year for '06-07, so \$10 million is provincial, and the remainder is federal.

A. Dix: I just wanted to say that I think we're reaching the moment that the Chair will declare a recess for the dinner break.

[1740]

You know that there are, of course, deep disagreements between ourselves and the government with

respect to child care, but I think one of the things that we as British Columbians all have to do is work together to get the federal government to live up to its commitments to British Columbia child care — something that hasn't happened.

One of the things I'd like to encourage the minister, and suggest to the minister, is to invite her to my constituency. As she knows, there's extraordinary work taking place at Collingwood Neighbourhood House with my constituents and child care. The programs are fantastic. The waiting lists are also extraordinary there, with as many as 1,500 children on waiting lists for programs at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, which are extraordinary programs.

I had the privilege last week of going to Waterside Daycare in the downtown east side. The minister will know, if she's visited, the extraordinary work being done by child care workers, and they simply need more support. I think people in the child care community have fought for a generation for a national day care plan. We somehow, as a province, given the enormous needs that we face, need to find a way to get there, to not be discouraged.

The current government which abandoned its signed commitments to British Columbians — the federal government — is a minority government. So I don't give up hope.

Hon. Chair, when you're in Vancouver-Kingsway, you're in a strange situation. We had a government minister, and then the government was defeated, and we still have a government minister. It's the same guy. Mr. Emerson campaigned in every home in our community for that child care plan that he signed with the province of British Columbia. I think Vancouver-Kingsway is the place where we need to hold him to that — and to the federal government for every dollar they promised British Columbians.

With that, hon. Chair, because I know that it is time for a recess, I will leave it to you to do the appropriate thing, because it's not time to report progress. We'll come back in a little while.

The Chair: Committee A will recess until 6:45 p.m.

The committee recessed from 5:42 p.m. to 6:49 p.m.

[B. Lekstrom in the chair.]

On Vote 19 (*continued*).

Hon. L. Reid: I simply wanted to make a comment in terms of a remark that was made by the member for Vancouver-Kingsway prior to the break. It was an interesting comment, because I think he chose to suggest that child care would be a wedge issue for the New Democratic Party.

It seems to me that for him to declare publicly he would disagree fundamentally with the direction that this government has taken around the child care file is just bizarre. His critic earlier said that, indeed, this is about advancing the very best opportunities we can for

British Columbia children. I accepted her at face value when she said that. I think that's a reasonable comment to put on the record.

[1850]

For her colleague to somehow suggest that he would disagree with that and somehow suggest that this is an opportunity to take a fundamentally different tack — enlightening, but counterproductive to the exercise. Either the members opposite were being forthright in their earlier deliberations — when they indicated they believed in advancing opportunities that were in the best interests of British Columbia children and families — or not. I await my critic's comment.

D. Thorne: I can't speak for my colleague, because we didn't discuss what he was going to say, but I suspect that what he meant was that it was maybe not.... How do I say this? It's not so much the direction — we're all headed in the same direction, the best for the children of British Columbia — but perhaps the way we're getting there would be different if the NDP was in government. Perhaps our fundamental philosophy is not the same. I suspect that's what he meant. He will be returning, I'm sure, before too long, and perhaps the minister could rephrase the question to him, if that's okay. But I suspect that's what he meant.

I just have one more question on the budget section that I didn't get finished beforehand. I'd like to ask it and then move into a couple of other areas. We only have — well, there he is — about 45 minutes left, so I was hoping.... Obviously, I'm going to have to speed up here, because we're running out of time with estimates. I'll just move along, and perhaps when I'm finished, you can....

I'm wondering about any other ministries that might be receiving federal child care money over the next year or so. Which ministries might be receiving federal dollars besides MCFD?

Hon. L. Reid: The child care dollar today is in the budget for the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and there are no decisions taken otherwise.

D. Thorne: Can the minister tell me the total number of child care spaces that are currently in existence in British Columbia?

Hon. L. Reid: Funded spaces today: 77,103. That certainly would not be all the spaces in British Columbia, because there are many providers that have spaces that are not part of this contingent.

[1855]

D. Thorne: So those are 77,103 subsidized spaces, and we don't have figures on all the other spaces that aren't subsidized. Okay.

Can the minister please tell me if she has any targets for the number of licensed spaces over the next year and if she also has target numbers to increase those spaces and increase the number of families that receive a child care subsidy? What are the plans that

will fund more child care spaces and more families with subsidies on provincial funding alone? Where will the funding come from?

Hon. L. Reid: The member will recall from our discussions earlier this evening that our last two announceables around capital saw somewhere in the neighbourhood of 850 spaces. It would be an interesting discussion in terms of what the capacity is in the sector to deliver. You will know, having visited numerous centres I am sure, that the average centre is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 spaces. So in terms of creating new capital space, that is an incredible number of individual construction projects that are operational around the province at any one time, in that they're not typically large centres.

I read off the list to you prior to the break — a centre of 20 spaces, ten spaces, 15 spaces. So that is oftentimes 20, 30 or 40 separate and individual construction projects. In terms of the challenge for this fiscal, certainly I think 850 spaces is not a bad reach in terms of the six months that we've had under this administration — almost nine months now, but probably six months since we had the first announceable.

Could we, in fact, get to 1,000 spaces on an annual basis? I would hope so. Some of the challenges around that would be the construction sector, because we know that we are in a booming economy at the present time in terms of the availability of those who would come to build those spaces — an equal challenge for us. We have dollars available that we trust we can put into the field, but the actual creation of those spaces will be dependent on a variety of factors, not the least of which will be the availability of those in the construction trades, construction industry, to come to the table and build those spaces with us. That will be an enormous challenge.

You will know that there's a whole array of other construction projects underway in British Columbia today. We will be competing with that sector, that delivery model, as we go forward. But 850, I think, is the first six or seven months of this mandate. If we got to 1,000 spaces in the next two or three months — an additional 1,000 — I would be absolutely delighted, but I know that we have external forces and competing challenges around construction as we go forward.

D. Thorne: I'm assuming that if we do move ahead with co-location and the hub model in existing buildings — I mean particularly schools or underutilized schools or other municipal or provincial buildings — we won't have to worry about construction, at least outside construction, other than inside. So we should be able to fund....

I'm wondering what the target would be if we move ahead with the fund model, the hub model. Or if you've gotten to that point yet, I'm wondering in the years to come, if the agreement is, in fact, dead.... How we are going to fund new spaces after next year? Can we do that with provincial funding? Will the dollars be there? Will we be able to get the dollars? I mean, do you have plans for that?

Hon. L. Reid: I appreciate her confidence that it may be easier, in fact, to have individuals who would come forward to renovate as opposed to a new build. The reality is oftentimes that they're the same contractors. They're the same providers. We trust that we'll be able to move forward on the creation of those spaces, having the construction trades readily available to us. The reality is that oftentimes a renovation project is a small enough project that it doesn't attract the same level of interest as a new build — again, a different challenge, but a valid, actual challenge that we will have before us.

In terms of the second part of your question, we canvassed it a couple of hours before the break earlier. We're not going to determine what happens until we get some additional signals in terms of the throne speech and the federal budget that will come down in the next two or three weeks.

[1900]

D. Thorne: I'm going to move now into some questions about child care subsidies. From what I understand, there have been some changes to the subsidy program. One of the changes was an increase to the income exemption. I think it is now \$38,000 for parents of under sixes in regulated child care settings. Is this correct? Did families also see their individual subsidies increase? And if so, by how much?

Hon. L. Reid: In terms of your general question, the '04-05 baseline was 21,704 children — the number of children whose families receive a child care subsidy. The target in '05-06 is 22,000, so we have met or exceeded our target. In terms of the second part of your question, we can give you some examples of the lifts that have happened for individual children.

It depends on a number of different factors, not the least of which is age, and whether or not there is a special need, the type of placement they're in, etc. But there are a bunch of different directions that drive a particular dollar value at the end of the day.

While I have the opportunity.... We've attempted to simplify the application process for subsidy because it was fairly cumbersome and fairly complex. I'm pleased to say that we're getting closer and closer approximations of what we would like to see, which is a more simplified process so that families find it less onerous to enter into that discussion with CRR, child care resource and referral, or someone at their agency or at their child care provider who would assist them with the process.

Our challenge is to make it easier, hopefully, as we go forward. You made the comment about the lift. That is correct in terms of the income threshold. It lifted from \$21,000 to \$38,000. That piece, I think, we've covered off.

I can certainly give you some specific examples by care type. Group care, zero to 18 months of age. In 2000-2001 the maximum rate was \$585. In January '05 it lifted to \$618 monthly rate and October of 2005 it's at \$750. There are probably eight or 15 categories here, so I will just give you one or two more.

Let's give group care, 36 to 72 months. In 2000 it was \$368. It lifted to \$394, and it is now at \$550.

Family child care, 36 months — licensed family, 19 to 36 months: \$404 in 2000, \$469 in 2005 and \$600 in October of 2005. Three examples. If you wish more, I can certainly enter more into the record.

D. Thorne: So the subsidy program has been moved into MCFD, and according to your website, you're developing a new service delivery model which will include a customer service centre. I'm assuming that this is a new service, that it didn't exist before. I'd like just a yes or a no on that. And I'm wondering if subsidy recipients will be affected by this, if it is a change.

Hon. L. Reid: The member will know, because we canvassed some of these vulnerabilities before the break, that our challenge is to reach families which are difficult to access. So if there are language issues, vulnerability issues.... The opportunity for this centre is to do some outreach and have individuals who will assist them directly in the process, provide materials and provide these applications in the languages they understand.

Our challenge is to ensure that the children who are most vulnerable in this province have the opportunity to participate in the most enriched settings that we can possibly provide. Your question is: is there going to be an impact on families? Yes, and the impacts will be very positive.

[1905]

D. Thorne: So it'll affect them in a good way is the answer. Okay.

Now, talking about subsidies again, talking about the child care allowance — the \$1,200 a year. The federal government has announced that the allowance is taxable. What is this government's plan for taxation around the allowance? How will B.C. tax families who receive the allowance?

Hon. L. Reid: I have taken the opportunity to begin the discussion with our Finance Minister and officials. There has been no decision taken.

D. Thorne: That's probably going to be the answer to my next question as well. I'm wondering how the child care allowance will affect families who are currently receiving child care subsidies. Will the child care allowance affect their eligibility for assistance? That's probably something that the ministry can decide.

Hon. L. Reid: The question is premature, because the reality is we are still advocating fiercely for what we would wish for British Columbia families. We will do our best to have as much information and as many options available to British Columbia families as more information becomes available to us.

Again, the two signals we're looking to next are the federal throne speech on April 4, followed by the fed-

eral budget, the date of which has not yet been publicized.

D. Thorne: I asked those questions for two reasons, and I understand that they may be premature. So I will rephrase my question, and I'll ask the minister: if it isn't her ministry's decision to make and if it is premature, can she at least tell me if she is in support of allowing low-income families to keep the child care allowance? Should it happen that we get the child care allowance, that it goes ahead on July 1, is the minister and the ministry in support of allowing low-income families to keep the child care allowance without it affecting their access and eligibility to income assistance and to the child care subsidy? That should be a yes or a no answer, I think.

Hon. L. Reid: There are some complexities around this issue that are yet to be determined, as I indicated in my previous answer. But the member will also know that there are countless thousands of British Columbians today under our administration who pay absolutely no income tax. We're proud of that decision. We're proud of that reality for those families. We don't intend to make changes that would affect those families negatively.

D. Thorne: Then I think what the minister has said is that she will do her very best to ensure that the government does not try to claw back subsidy rates from families receiving income assistance or deny access to other benefits, if and when this \$1,200 a year does happen and the child care deal is, in fact, dead.

I'm going to move on to my next section now, if I may. This is more of a federal issue around the child care plan again. Since the federal government announced it would no longer honour the plan, many concerned parents, communities and even entire city councils, as well as stakeholders, have been signing petitions and passing motions calling on the federal and provincial governments to ensure that funding is available.

There are a number of petitions going around. For example, a group called Code Blue for Canada has started a Canada-wide campaign. The group brings together national, provincial and territorial child care organizations, women's and social justice groups, and Canadians from all walks of life. This group's open letter to the federal government has been supported so far by 19,282 people.

Can the minister tell me if she has signed this open letter or any other petition calling on the federal government to honour the commitment to a national child care program?

Hon. L. Reid: She began her discussion with a reference to tax policy. She will know or should know that tax policy is the domain of the Minister of Finance and ministry officials in any province in Canada. I don't know if she put her questions to the Minister of Finance during her estimates, but that would have been the opportunity.

[1910]

D. Thorne: I think you're referring back to my question about taxes and clawing back taxes and income assistance and subsidies from before. Thank you for that.

But my last question is around the petitions and the lobbying that are going on, by people from across Canada to try and get the federal government to reconsider what I feel is a premature decision to cancel the child care agreement after 2007. So I asked if the minister has signed any petitions or open letters calling on the federal government to honour the commitment they have made in British Columbia to a national child care program.

Hon. L. Reid: It may be an opportunity for private members to engage, in terms of crafting petitions, etc. But the executive council has the opportunity to meet directly with the federal minister. That is the avenue we will pursue.

D. Thorne: I think that was more of a personal question that I was asking the minister. I was hoping she would answer yes or no, but I'm assuming that the answer was no, she has not. I'm now asking her if she would consider committing to signing an open letter from Code Blue or to signing a similar petition, so that we can at least have B.C. on record, the Minister for Childcare on record, as supporting the child care agreement and all the people fighting to save it.

Hon. L. Reid: The answer is exactly the same. That may be an opportunity for private members, but for members of executive council, who have the opportunity to meet directly with their federal counterparts, that is the avenue they will continue to pursue.

D. Thorne: Just to finish with that, I agree that that's obviously the way that kind of work is done with the executive councils, but I don't think that precludes individuals from signing statements. That's just a personal opinion that I have, however.

My next question is: how will this government work with cities to ensure that child care programs and spaces are available and affordable for families and that care is of high quality?

Hon. L. Reid: I had great opportunity — and great enjoyment, frankly — at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities conference this past September, to meet with a variety of mayors and councils from every corner of this province who had a real interest in partnering with the province in terms of providing child care spaces and opportunities for their constituents. There are some great opportunities. There are some great ways that municipalities can engage more effectively with child care providers in their areas.

I'll use the example of Richmond, which I'm most familiar with in terms of representing the riding of Richmond East. The city council in Richmond is very keen to work collaboratively with anyone who would

wish to build child care space. They have a whole array of different choices in the child care basket in Richmond, offered by a whole array of different child care providers — Richmond society of child care centres. There's a whole array of providers, where the city has come onside and provided the land.

A number of different partners, oftentimes the province, have provided the actual dollars for the construction of the building, and a non-profit society has operated the facility. There are six or seven examples of that within the city of Richmond, and there are many countless examples of that across British Columbia, where municipalities and regional districts have come onside to provide the land upon which child care facilities and centres are constructed. There are all kinds of opportunities for ongoing dialogue and for durable relationship-building that's going to matter, at the end of the day.

This is how we began the dialogue earlier, hon. member. We share the same child. It's not the provincial child. It's the city, province, federal government coming together to understand that those children reside in communities and they reside in their families. Collectively, we come to some understanding of how we best support them where they live. There are some glorious examples of municipalities across the province doing exactly that.

D. Thorne: Yes, I certainly agree with what you've said. It is important, though, to note for the public that council after council is now passing motions to send to the federal government, and everyone is signing, exactly as I stated a few minutes ago. I think that it behooves all of us to consider supporting our city councils further by supporting their motions as best we can.

[1915]

I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the other programs that are being funded, in particular Success by 6. Success by 6 is, as we all know, a unique partnership with the United Way, the government, MCFD, credit unions and communities. Can the minister tell me: is Success by 6 receiving funding in the next budget? And how much is this funding for, broken up into the six regions?

Hon. L. Reid: The member will know that this was a project that was undertaken in terms of building capacity across British Columbia. The partnerships that were formed in terms of the intersectoral coalitions were dramatically useful partnerships in terms of taking what was underway in the lower mainland of British Columbia — the United Way approach to how to deliver programming — and attempting to reach that more broadly into the northern reaches of the province, the interior and the north Island. That has been successful.

Of the \$10 million that was put on the table, in excess of \$9 million is in the field today — which gives me great joy, I can tell you, because the money needs to be mobilizing resources and opportunities for babies and families in communities. That piece of work is well

underway. It was an investment that was taken. It is not a line item in the budget. It was done to mobilize communities and to create capacity. We believe we are well down that road.

Today we are reaping the benefit of, frankly, community groups and agencies, which before were not part of the dialogue around how important it was to support family. There are a bunch of non-traditional partners at those intersectoral tables in many, many communities across British Columbia. We welcome that; we applaud; we celebrate that. That is the way the work will continue and will be done.

It's not work that any one group can do alone. Frankly, if it were, any jurisdiction in Canada would be further ahead than we are. The notion of bringing together credit unions, Credit Union Central, the United Way.... There's a whole array of partners that have done the work in terms of mobilizing community at the local level. That work has been successful. We're proud of it.

D. Thorne: I certainly agree that the work has been successful. I actually sat on the council of partners before I was elected as an MLA. But I'm not clear if the minister said that there wasn't any ongoing funding. I did hear that it's not a line item. Does that mean that the initial funding was sort of it for Success by 6 and that they're basically on their own now when that money is gone?

Hon. L. Reid: I believe that the approximately \$9 million that's in the field will take some continuing direction and monitoring. I believe there are sufficient dollars to do that for the remainder of this year. If there's further discussion, I know they will come forward, and we will continue to have further discussion.

Our challenge, when those dollars were put on the table, was to mobilize community. We believe that has been accomplished in great numbers across British Columbia. We are, frankly, satisfied with the result. We're very pleased with the result we've achieved.

[1920]

We will certainly continue to look at how best to go forward. We will continue to be informed by the work of Dr. Clyde Hertzman on the vulnerability quotients and the gradient work. Whether or not it turns out that there are other ways to proceed and enhance this work, we will fold all of that into the discussion. There are sufficient dollars in place today, I believe, to continue the work they're currently doing.

D. Thorne: Has the council of partners and United Way been informed that they're not in the budget for this year?

Hon. L. Reid: I don't think this is any different than what you indicated or received from your conversations yesterday. Certainly, I can put on the table some of the accomplishments in terms of where they've gone: 40 credit unions with 325 branches, 1.36 million members; 17 United Ways; the number of communities reached in British Columbia, 203; the number of cross-

sectoral tables initiated by or now connected to Success by 6, 87; funds raised and grants leveraged, \$2.7 million; in-kind contributions to Success by 6, valued at \$1.2 million. Total funds invested — this is a bit earlier, so this shows almost \$9 million. Success by 6 projects and activities now underway: 150, with 30 more beginning on the first of April.

The government contribution was not the only funding stream available to the Success by 6 partnership, because it's a partnership. The credit unions are fundraising. The central credit union movement is fundraising. There are certainly funds and grants leveraged — an additional \$2.7 million — that will support them as they go forward as well. We're going to be part of some ongoing discussions, I know.

D. Thorne: Thank you for that answer, minister. I just wanted to ask a couple of questions about the EDI, the instrument. Exactly how is the ministry using the HELP database to determine and develop its performance measurement activities? I should just add, to be clear: am I correct that the HELP database is being used as part of the performance measure?

Hon. L. Reid: The performance plan strategic measure. We canvassed this a little bit earlier when we talked about creating a benchmark and why it was important to do that.

There are approximately 44,000 children who've now been canvassed using the early development indicator in British Columbia, and that was during the month of February. Kindergarten teachers have a day of their time bought by some of the funding provided by government, so indeed, they can evaluate the learning on four quadrants of learning, if you will, on every single child in their classroom across British Columbia.

Then that data is carried forward, and that re-evaluation happens on the three-year cycle. That data is married with a bunch of other data sets we have across British Columbia and, hopefully, married with the foundation skills assessment of grades four, seven and ten, so we know whether or not the investments we took in the preschool years actually reflected positively on how they did when they were eight years of age, 12 years of age and 16 years of age. That information is vitally important to the school system as we go forward.

I don't know if the member opposite has had the opportunity to be part of the work that's been ongoing, but the categories are very clear in terms of why we measure what we measure. This is data and methodology that's been normed on a Canadian population. That, in itself, is wondrous — that we actually have the ability to do that. Certainly, to have someone of Dr. Clyde Hertzman's skills in our province, when I know he's been asked to move to many jurisdictions on the globe — for him to continue to provide that and give us that sense of feedback — is wonderful.

[1925]

You will know that the EDI looks at physical well-being, at language and cognitive skills, and certainly, it's an extensive list in terms of asking kindergarten

teachers to be involved. It looks at social and emotional development and at intellectual function, because all of those things are important. They have the ability to take that 44,000 sample size, which is an enormously large sample size of five-year-olds in British Columbia, and make some determinations in terms of how that vulnerability needs to be addressed across the province.

In terms of the value of the instrument, it's vitally important in terms of the investment we've taken. It's population health data, if you will, and its value is in its comparability in terms of the five-year-olds today, how they're functioning in the school system when they're eight, etc., etc., as they move through the process. We will continue this work every three years on a revolving cycle. Many of the districts are going around for the second time this year, and we will have some very interesting data that frankly, we had not had the opportunity to evaluate in previous years.

D. Thorne: I certainly agree with the minister, and I think she's correct when she says that it is quite an opportunity to be able to work with the health people. But I do think it's a problem when the kind of advice that we get from them is not properly incorporated into public policy.

I think that's also a concern of ECD, of early childhood educators and also of the health people, because they released the report *What the EDI Is (Not) — and Why It Is Important for British Columbia: An Open Letter to the Early Childhood Educators*. They were explicitly stating that the EDI is most certainly not a measure of the success of preschool, early childhood or child care experiences. I think there is concern that the EDI does not become a measure of success or failure of early childhood education. I think it was clear that the report was released to reassure early childhood educators that the EDI would not be used strictly as an assessment tool for screening and diagnosing individual children or for measuring success or failure of preschools or other educational-type programs.

I guess the question — to kind of wrap up the rest of my comments here — would be: how will the minister ensure that early learning and child care do not focus solely on literacy and readiness initiatives?

Hon. L. Reid: I am more than pleased to enter the debate and speak to that specific question. This is not anything other than population health data. It is not individual data, so anyone who has any concerns about whether or not it's comparing child X in kindergarten Y to the child who sits next to him needs to know that that is not the case. These are broad-ranging opportunities to look at the health of community in terms of all the influences that would come to bear on a five-year-old in their entire preschool life — not just their child care life, not just their attendance-at-a-centre life, but whether or not they were born full weight and full term, whether or not the pregnancy was a healthy pregnancy, whether or not they were well parented in the early years, whether or not there were community supports and cohesion.

All of those factors and influences are what this will measure in terms of an overall sense of population health. Community wellness, if you will — to distill that down. But it's definitely population health data. It is not individual data that measures the success of ABC preschool versus XY preschool. It is not that. If anyone is left with the impression that it is, it's absolutely not. Dr. Hertzman is very clear that this is population health data that allows us to get a sense of the vulnerability of populations of children. This is not an individual comparability issue. This is a community-by-community, neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood issue, and that is the value of this data.

Dr. Perry Kendall is the public health officer. The federal Public Health Agency is proud of the work that's underway in this province because it is about comparing broader principles and broader delivery mechanisms. It's not about identifying a particular gap in a literacy program in a particular preschool. It's about understanding all of those influences that come to bear on creating the best possible learning environment for a five-year-old — what that looks like for a five-year-old, for a four-year-old, for a three-year-old — and having the ability and the articulation to structure those environments based on that research.

[1930]

That's the big picture that we're attempting to build in British Columbia, and frankly, we're being extraordinarily successful at that piece of work. But it is not an individual assessment to look for individual children. It's much bigger, much bolder than that in terms of how we take that information and bring it to bear to identify gaps — neighbourhood by neighbourhood, community by community, city by city, if you will — not an instance that would be much tighter and much more refined than that.

I actually am impressed that the member opposite put it on the record, because this is not an opportunity for us to make those kinds of very minute comparisons. It simply isn't about that.

D. Thorne: Certainly, I'm pleased to hear that as well, because I think the health people, and Dr. Hertzman in particular, were also concerned that people would be concerned that this was happening. That's why this report was written in the first place, clearly, to early childhood educators, who might be concerned that the instrument might be perhaps misused or something in the future.

My last area of questions is general program questions around education and health. We have covered some of these before in a general way as we've had this discussion. I guess this goes back to the early learning centres, which I think is what we've been referring to as hubs, in underutilized schools. How big a part does that play in the tentative child care plan, I'll call it, at this point in time or perhaps out into the future? How big a role?

Hon. L. Reid: Just to reference the previous question in a little bit more detail. I wanted to put it on the

record just so that if she has the opportunity to share this with those who might have a concern.

In February '06 HELP launched the first edition of the B.C. Atlas of Child Development. The atlas includes colour-coded maps, demographic information, early development instrument results to demonstrate early childhood development trends in neighbourhoods and school districts across British Columbia. This groundbreaking atlas makes British Columbia the only jurisdiction in the world that has maps of early childhood development that demonstrate the relationship between vulnerability patterns and socioeconomic conditions. The colour maps depict data such as education, health, child care, welfare and justice and provide an analysis for developing strategic approaches to early childhood programming for community planners and policy-makers.

That is a clear discussion point, I believe, for the member opposite.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

In terms of the plethora of hubs in the province, I will be able to very clearly give you that answer once the inventory is complete and we know exactly how many there are. The reality is that — and I believe I canvassed this with you earlier — they've been around for well upwards of 30 years. This is not a new discussion in the province. Britannia has been in place as a neighbourhood hub for 30 years, and many of the others centres I referenced before the break are 10 and 15 years old. If the member is recalling the definition in terms of co-located services — programs that offer two or three or more services from a particular site — there are going to be many.

We are hopeful that many of the ones that don't currently offer child care will consider offering child care. We are hopeful that the utilization of public buildings that don't currently have child care will fold in child care into the delivery of that service, because that would make it a full-service neighbourhood, if you will. That's my goal.

I know it's the goal of many members across the chamber and across the province who truly believe that there has to be an array of service, that we need to continually add services to the basket because there will not be a family in British Columbia who has their needs met by any particular service. Their needs will change as their children age, and their needs will change as their children come to the discussion with, perhaps, a particular special need. Our challenge is to ensure that there is an array of choices, to respond as best we can.

D. Thorne: Can the minister clarify for me if in all cases she intends for us to be talking about early learning and child care, not just early learning, in these underutilized schools?

[1935]

Hon. L. Reid: I will recall the discussion I had prior to the break with the member opposite when I was

making the point that early learning occurs in a variety of settings. Child care occurs in a variety of settings. Early childhood development occurs in a variety of settings. So would it ever be possible to have an early learning centre adjacent to a child care centre? Yes. Would it ever be possible to have an early learning centre and a child care centre be one and the same? Yes.

D. Thorne: Well, I think what I meant by that, or what the concern is, is that child care would not be a part — that it would be more of, say, a preschool. I'm more concerned that we're reaching a full spectrum of the population in these schools. I think that's where I was going with the question, just so you don't.... I mean, I understand child care is the cornerstone of any early learning, of course.

I think I'm still a little concerned about the mix of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. For instance, I asked earlier: do other ministries have any federal dollars? Now that I'm looking at my school questions, I'm remembering the Ready, Set, Learn. My understanding of Ready, Set, Learn is that it was funded through federal dollars into the education system. Now from the answer earlier, I guess I was told that it is not.

Hon. L. Reid: The member's recall of the Ready, Set, Learn program may just need some refreshing, if you will. The dollar for that came from the early childhood development dollar because it has more of an introductory, hopeful, diagnostic aspect to it. The opportunity to bring three-year-olds into public schools was, frankly, to identify whether or not there were special needs in evidence and not to wait until they were five. If there were obviously evident issues that could be responded to as a three-year-old, we should absolutely take that opportunity to reframe the discussion to perhaps direct them to occupational therapy, physiotherapy or speech. So that was a definite decision to spend early childhood development dollar on that.

If you're suggesting that early childhood education dollar in terms of child care-early learning, that was not the fund from whence that dollar flowed. If you're still concerned about what's going to transpire around the early learning piece.... Is that your next question?

D. Thorne: I'm just finishing up, actually, but I came back to the question on the federal dollars because I thought that the Ready, Set program and some of the early literacy programs were being funded by the federal dollars. That was my understanding.

When we first came back after the dinner break, I asked if any federal dollars were going into any other ministries, and I thought that I was told no, they weren't.

Hon. L. Reid: We understood your question to be in terms of the ELCC agreements in terms of the Ministry of Education. If you were asking specifically about the ECD dollar, yes, some of that did go towards the

Ready, Set, Learn program, but that was an early childhood development focus. I think we canvassed that fairly well before the break in terms of how expansive that particular fund was. That was the year 2000, a five-year early childhood development agreement between British Columbia and the federal government.

[1940]

The first ELCC, early learning and child care, agreement was 2003. It runs through to 2008. The most current ELCC — 2005 forward. I understood you were asking about the two separate and distinct ELCC agreements to which I've given you the answer.

D. Thorne: I was just asking about federal dollars in general. I'm just trying to figure out when all the funding is going to end. My concern is what's going to happen to the programs — where we're going to make up the dollars.

I thank the minister for that. With that, I will allow my colleague from Powell River.... He has some Powell River questions he'd like to ask. I thank the minister and her staff.

Hon. L. Reid: Just before I do, I will put on the record perhaps a more detailed answer to that question, just so there isn't further confusion.

B.C. is committed to investing in early childhood development and early learning and child care services. Under the 2000 FPTECD agreement, the federal government provided British Columbia with \$289 million over five years for prenatal, early childhood, parental and community supports. Under the 2003 multi-lateral ELCC framework, the federal government provides British Columbia with \$138 million over five years to promote quality child care and to support parents in the labour force and in training. Under these agreements we are required to publish information on the allocation of federal funds for ECD and ELCC. So that work is underway.

I think that just gives some further clarification.

D. Thorne: I thank the minister for that, and I thank her and her staff. See you next year.

A. Dix: We're shifting gears here for the moment. Just to say to the Minister of Children and Family Development that we're moving to the area of child and youth mental health, which happily continues to reside in the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

I think that the Minister of Children and Family Development will be responding to questions. Our critic for mental health is here, and I know that new staff will be moving to assist the minister.

C. Wyse: I've got three very broad categories of questions. What I will attempt to do to assist you, minister, is try to give you a heads-up when I'm going to be shifting gears and see whether that will help us in the process of sharing information.

My first general area for questions is around the broad area of contracted child and youth mental health

agencies and services. So my first question is: how much funding is attached to the province's child and youth mental health plan?

[1945]

Hon. S. Hagen: Welcome to my friend from Cariboo South. I actually looked it up.

Okay, so the total funding for '05-06 is \$52.4 million, which in '06-07 goes to \$67.1 million. In '07-08 it rises to \$83.7 million.

C. Wyse: Thank you, minister. My second question is: what does this funding include?

Hon. S. Hagen: That money we talked about delivers community-based mental health programs, both direct and contracted services, but the majority are FTEs that work in the ministry. It does not include facilities like the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre or youth forensics. They are on top of the dollars that I gave you.

C. Wyse: Thank you, minister. My third question is: how much is being spent by each health authority on child and youth mental health?

Hon. S. Hagen: I can't give you those numbers because that's under the Ministry of Health.

C. Wyse: I will take the direction, obviously, from the minister.

Now, how is the province holding the health authorities accountable for implementing the child and youth mental health plan?

Hon. S. Hagen: Our ministry is actually implementing the child and youth mental health plan. We're responsible for that.

[1950]

C. Wyse: In my discussions with contracted agencies, they advised me that they did not receive any funding increases in phase one of the implementation of child and youth mental health regional plans, despite a sharp increase in caseloads making it increasingly difficult for them to undertake their work. The health system relies on these agencies to carry out the goals of the plan. Is the minister concerned about this lack of funding for the contracted agencies?

Hon. S. Hagen: As I mentioned in one of my previous answers, the focus on service delivery — and therefore on service enhancement — has been through the ministry, so we've added FTEs. I'm also told that your statement isn't entirely accurate, in that some of the agencies have received extra funding. But the way we deliver the services, mainly, is through FTEs in the ministry or through people in the ministry.

Last year we added 102 FTEs, and this coming year it's forecast that we will add 80 new FTEs. Then, of course, because of our lift for the third year, we will be

adding more FTEs that year. Also, there's a significant portion of the new funding that's targeted for the aboriginal community, and that money will be delivered through agencies.

C. Wyse: Once more, I'm appreciative of the information from the minister. Even if I'm only partially correct on the delivery, your answer, as I understood it, says that there are contracts that are entered into for providing services. The information that I have is that in some cases, there haven't been increases provided for a very long period of time, and that is where my question is meant to be directed.

Once more, the question is dealing with the lack of increase for some of these contract providers. They have not been received for years. With the pressure that is on them in delivering their services, the question still remains: what is the minister's concern, if any, on the ability of those agencies to continue delivering services?

Hon. S. Hagen: To the member for Cariboo South: I can give you some specifics, actually, that affect various areas of the province.

[1955]

I am told, again, by my staff that there have been some increases. There will be increases because of our budget lift, and I'll give you some specific examples. In Williams Lake, there will be a 0.5 FTE added and a 0.3 FTE added, one a halftime behavioural specialist and the other a support worker; in Castlegar, 0.5 being added; in Penticton, one being added; in the central Okanagan-Kelowna area, several contract amounts that will be advertised and awarded. So you can see by our budget lift. I mean, it's a very substantial budget lift.

I can tell you that every time I meet with the Canadian Mental Health Association, they hold the program in British Columbia up as the best in Canada. They've told me that. I'm not trying to discourage any more questions, obviously, but we have increased. We will be continuing to increase. I'm very supportive of the people out there who are in agencies delivering these programs, as well as supportive of the FTEs in the ministry.

C. Wyse: I may have to acknowledge that I'm a little thick here in understanding the answers, minister, so I'm going to ask you to bear with me. I'm dealing with contractors separate from the ministry and the increases within the FTEs. Again, you have used the CMHA and assured me.... In my tours throughout the province, I've been told — whether it's been Penticton, whether it's been Kamloops, whether it's been Williams Lake, and other agencies in Prince George and so on — that they have not received an increase in their contract literally for years. Some of them tell me anywhere from eight to 12 years.

It's those groups that I'm referring to and their lack of increases, and that's where my question is to the minister. Is he concerned about the cost of inflation

affecting the ability of those organizations to provide services in those areas?

Hon. S. Hagen: We are not entirely clear what your question is, so let me just try and maybe flush this out a bit. I wonder if the member is speaking about HEABC contracts or CSSEA contracts, operational costs of agencies, because what we fund as a ministry is services. Okay? So I'm not sure if you're talking about service enhancements, which we do fund, or wage costs.

[2000]

C. Wyse: My understanding, again, is that there are services provided by agencies that involve the Ministry of Children and Family Development — for example, in Prince George. They enter into contracts with your agency to provide services. The value of those contracts for providing set services has not increased for a number of years. The cost to that particular agency has increased because of their inflationary costs. They become responsible for providing the staff, the electricity, the rent of the building and items of that nature. It is particularly those types of contract services that I'm attempting to direct my questions to.

Hon. S. Hagen: Okay, I understand what you're saying. I do know that my staff does work with agencies. Rather than sort of talk about this generally, if you want — not now, but if you want — to let me know what the agency is, I'd be happy to have my staff talk to them about what their individual circumstance is.

C. Wyse: At this moment I'm going to accept the advice and the suggestion that the minister has given to me. You're extending an offer to look into exploring this issue, and that would be my question at this time.

Hon. S. Hagen: I know that my ministry staff do this all the time. If there's a problem at an agency or if they're having difficulty — whatever difficulties — my staff will sit down and work with them.

C. Wyse: If we're here to share information or to make improvements — and I believe that's really what we're trying to do here.... If I'm allowed to make a statement, I wish to advise you that in my travels around the province — in many areas and different communities — assuredly, that is a concern that is consistently being shared with me by those agencies — that the cost of inflation has caught up to the delivery of their services. I will need to seek permission to give names on behalf of those agencies, and so on. With that comment having been made and that information shared, I will leave it with you to have your ministry follow up with it.

Moving on to my next area, to attempt to assist, to ask again some questions that I've encountered around the broad area of youth and forensics and mental illness.... That involves support for those youths that have those characteristics that fall within the jurisdic-

tions of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Given that information, my first question is.... Because of the shortage of mental health staff, they can't track people with those characteristics that I've described to you — having a mental illness, being in the forensic system. The information I have from the field is that they simply lapse, and it falls out.

My question is: how does the Ministry of Children and Family Development address the follow-up with the individuals that are in their care, given the situation that I've described to you?

[2005]

Hon. S. Hagen: I'm really glad you asked that question, because I can say — virtually categorically, I think — that the level and quality of services provided to that group of individuals you described are widely regarded as the best in the country. The caseload is dropping, and I will give you the numbers, but I just want to lay out some of the services that are offered.

The Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services offers mental health services to young persons involved in the criminal justice system. It provides court-ordered assessments and treatment services under the Youth Justice Act. It provides highly specialized treatment programs, especially to youth who have committed sexual and violent offences. It's also responsible for services to youth who have been found unfit to stand trial or not criminally responsible by reason of mental disorder. Hospital services for this population are provided by the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre, which I visited about two or three weeks ago.

They have one in-patient assessment unit in Burnaby and out-patient clinics in Burnaby, Langley, Vancouver, Kelowna, Kamloops, Prince George, Nanaimo, Campbell River and Victoria. With regard to caseload and expenditures, because I think that this tells a significant success story: in '01-02 the total average caseload was 1,293. The total expenditure of that year was \$11.6 million for an average expenditure per youth of just under \$9,000. I won't bore you with all of the numbers between, but in '05-06 that caseload had dropped from 1,293 down to 918, and the expenditures had increased from \$11.6 million to \$13.06 million. So the average expenditure per youth has gone from \$8,973 in '01-02 to \$14,232 in '05-06.

C. Wyse: I'm very appreciative of the description of the services that are available. I'm very appreciative of the description of improvements that have been made in the area. But the question I was attempting to ask was the follow-up when the individuals in your care, in forensics, aren't receiving enough monitoring, so they lapse and are falling through the cracks. I'm just wondering what MCFD has in place, if anything, to deal with that situation around the people in their charge, because the issue does exist in the population at large.

Hon. S. Hagen: Some of my staff think you may be talking about the adult system. I know when I went to

the Maples, I met psychiatrists and met psychologists. They have all of these out-patient treatment centres around the province. I'm having difficulty, I think, understanding your question.

[2010]

Now, heaven only knows, in dealing with this many people, there may be the.... I don't want to use the term "the odd problem," but there may be individual circumstances that we would be happy to look at. Certainly, in the people that I've met around the province.... And as I say, the Canadian Mental Health Association makes no bones about it. They say we've got the best system in Canada for children and youth.

C. Wyse: I appreciate and take his suggestion under advisement.

The third general area takes me back to last year and some questions that I'd asked of you. I've gone back and looked over things, and there's some follow-up that I'd like to do from when we talked last on this area.

You had assured me that there existed some protocol agreements — and just briefly, for your recollection — between MCFD and health authorities covering transitions from hospitals to communities for youth. You assured me that those protocols were in place. Likewise, the youth with mental illness to adult between MCFD and each health authority: you assured me that those protocols were in place. The third area where I had your assurances was the transition of youth with mental illness between MCFD and the court system.

When I was moving around and talking with people in the field, there seemed to be less certainty about the existence of these protocols among people I was talking with. My question to you, minister, simply to assist me: would the minister have his office provide me with copies of each of those protocols as it applies to each health authority?

Hon. S. Hagen: I just want to compliment the member for Cariboo South. He's sometimes much more positive than some of his colleagues, from time to time.

Interjections.

Hon. S. Hagen: I'm just kidding.

I think that maybe what you're talking about is something called a joint policy directive, which is signed by the Deputy Ministers of Health and MCFD to assist the health authorities. I'm pleased to provide copies of those to you.

C. Wyse: From the actual estimates, your answer is: "There is a policy. The policy exists. The protocol agreements are all in place." When I look through it, I'm simply referring to the actual questions I gave you back in November, and those are the answers that are contained here. Once more, I'm simply asking the minister whether he'd have his office provide me with the

copies of the agreements that in November, I believe, I was told do exist.

Hon. S. Hagen: Yes, my office will do that.

C. Wyse: I'm very appreciative of that, because I've spent a little bit of my own time trying to track down these documents, and I'm not having success. Once more, the situation I have encountered has led me to this and, likely, one last question.

[2015]

The Vancouver Island Health Authority and MCFD, the Vancouver Island region — I'm prefacing it — has a mental health transitional protocol agreement — that's what we've been talking about — covering 17 to 21 years of age. People that I've talked with weren't aware of this particular document, though it had been written in 2003, and these are people that are in the field. It also includes reference to a joint mental health planning group that will be established in each subregion of the Island.

My question to the minister: what follow-up is in place to ensure that staff are aware of the protocols that I have referred to?

Hon. S. Hagen: There is a group called the child and youth mental health network, which has senior representatives from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Ministry of Health, the health authorities, the Ministry of Education and the regional directors, which has been established to coordinate service delivery and identify and resolve service coordination issues.

Again, there may be instances where.... I assume it was front-line workers that you were talking to, but I, sort of looking at this.... Well, there may be instances. If there are, because of your question, we'll certainly.... My staff will raise this, particularly in the Vancouver Island region, to make sure that there is knowledge about how we deliver these services.

C. Wyse: I use that as an example, and so I leave it. I don't mean to specifically narrow out or identify any one particular area. It's really meant to your last part that there will be follow-up to ensure that this does exist right throughout the whole area.

Given that, I'm going to go on to my third point and my last question. In our last conversation, we ended up.... I will quote here: "That's why I'm very focused in dealing with youth we have in the 16- to 18-year age." We were talking about this transition period of time of moving from youth to adults, when they moved from your ministry out into an area where, with mental illness, the protection may fall away as you're referring to.

So putting it in that context, in discussions I have had in my moving around, I'm advised that a youth of 18 years of age with no open file at MCFD is referred to a psychiatric unit of a local hospital and is at a major risk of falling between the cracks because the ministry, at that age, may not feel it's worthwhile opening up a file if the person is in care.

My question, having devised that scenario to you, is what assurances does an 18-year-old youth in MCFD care have of receiving necessary support should the symptoms of mental illness develop? I wish to add just one phrase to this question. We know from recent research, and you're likely already aware of this, that the sooner mental illness is diagnosed and treatment begins, the greater the chance of success for support for that particular individual. So therefore, back to you with my question.

[2020]

Hon. S. Hagen: That's a very good question, actually. What I'm told is that it's the type of happening that would be dealt with by front-line workers working between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. If the 18-year-old, for instance, was 18 years old plus one month, then it would be dealt with in the ministry. If the 18-year-old was 18 years and ten months, then it may go directly into Health, so that the person wouldn't fall between the cracks. It's not something that we legislated. I mean, it's something that is decided — front-line workers working with each other.

I have to tell you that in my travels around the province, I'm getting more and more impressed with how workers — whether they are in Health or Education or in this ministry — work together as a team. The latest place I saw that, which was really impressive — and I was telling one of your colleagues earlier tonight — was in Prince George at the family resource centre there.

I'm not going to take up your time, but when you look at service delivery like that, like that example in Prince George, that's really serving people. People know to come to one place. It might be for an inoculation for their child. It might be to get counselling. Any number of services are offered out of there. That facility was not, sort of, legislated together by a senior government. It came together by cooperation from the school district, the city council, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Ministry of Health.

I agree with you. We don't want to lose people between the cracks, but we depend on people. We depend on our front-line workers to make sure that that doesn't happen.

C. Wyse: Just a closing statement for myself. I appreciate your remarks. At the end, the scenario that I've outlined for you is what I've picked up in the field — a concern that I'm sharing with you which is mutually our responsibility here. It is only meant to make sure that your ministry is advised that that situation does exist. It is an area that is a concern in the field that people aren't getting the support and that they are falling through the cracks. I leave that with your responsibility to follow up with that.

Once more, I thank you for your time and your answers. That finishes my questions.

Hon. S. Hagen: I appreciate that. I mean, it's important for you to know — and for any of your colleagues,

because my colleagues do this.... You find out about a situation like that, don't hesitate to come and see me, because we'll check into it.

A. Dix: I wanted to follow up on an area that the minister and I canvassed last fall, and it's with respect to child protection audits. So I'll give the minister a chance.... I think we're moving areas again, and so I'll just talk for a few minutes while everyone gets into place.

[2025]

The minister said last year that a significant number of audits have been done, that in fact audits take place of all child protection offices in a four-year cycle. I wanted to ask the minister, first of all, how many audits took place in the last fiscal year, and can he give me some sense of the results of those audits?

Hon. S. Hagen: Just to give you a bit of background, the revised audit program, based on current standards, was implemented in April/May of 2004, and during that fiscal year, 48 were completed. For the '05-06 fiscal year, 46 audits have been conducted, and a further 11 audits are in the report/recommendations development stage. I can give you a breakdown per region, if you want. The audits have resulted in 148 recommendations. Of these, 34 are completed, with the remainder in progress, and the compliance rate is 79 to 80 percent.

A. Dix: It's one of the strange aspects of the ministry website that under "Accountability and Audits" and this notion of putting audits on the website to be fully accountable for everything that goes on in the ministry, the only audits that are actually posted to the website — and they continue to be posted there, presumably from a time of accountability; I don't know what the ministry is trying to say by it — are 2000, 2001 and 2002.

If you go onto the ministry website — as I did tonight just to make sure it hadn't changed — in fact, it starts at Ashcroft in 2001. It's alphabetical and ends in Williams Lake in 2002. In between there, it's 2000 and 2001 and 2002. You can click on those. It's very interesting. I think it would be very useful information for social workers, for people serving the ministry, to get a sense of how it's going, to build a sense of how the ministry is doing in terms of meetings standards and so on. I think it's actually very useful information.

In terms of the goal of openness and accountability, it's just a bit perplexing and continues to be a bit perplexing that the ministry hasn't posted such a child protection audit since 2002. Because I'm sure there's a desire to do that, can the minister tell me how that's going?

[2030]

Hon. S. Hagen: A very helpful question, actually. I'm told that the ministry moved from compliance-based audits to qualitative audits in 2002. When the

audit tool was changed, the audits were no longer posted. Is that a good reason not to do it? No.

We're certainly going to take a very serious look at this, and I'll qualify it only by saying that I'll be interested to see if Mr. Hughes deals with this in his report. But whether or not he deals with it, unless he says that we shouldn't do it, then we'll certainly take a look at sort of redoing the process that was in place prior to when it was stopped.

A. Dix: The minister committed the last time we discussed this in estimates to provide the opposition with copies of the audits. I presume that probably the same process that would be required to do that — which would require, I would guess, some freedom-of-information considerations and other things — would be involved in posting on the website. What I wanted to ask the minister is: is the ministry responding to his commitment from the last set of estimates? If he does, that might be the process by which we put these audits in a position to be posted.

I wanted to renew my request that the minister agreed to last fall, and to say that may be the way in which we come to it. I understand we ask for lots of things and that people are busy. I'm not saying that to be critical. I would like to see them, and I think it would be useful to members of the Legislature and to others. I just want to renew the request and suggest to the minister that might be the process by which we can get them website-ready so that everyone can see them.

Hon. S. Hagen: I'll commit this to you: we'll have a definitive answer to you within a month. That will give the Hughes report a chance to come out, and in the meantime, we can have discussions on specifically what you want.

I don't disagree. I think the public would be interested in this. I actually think the results are pretty good — not that we can't get better.

A. Dix: Just a specific question that I asked yesterday. The minister said he would get back to me with an answer with respect to section 54.1 agreements and whether all those agreements have been approved by the public guardian and trustee. I just wanted to ask the question again and see if the minister had found the answer to that question.

[2035]

Hon. S. Hagen: This is an order made by a judge in the best interests of the child. It's not really an agreement; it's actually a court order that has been issued. The public guardian and trustee must consent to all orders.

A. Dix: I think the minister said yesterday that 11 agreements have been signed in the current fiscal year, to which I believe he was referring — and just to be clear, to 2005-2006. All 11 of those have been consented to by the public guardian and trustee.

Hon. S. Hagen: That's correct.

A. Dix: I wanted to ask a quick question about section 8 agreements with respect to those and with respect to criminal-records checks. Has the ministry changed policy, or did the ministry change policy in 2005 to put all such agreements and other parallel agreements through the Cornet system? Has the ministry changed the way in which it assesses the results of criminal records checked with respect to section 8 and other agreements?

Hon. S. Hagen: The answer is yes, but I'm told it was changed in January '06. I think you said '05? Yeah. That's when the instructions went out to staff. It set a requirement that all prospective caregivers require a Cornet check in addition to a criminal-record check. As I'm sure the member knows, the Cornet check is virtually instantaneous.

A. Dix: The second question I asked: has there been any change in the assessment process for the result of those checks?

[2040]

Hon. S. Hagen: I'm reading from the document that went out to the staff. It reads as follows:

If a record on Cornet is found and the person is still being considered as a prospective care provider, the following criteria are considered when determining whether to approve the person: the criminal record review program's list of criminal offences may be used as a guide when considering whether the person's criminal activity presents a risk to the child; the number of charges, convictions and diversions; the time between past criminal activity and the present; the conduct and the circumstances of the individual since the offence or alleged offence; the developmental age of the child, the child's circumstances, and the nature of the child's existing or intended relationship with the person; the child's views, if applicable, and the relevance of the particular criminal activity to the care or contact with the individual.

The social worker then reviews the person's record and the criteria for approval with the district supervisor. If information from Cornet raises no concern about the child's future safety and well-being while in contact with the person and there's no other reason to decline making an agreement, the prospective care provider may proceed in the assessment process. Reasons for declining to make an agreement based on a Cornet check are documented and shared with the prospective care provider.

A. Dix: I'll just ask if the minister — I know it's gone out to social workers across the province — if he'd be prepared to share the document with the opposition.

Hon. S. Hagen: Sure.

A. Dix: I just have one last quick question....

Interjection.

A. Dix: Okay, sure. I'll sit down.

Hon. S. Hagen: This is a correction from yesterday. I can't remember which one of your colleagues asked the question, but it was with regard to the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre when we had that discussion.

I wanted to clarify something. This is in response to a question yesterday. I informed the member opposite that based on information received from staff, MCFD funds the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre in excess of \$7 million a year. I am now informed that the funding of over \$7 million a year is for the Vancouver Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society, and not for the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre. The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre is funded at only \$55,000 per year, in addition to the \$30,000 mentioned by the member — just so that's on the record.

A. Dix: Noting the time, I'll just give the minister a heads-up on the first question I'm going to ask tomorrow. Tomorrow we're going to do community living — a really interesting debate for all of us, I think, because we didn't get a very good chance to go over Community Living B.C. in our last round in the estimates. The question is on the extent to which the ministry will be underspent this year in children and family services. I'll put the minister on notice that that's a question I'll want to ask. It's just basically a number.

With that, I move that the committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Motion approved.

The committee adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

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Published by British Columbia Hansard Services, and printed under the authority of the Speaker by the Queen's Printer, Victoria. Rates: single issue, \$2.85; per calendar year, mailed daily, \$298. GST extra. Agent: Crown Publications Inc., 521 Fort St., Victoria, B.C. V8W 1E7. Telephone: (250) 386-4636. Fax: 386-0221.

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