



Second Session, 38th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF
DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
(HANSARD)

Monday, May 1, 2006
Afternoon Sitting
Volume 10, Number 4

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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MONDAY, MAY 1, 2006

The House met at 2:03 p.m.

Introductions by Members

Hon. S. Hagen: I'm very fortunate that I have three wonderful nieces, and today one of them is visiting us in the House, from White Rock. I ask the House to help me welcome Dr. Dina McConnell and her two daughters Anya and Grace.

Tributes

PHYLLIS HARDS

C. Trevena: On Friday a tragic incident occurred at Campbell River Hospital. Phyllis Hards, a 78-year-old volunteer, died after an attack near the Sunshine Gift Shop, which she managed.

Phyllis was known and admired and loved throughout the community. She'd volunteered with the ladies auxiliary at the hospital for 25 years. Just last December she was given an award for contributing more than 10,000 hours of voluntary service. In 2002 Phyllis was named Campbell River senior of the year. She was tireless and dedicated, working seven days a week. She was an inspiration to her fellow volunteers, friends and those who came to the hospital.

I would ask that the House pass its sympathies to her family and to her friends.

PETER AFFLECK

S. Hawkins: It is with great sadness that I inform the House of the passing of a dear friend and colleague. Peter Affleck passed away early this morning, following a massive heart attack that he suffered on Wednesday. He is survived by Anne and his four kids.

Many of you will know Peter because he was in the forestry industry for over 30 years. He was a tremendous force in shaping forestry policy in this province. He was in Kelowna since 1994. He was a minor hockey coach, he was a volunteer for all kinds of things in the community, and he was involved in many charitable functions, including helping me out with a golf tournament I do every year for cancer care.

Mr. Speaker, I want the family to know that our thoughts and prayers are with them.

[1405]

Introductions by Members

H. Bains: In the House today are members of Surrey Manufactured Home Owners Association and their representatives: Doreen Mortensen, president; Louise Nicholson, treasurer; Ed Barton, director; and Glen Reckseidler, director. Along with them is a woman who keeps me looking good in the community, my

constituency assistant, Emily Zimmerman. Would the House please join me in welcoming them.

Hon. P. Bell: I had the honour today of presenting the first minister's award of excellence to Steve Carr, who is the director with the integrated land management bureau in our Kamloops office. Steve has been with government for quite some time and has been an incredibly dedicated employee who has delivered on many services for all constituents of members of both sides of the House. I would ask that the entire House please help me in congratulating Steve for all of his good work.

N. Macdonald: In the House today is Ellen Zimmerman, a constituent. I have spoken to the House about Ellen previously. She was winner of Women of the Earth. She was honoured in Paris not too long ago. She is here representing Wildsight, which won the top award in Canada for conservation groups — received from the government of Canada and *Canadian Geographic* for the year 2005. Please join me in making her welcome.

D. Routley: Joining us in the precinct today are several members of the Active Manufactured Home Owners Association: Joyce Klein, treasurer; Alex Ross, president; Shirley Stirret, director; Beryl Adkins, member; and Derek Adkins, member. Would the House please welcome these fine folks to the precinct.

S. Fraser: Visiting the precinct today is one of my constituents, Wolfgang Zimmerman. He is no relation, I think, to the other Zimmerman. Wolfgang is the executive director of the National Institute of Disability Management and Research. He is working tirelessly to develop the first international university on workplace health sciences as a global centre for excellence. He is working across the spectrum, across different sectors and across this House with members from both sides to make that a reality. Would you please help me make him feel welcome.

S. Hawkins: Mr. Speaker, on your behalf I would like to introduce 14 new Legislative Assembly employees, including eight summer tour guide staff and six parliamentary players. With their assistance, the tour office offers tours in English, French, German, Spanish and Japanese. I would like the House to please welcome Diana Dearden-Lindell, Stephen Calder, Rhea Laube, Michelle Oko, Jennifer Ives, Erik Mitbrodt, Janet Doherty, Karoline Piercy, Jennifer Abel, Scott Hendrickson, Brendan Bailey, Jason Moldowan and Caret Wass. Please help me make them welcome.

D. Routley: Could the House please help me make welcome Jim Bennett of the B.C. Real Estate Association. He is visiting us in the precinct today.

**Statements
(Standing Order 25b)**

SAN PATRIGNANO COMMUNITY
FOR ADDICTION TREATMENT

L. Mayencourt: I rise today to speak about a program that I visited in Italy. Italy, like many other nations, has experienced an increase in drug use during the past decade. Vincenzo Muccioli, founder of the San Patrignano community, understands the deeply rooted causes of drug addiction as an escape from reality often beginning in adolescence due to the absence of relationships with families and peers, as well as feelings of isolation and not belonging. San Patrignano is an intentional community. It is comprised of 2,200 recovering addicts. Residents live there voluntarily, within a walled community. They stay there three to five years.

[1410]

The mission of San Patrignano is vast. The organization aims to welcome, support and assist people with their healing journey. It does so free of charge and without discrimination. As I said, in December I had the opportunity to visit this community and see first hand how these programs work. At San Patrignano they have a winery. They have a furniture factory, racehorses, a cheese factory, a dairy, a vegetable farm, restaurants, the creation of tapestries and handmade wallpaper. In all areas of this community, the attention to detail and perfection has made San Patrignano a brand that all Italians know means top quality. It is that social enterprise, which those members engage in, that pays for the community.

I was very touched by the way everyone worked together there and the camaraderie that we saw. In a spirit of self-banishment, all residents — who are all recovering addicts — control the activities of the communities through the goods and services and use professional training as an educational tool aimed at the complete social rehabilitation of its residents.

In the words of Vincenzo Muccioli: "San Patrignano is a community for the living, where you can restart your life after years spent as a social outcast. It is a community against social marginalization."

B.C. SCHOOL TRUSTEES ASSOCIATION

J. Horgan: It's a pleasure to rise today and inform this House of the recently concluded annual general meeting of the B.C. School Trustees Association, held in the warm and hospitable city of Prince George over the weekend. I had the pleasure of being at the event with the Leader of the Official Opposition, and it was a very enjoyable couple of days of stimulating debate, resolutions and some fantastic entertainment from the D.P. Todd Secondary stage band on the night of the annual reception.

It's that reception that brings me to my feet today, because at the annual general meeting the BCSTA recognized 22 members for long service and life membership. I'd like to read those names and those districts. Please withhold your applause until I've concluded.

Lyn Skrlac, former trustee of district 85, Vancouver Island North, 21 years' service. Gerda Fandrich, district 34 from Abbotsford, 21 years' service. Annette Hamblar, district 8, Kootenay Lake, 21 years' service. Bob Haslett, district 54, Bulkley Valley, 21 years. Pennie Jamieson, district 67, Okanagan-Skaha, 21 years. Nel Joostema, district 42, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, 21 years' service. Laurae McNally, district 36, from Surrey, 21 years' service. Alan Chell, district 19, from Revelstoke, 22 years. Bill Christie from Prince George, 22 years. Norman Hayduk, district 92, Nisga'a, 22 years. Marguerite Kempin, Nicola Valley, 23 years. Lorraine Manning, 23 years, from Kootenay-Columbia. Brent Atkinson, district 40, New Westminster, 24 years. John Malloff, district 51, Boundary, 24 years. Gordon Comeau, Nicola-Similkameen, 25 years. Michael Ewen, district 40, 25 years. Charles Hingston, district 64, Gulf Islands, 25 years. Jim Sinclair, district 78, Fraser-Cascade, 25 years. Rosalie Nichiporuk, district 91, Nechako Lakes, 26 years. Lastly, from my constituency, is Wilma Rowbottom, 27 years — 508 years of service to the community.

HUMAN EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

J. McIntyre: I rise today to speak about HELP, the Human Early Learning Partnership. This partnership is an interdisciplinary research network linking over 180 faculty, researchers and graduate students from six B.C. universities. HELP works in partnership with the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Minister of State for Childcare.

HELP's research program contributes to new understandings and approaches to early childhood development and seeks to ensure that all children in B.C. have the means to reach their full potential. To this end, HELP's research aids in developing a better understanding of the biological, familial and community factors that influence the learning abilities and developmental outcomes of our young children.

To date, this partnership has funded 77 innovative and collaborative research programs across its partner institutions. HELP has also created socioeconomic maps for every school district in B.C., and it has distributed a community mapping toolkit across the province.

The toolkit assists local communities in analyzing these socioeconomic maps, as well as being an aid in analyzing the early development instrument, which is a provincewide survey used to assess children's school readiness on five different areas of development.

[1415]

With the generous support of the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, HELP has established a child and youth development trajectories unit that conducts studies tracking children's development from conception all the way through to high school graduation. Just this past February the partnership released the B.C. Atlas of Child Development. This atlas is a collaborative effort of HELP and the MCFD ministry. It provides colour maps that depict early childhood de-

velopment trends across neighbourhood and school district boundaries and shows some very interesting patterns.

Looking to the future, under the leadership of the director Dr. Clyde Hertzman, the human early learning partnership continues to work on several initiatives to assist local communities, governments and decision-makers at all levels in their efforts to ensure healthy early childhood development.

FIRE AT SIKH TEMPLE IN WILLIAMS LAKE

C. Wyse: On March 26 the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scriptures, was burnt as a result of an arson at the Gurdwara Sahib Western Singh Sabha Gyani in Williams Lake. Great personal loss and hurt is experienced by a Sikh whenever the holy scripture is harmed. The most reverend priest of the Sikh religion was in attendance to celebrate Vaisakhi day and to assist with the cremation of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Giani Gurbachan Singh arrived in Williams Lake from Amritsar in India where the Golden Temple is located. He spent several days assisting in various services. This is only the third time he has participated in such a cremation ceremony.

I extended the personal sympathy and empathy of each MLA to Sikhs around the world as well as extended the personal wish of each MLA that the healing of each Sikh proceed as quickly as possible. Also, at the request of the mother of the person under investigation for the arson, I extended her best wishes to the Sikh community. I know each of us in the Legislature hopes he will receive the medical care he requires in order to be well.

On behalf of all of us in the House, I will advise the Premier of the situation facing the Sikh community in restoring the temple in Williams Lake. *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh.*

In closing, I request the House to join with me in wishing Sikhs around the world a speedy recovery from their grief.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

R. Lee: To acknowledge the rich and lengthy history and contributions of Canadians who trace their origins to Asia, May is Asian Heritage Month. Since the first celebration held in Toronto in 1993, cities throughout the country and British Columbia are hosting festivals and activities to recognize and celebrate many Asian cultures found in Canada.

In 2001, thanks to a motion in the Senate of Canada, May was officially designated Asian Heritage Month right across the country. British Columbia is home to hundreds of thousands of Asian Canadians whose origins stretch from the area around the Black Sea to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. These heterogeneous people have enriched our lives not only from their cultural contributions but also through their great entrepreneurial spirit, creating jobs and opportunities for all who live in our province.

Since 1996 the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society's annual explorASIAN festival has promoted the diversity of Asian Canadian life and culture in the lower mainland during May. In its tenth year, explorASIAN celebrates pan-Asian arts, culture through education, workshops, seminars, lectures and community outreach programs. In addition, scores of musicians, writers and other artists demonstrate and promote traditional Asian culture and arts activities. Today explorASIAN is Canada's largest festival during Asian Heritage Month.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Asia Pacific, I invite everyone to promote and take part in the festivities that salute the heritage and contributions from our Asian Canadian population, who have helped make British Columbia the diverse and vibrant place it is today.

[1420]

ENCOUNTERS WITH CANADA PROGRAM

C. Trevena: On a cold April evening, Nicole Musfelt took the 45-minute boat trip from her west coast community of Tahsis to Zeballos, where the school board was meeting. She was to tell trustees about an experience she was never going to forget. Nicole had recently been on an Encounters with Canada trip to Ottawa. The grade 11 student said: "I learned how multicultural Canada is. I've never seen anything like it."

It gave her the motivation to relearn French, which she had stopped in grade 8 because she didn't think she'd ever need it. Nicole goes to Captain Meares Elementary School in Tahsis, where there are now just 29 students from kindergarten through to grade 12. Her Encounters with Canada trip brought together 120 students from across Canada to learn about our institutions, visiting Parliament and the Senate, about science and culture and to meet students from very different backgrounds. "It's too bad it's being shut down," Nicole told the board, who were meeting in a gym at the Zeballos School. "I have a totally different outlook on Canada."

It is too bad. Encounters with Canada is about to wrap up its mission of bringing together students from all parts of this huge, great country, giving young people from different regions and different cultures a chance to learn about their country and each other, a chance to understand what Canada is.

Encounters with Canada was part of the Canadian Unity Council, a body which was shut down as one of the first acts of the new federal government. B.C.'s Ministry of Education contributed to some of the costs of the program, as did other provincial governments. A great deal of volunteer time, energy, school trustee and teacher commitment went into making it the success it has been for thousands of students.

Nicole took the boat back to Tahsis the next morning, saving her a four-to-five-hour drive, and got there in time for school. Thanks to Encounters with Canada, she has taken a taste of her country back into the classroom at Captain Meares. It is a pity that other young people no longer have that opportunity.

Oral Questions

SOFTWOOD LUMBER AGREEMENT

M. Farnworth: On Thursday the Premier stood in a press conference and stated that the proposed softwood lumber deal was good for British Columbia. On Friday the Premier wrote a letter to the Prime Minister expressing a range of concerns about this same deal and reserving the right to withdraw from it. To the Minister of Forests: what changed?

Hon. R. Coleman: You know, first of all, I'm proud of the fact that for the first time in over 30 years, there's a stable long-term agreement that can be put in place for softwood in British Columbia and the rest of Canada. Just through to the member, so he understands, as the deal was coming together at the last minute, the United States filed the ECC, which is a challenge that they could file, but they had to file by five o'clock Eastern time. Because that was filed and there were other things at play, before the Prime Minister was prepared to stand in the House in Ottawa, we sent a letter just to protect our legal position in British Columbia.

That's all that changed. Nothing changed, hon. member. The deal — as we dealt with when we sat together and put the framework together with the U.S. Ambassador in British Columbia and the rest of Canada — is a good deal for British Columbia, a good deal for the future of forestry in B.C.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Port Coquitlam-Burke Mountain has a supplemental.

M. Farnworth: I appreciate the minister's comments. We all would like to see a deal. We want to see a good deal. What we saw on Thursday was the Premier standing up saying: "This is a good deal for British Columbia." Now the minister has stood up here and told us: "Well, we did some things to make sure that we could cover ourselves."

Was the minister aware of those issues on Thursday? And if so, why didn't he raise those issues on Thursday and have the Premier say, "Yes, we think it's a good deal, but guess what. There are some things that we're also concerned about," instead of the saying to the world: "It's a good deal"? The Prime Minister is saying it's a good deal, and then these other things come out the following days.

[1425]

Hon. R. Coleman: Well, through to the hon. member, I think you have your days wrong. The letter was sent prior to and with discussion with the Prime Minister on Thursday. It was with regard to the extraordinary challenge and not to do with the actual softwood framework at all. The basic United States agreement on softwood lumber is in place. Frankly, I am surprised that the members of the opposition didn't actually get up and say, "What a great thing it is that somebody

finally got this deal done," because I think somebody had to.

I mean, can you imagine? We didn't say, "Shut down Nanoose Bay," and get into an argument with the United States over this. We actually sat down and managed to get together an opportunity to make a deal. Now we have in front of us an opportunity for long-term stability for our forest sector on a seven-year deal with a two-year option.

There was the one letter that went. It was not about us departing from the deal. It was just advising, as instructed by legal counsel to do that. That's no big deal, frankly, because now that has been dealt with. With regards to what we know, they will do with the ECC in the future, as far as vacating it, as we move to the final document of the agreement that will be signed.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Port Coquitlam-Burke Mountain has a further supplemental.

M. Farnworth: Will the minister commit to tabling that letter in this Legislature?

Hon. R. Coleman: I think a letter between the Premier of British Columbia and the Prime Minister of Canada.... It will be up to them to decide what to table. It's not my authority to do such a thing.

B. Simpson: I believe that the Premier of the province is a public officer elected by the public, has a public duty and is acting in the public interest when he writes a letter to the Prime Minister of this country, who is also a public officer.

Again, to the minister: if that letter is only about the withdrawal of the appeal and not, as is reported, that the Premier indicated a series of concerns about this deal, a series of second thoughts about this deal and reserving the right to withdraw from the deal, then why will we not get a commitment today to table that letter in this House for all of us to see that?

Hon. R. Coleman: When you have 16 hours of negotiations per day for a six- or seven-day period, you want to make sure that all of your points are covered as you move through to a deal.

You know what this is about, Mr. Speaker? It's about this: "Thanks for your hard work on the softwood file. Although it's probably not exactly what we wanted, we can live with the deal. More importantly, we will now have a defined playing field that we can work within. We are a wholesale lumber company with a manufacturing plant in the Fraser Valley employing 80 people. We can tell them tonight that their jobs will be secure." That's what this softwood deal is about.

The framework is agreed to. We're moving forward. We should be celebrating the fact that finally there is a future for the forest sector in B.C. in a softwood lumber agreement.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Member for Cariboo North has a supplemental.

B. Simpson: I certainly do. I find it fascinating that the minister will read private correspondence between a third party and himself....

Interjections.

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

B. Simpson: He can read private correspondence between himself and a third party, and yet he will not reveal what should be public correspondence in which British Columbians can have surety that they have a deal that is in their best interest — all British Columbians, all communities, all workers and not just one mill that we won't even have a name for.

[1430]

At the Council of Forest Industries the minister stated that B.C. is the big dog when it comes to forest products in Canada. The minister stated that B.C. also had a commitment from Ontario, Quebec and Alberta to play the lead role in softwood negotiations because of its 50-percent share in the market. Yet last week the same minister said: "We're just responding to the federal position." So if we were the big dog and had the commitment of the lead role, how did we lose control over the softwood lumber negotiations?

Mr. Speaker: Can you pose a question.

B. Simpson: My question to the Minister of Forests: how did this minister lose control so that we say it's a good deal and then we have to lodge a right to withdraw?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. R. Coleman: We did take the lead role on this negotiation. We were the ones driving the bus in this negotiation, and we were the ones working with industry across the country. What's more than that, the members might actually want to check with the mills in their community.

Actually, hon. member, I have permission to read that e-mail in the House. Besides, I want to tell you this. There are all kinds of unsolicited correspondence coming into my office today from companies all over British Columbia — from reman'ers to value-added, etc. — saying: "Thanks for finally remembering about us in the future of forestry in British Columbia."

What's more, I know who drove this deal. I know that B.C. was at the table. I know that B.C. was the leader in the softwood negotiations with the ambassador and federal government in this country. I do know this — that it was the best deal available for British

Columbia for long-term stability for the industry, and we made the right decision on Thursday.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. The member for Surrey-Whalley has the floor.

APPOINTMENT OF JOHN TOMLINSON TO AGRICULTURAL LAND COMMISSION

B. Ralston: Last week the Minister of Agriculture and Lands made several new appointments to the Agricultural Land Commission. The Agricultural Land Commission Act clearly states that commissioners must be "knowledgeable in matters relating to agriculture, land use planning, local government or first nation government." Can the minister of Agriculture and Lands clarify how he believes John Tomlinson, one of the two new appointees, meets the ALC's merit-based requirements?

Hon. P. Bell: All of the new appointments coming up — there are a series of appointments coming up to the Agricultural Land Commission at this point — are vetted through the board resourcing office to ensure that they meet all of the qualifications necessary to work on the panels.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Surrey-Whalley has a supplemental.

B. Ralston: Well, there are other qualifications that appear, I'm going to suggest, which came into play. John Tomlinson has close connection to at least one of the minister's cabinet colleagues. Not only is he apparently a friend of the Minister of Forests and Range, he also worked in that minister's 2001 election campaign and is the former B.C. Liberal riding association president for Fort Langley-Aldergrove — the same minister's riding. He has donated over \$12,500 to the B.C. Liberals, together with his wife. He even starred in a B.C. Liberal election commercial as a "business owner."

The Minister of Agriculture and Lands has described the Agricultural Land Commission as "an independent, arm's-length agency." Is the minister seriously telling this House he didn't know? He's asking us to believe he didn't know of Mr. Tomlinson's political pedigree. Or is the truth that he has given Mr. Tomlinson a political directive to get Barnston Island out of the agricultural land reserve?

Hon. P. Bell: Although the member is trying to weave some threads here into a conspiracy theory, I'm afraid it just doesn't hold any water. There is nothing that the member just indicated that would not qualify the member or would disqualify the member from sitting on the panel.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members.

Hon. P. Bell: There is nothing there that would disqualify the member from sitting on the panel. If I might remind, the stellar performance of the NDP government through the 1990s with regards to the Agricultural Land Commission.... It was that government that chose to remove Six Mile Ranch and overrode the Agricultural Land Commission — didn't even allow them to have the decision-making process.

[1435]

This government is proud of the process that we have in place. We have agricultural land coming out at record lows — never been this low. In fact, in the first four years of our government there was less land that came out of the ALR than there was in the last year of that government.

M. Karagianis: Well, this actually is one of the worst kinds of patronage appointments that you could possibly want to see at this time in British Columbia. Given recent news events that have implicated the agricultural land reserve in a legal matter, we now have patronage appointments onto the Agricultural Land Commission. No order-in-council — in fact, a direct reward for someone who not only contributed to the Liberal campaign but worked very hard on campaigns of members of this House.

I would like to know why at this time, with the delicate situation around the agricultural land reserve and accusations in the courts today, this minister has allowed this kind of patronage appointment to the Agricultural Land Commission.

Hon. P. Bell: Certainly, the member that has been vetted through the process is amply qualified to serve on the Agricultural Land Commission.

You know, the member refers to orders-in-council. I just happen to be holding an order-in-council dated June 10, 1998, signed by the previous Minister of Agriculture and Lands, removing land and overriding the Agricultural Land Commission with regards to the Six Mile Ranch decision.

We are transparent; we are open. Land is coming out at all-time lows. In fact, at Barnston Island, the application the member is referring to — the proponent has asked to have that tabled for now.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members. Member for Esquimalt-Metchosin has a supplemental.

M. Karagianis: Yes, I do. I'm glad that the member actually brought this up — that this is the most open and accountable government — because what we've seen here is circumventing the merit-based appointment process completely. Where is the openness in that?

This is a member who's been given a patronage appointment, who has played a significant role in election campaigns and contributed significant amounts of dollars, now sitting on the Agricultural Land Commission at an extremely important time in this government's history. The agricultural land reserve is being

decimated day after day, and now we see a patronage appointment....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Can we have some quiet so we can listen to the question.
Continue.

M. Karagianis: We see a patronage appointment. Again, why was this not a merit-based appointment that should have been done in an open process?

Hon. P. Bell: Actually, there is a thorough vetting process. Everyone is able to apply for a position on the Agricultural Land Commission. There were a number of applications that came forward, and excellent ones.

The member talks about the decimation of the agricultural land reserve. I'm sorry, the statistics just simply do not back up the allegations. During the period 1996 to 2000 there were 17,433 hectares that came out of the Agricultural Land Commission. In the first five years of our government — 6,963 hectares. There's no decimation here. We're protecting agricultural lands.

R. Fleming: In addition to the resumé in which the minister didn't mention about Mr. Tomlinson being the former president of the Fort Langley–Aldergrove association, a former campaign manager and a large donor of \$12,000, he also starred in the last election in Liberal campaign ads as an ordinary person.

The government has turned the Agricultural Land Commission into a who's who — a grazing pasture of Liberal campaign managers and Liberal donors. Before the government appoints further members to the commission, will the minister commit to post publicly and openly remaining positions and not make them the subject of pork-barrel patronage?

[1440]

Hon. P. Bell: If this is a vision of what we have for the week to come, it's going to be a slow week in the provincial media, I guess.

These are public postings. Anyone in the province of British Columbia is able to apply to sit on any Agricultural Land Commission panel around the province. I guess the member just hasn't actually looked up the website address. If he'd care to go to the government website, I'm sure he'd be able to find those postings.

But let's have another look at this. In the year 2000, the last year the NDP was in government, they removed 5,797 hectares from the Agricultural Land Commission. We didn't remove that in the first four years of our government.

B.C. FERRIES CONTRACT FOR SERVICE TO NORTHERN COMMUNITIES

N. Simons: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. How can the minister agree with B.C. Ferries' claim that the sinking of the *Queen of the North*

was a force majeure before the Transportation Safety Board or any other investigation has completed their work, let alone provided any answers?

Hon. K. Falcon: Actually, this appears to be one of those very rare — extraordinarily rare — events where the media might have got this a bit wrong. That doesn't happen often, but in this case I have to say that I was apparently quoted as saying that I supported that position. I want to be clear. I have never said that.

In fact, I do not support the application of force majeure, nor do I reject it. At this point it's something that the lawyers will negotiate between themselves. The key thing for the Minister of Transportation is ensuring, of course, that service is restored — as it has been to the best efforts possible through the Ferry Corp. — to the folks in the northern coastal communities.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Powell River-Sunshine Coast has a supplemental.

N. Simons: I appreciate that. It just happened to be on a government website. I'm just wondering: will the minister admit that paying B.C. Ferries Corp. \$2.7 million of taxpayers' money for trips that the corporation will not be making is not just more evidence of serious flaws in the contract with the government?

Hon. K. Falcon: Well, here we go again. I'm having to school the members opposite in the research that they're doing. He quotes a government website. I believe he's referring to the independent ferry commissioner. It's not referring to anything I said. He is referring to comments of the independent ferry commissioner on his interpretation of what B.C. Ferries said to him. So I suggest that the member might want to do a little more research in that regard.

The other area where the member might want to do some research is actually in the coastal ferries contract. It's actually on the website. If the member reads the coastal ferries contract, he will know that every quarter there's a reconciliation done on the amount of service that's actually been provided by the service provider. Where there are deficiencies, there are financial adjustments made.

The issue, of course, is that B.C. Ferries is alleging there is a force majeure incident here. There are provisions for unforeseen circumstances within the coastal ferries contract. Those are issues that will be negotiated between lawyers for the Ministry of Transportation and the Ferry Corp. Lawyers can have lots of fun with that.

The issue for our government is this. We want to make sure the Ferry Corp. is doing every step and taking every step they possibly can to restore service to those communities, and they have worked very hard to do exactly that.

FERRY SERVICE TO NORTHERN COMMUNITIES AND FARE INCREASE

C. Trevena: To the Minister of Transportation. I would like to remind him that he signs off on what the

independent ferry commissioner does, particularly when it comes to fare increases.

I have constituents who are suffering greatly because of the vast reduction in services on the northern routes. In Port Hardy there has been a dramatic reduction in business over the last months, and we're seeing bookings disappear for the holiday season. Instead of helping these communities, the government is being seen to help the Ferry Corp., despite saying that the Ferry Corp. is independent.

I would like to ask the minister how he can justify paying off B.C. Ferries with taxpayers' money at the same time as increasing their fares.

[1445]

Hon. K. Falcon: Well, this is part of the opposition that, frankly, baffles me sometimes, when it comes to the whole B.C. Ferries situation. On the one hand, I'll hear the member for the North Coast demanding that we must get ferries in service and have ferries right away and that this has to be done. He's running around hysterically suggesting this. Then I get the member from Esquimalt — not this particular member — saying we need to slow everything down. We have to slow down. Don't go ahead and order ferries, because we want to make sure the local shipyards have time in their otherwise incredibly busy schedules — because they're so busy, and the economy is so strong. I need to slow everything down so that they can have an opportunity to bid.

Just for once, I wish the leadership of the opposition would get their act together and figure out what the heck they want us to do. I can tell you what we're going to do. We're actually going to make sure ferry service is restored and the best possible service is being provided to the north coast and midcoast communities.

Mr. Speaker: Member for North Island has a supplemental.

C. Trevena: The issue — the Minister of Transportation might miss this — is that there is one ferry missing, which means there is no business for much of the north coast and the north Island.

B.C. Ferries is also looking to bring in the fourth fare increase, through a fuel surcharge, in 11 months — four fare increases in 11 months. The company is talking about a 7-percent increase on the smaller routes and a 3-percent increase on the main routes. Those routes that the minister might have forgotten link the Trans-Canada Highway with the Trans-Canada Highway. I would like to ask the Minister of Transportation whether he will listen to the people of B.C. and not give his approval, which he needs to give, to the fuel surcharge increase.

Hon. K. Falcon: Well, the member opposite knows that the independent Ferries commissioner is there to look after the interests of British Columbians in terms of the requests for fare increases as a result of fuel surcharges.

You know, the member should know — whether it's the taxi industry, the airline industry, the bus industry.... Many industries are faced with the reality that fuel costs have gone up considerably. I know that in the past, the requests that have been put forward by B.C. Ferries have not been accepted by the independent Ferries commissioner — at least not the total that they were requesting and, in fact, reduced amounts. But fuel surcharges are a reality of life.

The member opposite will know that some of the folks from some of the areas that the member represents were here expressing their displeasure the other day. We pointed out that on the smaller routes, yes, for a passenger attempting to get on some of these ferries there has been a three-year increase in fares. They quoted the 35-percent figure, and that worked out to about 83 cents over three years, including all of the increase. I recognize that's not an insignificant amount of money, but we also have to understand that the Ferry Corp. is doing its best to struggle with the fact that fuel costs have gone up over \$22 million. I think their approach and the independent Ferries commissioner's involvement are appropriate.

IMPACT OF FERRY SINKING ON HARTLEY BAY SHELLFISH INDUSTRY

S. Simpson: On April 25 the Gitga'at Nation wrote to the Minister of Environment concerning the sinking of the *Queen of the North*. In their letter to the minister, they made reference to comments that are attributed to the minister in the *Vancouver Sun*, April 21, where the minister is cited as saying that early tests indicate the environmental impact of the sinking is less than feared. The minister is further quoted as saying: "I think most of the clam beaches have been spared."

Well, in their letter the Gitga'at Nation does say that such comments are not an accurate depiction of the reality on the water, and they only act to instil anger and frustration in the Gitga'at community as they agonize over the safety of their food supply.

On April 20 we know that the minister and the Premier met with the Hartley Bay band, and at that time the Premier promised that they would be the first to know the extent of environmental impacts. Yet the very next day, the minister is quoted in the *Vancouver Sun*. Why did the minister break the Premier's promise to the people of Hartley Bay and not speak to them first about what he believed the situation is, rather than running off to the *Vancouver Sun*?

[1450]

Hon. B. Penner: For the benefit of members, I'll just read a fuller extract of that article that the member was referring to. In fact, the initial part is a paraphrase written by the reporter.

Environment Minister Barry Penner says early tests indicate the environmental impact of the sinking is less than feared. "We do take it seriously though," he said. "I think most beaches and clam beds have been spared, but we're continuing to monitor if there's any risk to human

health." However, Penner said he's committed to getting the fuel out of the *Queen of the North*, with input from first nations leaders. "I would describe it as a delicate but vital task to see that the remaining fuel is removed."

Mr. Speaker, the information that we talked about in Hartley Bay and that I have at this point — which is the most up to date, although I've asked for a further update — is that out of 13 sites tested, seven showed no signs of elevated hydrocarbons. So the majority of the sites tested — i.e., most of the sites tested — showed no signs of contamination.

It doesn't mean that more testing isn't taking place. I've asked for a further update, and I'll provide that with the Hartley Bay people and others as soon as we get it.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Vancouver-Hastings has a supplemental.

S. Simpson: I'm pleased that the minister can read the newspaper to us here, but the reality is that the people of Hartley Bay — a letter signed by two hereditary chiefs, the Chief of the Hartley Bay band and councillors — asked the minister to get back to them and clarify these comments.

I talked to the Chief of the Hartley Bay band at 1:30 today. They haven't heard from the minister yet. Getting a well-deserved award for community achievement is one thing, but what the people of Hartley Bay really need is support and action on their economic and environmental problems caused by the sinking of the *Queen of the North*.

In their own review of these same results that the minister spoke about to the media, the Gitga'at biologist found elevated levels of carcinogenic contaminants in those shellfish beds on the path of the fuel released by the *Queen of the North*. They've called for more analysis and for a real plan to deal with the remaining fuel in the vessel.

Does the minister disagree with the findings of the Gitga'at people regarding contamination? When is he going to speak to them about the very real concerns they expressed in their letter of April 25?

Hon. B. Penner: The first time I had a chance to read the letter that the member refers to was about 20 minutes before two o'clock today. I will be getting back to the Hartley Bay people as soon as we have more information to share.

At this point the information is that the majority of the sites tested — at least, this is the latest information that I have — did not show any elevated signs of hydrocarbons. Of the five that did, two are believed to have been the result of normal seagoing traffic and not necessarily related to the sinking of the ferry. This leaves three sites that Ministry of Environment officials indicated some concern about. That's why we have called on Health Canada to help us perform detailed analysis.

It is an issue that we take very seriously. That's why, frankly, when the ferry sank on March 22, at 7:15 that morning Ministry of Environment officials reacted

immediately, were dispatched to the site and set up an incident command structure that included first nations representatives being an integral part of that response. That's why the response has been as effective as it has been.

[End of question period.]

H. Bains: I ask permission to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Petitions

H. Bains: I have an 861-name petition from manufactured home owners of this province who are deeply concerned about the lack of compensation and protection they receive at the time when they get an eviction notice because the landlord may have decided to develop the land for other uses.

C. Wyse: I request permission to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

C. Wyse: I wish to present a petition of 75 members of Dog Creek and Canoe Creek communities demanding that the roads be better maintained and that more of their roads be paved.

Orders of the Day

Hon. B. Penner: Mr. Speaker, I call estimates debate on the Ministry of Forests and Range in this House. For the interest of members, I call in the other House, the Douglas Fir Committee Room, continuing estimates debate for the Ministry of Community Services.

[1455]

Committee of Supply

ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF FORESTS
AND RANGE AND MINISTER
RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSING

The House in Committee of Supply (Section B); S. Hammell in the chair.

The committee met at 3 p.m.

On Vote 32: ministry operations, \$473,203,000

Hon. R. Coleman: Just for clarification for the members present, I will be moving Vote 32 for now. I will also, later on, move to Housing. We'll do the Housing portion of the debates, but this will get us through this portion of the debate.

The ministry focus is twofold: forestry and housing. My comments on housing, as I said, will be reserved for later in the debates when I deal with the opposition critic with regards to housing.

In forestry our job is to oversee the public interest. That means providing leadership in the protection, management and use of the province's forests and rangelands. We're doing that, so to begin with, I want to speak about forestry.

The main agency responsible for the stewardship of 47 million hectares of provincial land is the Ministry of Forests. We have an estimated 3,559 full-time-equivalents and a budget of \$723.8 million for 2006-2007, which obviously includes the Housing portion. Those numbers represent an increase of 282 FTEs and a budget increase of approximately \$80 million over '05-06.

Our core business areas are protection against fires and pests, and managed fire to protect the provincial Crown land investments in the forest land base. This includes increasing emphasis on fuel management and constructive use of fire. On October 4, 2005, a new national wildfire strategy was developed with the expertise of British Columbia.

Pests. Of course we have a few of those in the forests, as we're all aware, particularly the mountain pine beetle. We'll expand on that later, and I'm sure we'll have some discussions with regards to that over the next few days.

Other bark beetles, though, do include things like the spruce beetle, the Douglas fir beetle, the western pine beetle and others. All of them are interesting little insects that seem to have unbelievable resilience when it comes to what they can do on our land base.

With regards to forest stewardship, I think it's important that we have sound environmental stewardship of forest resources. That includes looking at forest conditions and ensuring actions today to maximize the future health of our forests.

We manage range issues — for example, invasive plants, forest encroachment on grasslands, etc. We evaluate range practices. We restore damaged rangelands and work with other agencies to ensure a healthy and viable range industry.

In compliance and enforcement, we uphold B.C.'s laws protecting forests and range under the ministry's jurisdiction. For example, we enforce forest practices and enforce revenue and pricing legislation governing removal and transport of timber. We act on forest crimes such as theft and arson and mischief.

On the side of forest investment, through the forest investment account, some revenues are invested back into the land base. This ensures we have productive forests for future generations. One example is watershed restoration.

On the pricing and selling of timber, we ensure that British Columbians benefit from the commercial use of their forest assets. We provide a competitive regulatory framework, a fair pricing system and effective allocation of timber harvesting rights.

We also run B.C. Timber Sales, which is auctioning significant portions of the provincial allowable annual cut to generate pricing and cost data. That drives market-based pricing and provides competitive access to timber for industry.

Our key priorities. Number one is timber reallocation. That would be completing our timber reallocation of 20 percent of long-term replaceable logging rights being reallocated; 8.2 million cubic metres are to be affected. All that volume is now being transferred.

All on-the-ground operating areas for B.C. Timber Sales have been identified, and we're halfway through identifying on-the-ground operating for first nations and community tenures.

To assist impacted workers and contractors, \$125 million has been set aside in the B.C. forestry revitalization trust. The trust is administered by a board. The board consists of major licensees, contractors and workers, who establish eligibility criteria. By the end of March, \$45.4 million was paid out to the impacted workers and contractors.

We created and expanded forest opportunities for 29 communities since August of 2004.

Obviously, when these notes were prepared, we were looking for a new framework on softwood lumber and some opportunities to have long-term stability on the land base. I think we're actually moving down the road to where we have that in the document, which basically outlines the framework between our two countries. People should always recognize that the actual softwood trade deal is between Canada and the United States, the two parties with regards to that.

On revitalizing the coast. There are some significant challenges on the coast, so we have to work with a number of people, including the steelworkers, the Coast Forest Products Association, industry and companies. We're reviewing the Competition Council report and submissions from the two industry advisory groups. The council believes an industry-led plan could be successful with support from government and has the best chances of success.

We've already started moving on several revitalization initiatives. They include market-based pricing, timber reallocation, proper pricing of pulp logs, and more use of weigh scaling and market studies.

[1505]

On the mountain pine beetle side, the infestation of the mountain pine beetle, as everyone knows, is the largest in B.C. history, affecting 8.7 million hectares of land. More than 400 million cubic metres of timber have been attacked. The mountain pine beetle action plan sets out steps for both short-term and long-term actions.

We've committed another \$113 million for mountain pine beetle-related activities, to be spent over the next three years. The funded activities include an additional \$75 million for Forests for Tomorrow, government's reforestation plan; \$20.7 million to upgrade and maintain Forest Service roads at the heart of the infestation — this is in addition to \$90 million from the Ministry of Transportation for highways affected by increased logging traffic; \$17.5 million for additional staff to handle timber tenures associated with increased harvesting.

We're also working with stakeholders to plan our future forests. Participants include scientists, industry, communities, Canadian Forest Service, universities, licensees and first nations.

Last month we reached agreement with the first nations. An agreement for first nations was very important in that we will harmonize the plans between first nations and government with regards to the future of forests in B.C. We're reallocating years two and three of funding received from the federal government to work with first nations — \$2 million for wildfire protection and fuel management on provincial Crown land around reserves; \$8.9 million allocated for first nation forestry council's strategic long-term plan to sustain culture and depend on invested forests; potentially \$880,000 for research priorities identified by the first nations; and \$1.3 million to fund first nations participation in the government's mountain pine beetle response team for a two-year period.

First nations are now full partners in the mountain pine beetle fight. The key to success is working together. We're the first government to set aside revenue-sharing for first nations — committed to increasing first nations participating in the forest sector.

Since September of 2002 we have signed agreements with 104 first nations, including forest and range agreements and direct awards. This provides access to 16.9 million cubic metres of timber and \$119.6 million in shared forest revenue. Under the New Relationship, we've been working with the First Nations Leadership Council. Those discussions resulted in an improved forest and range agreement template.

In the transition to Forest and Range Practices Act, by January 2007 all forest companies will be operating under forest stewardship plans. We're well on our way to achieving that goal. At the end of March forest companies had advertised, submitted for approval or approved forest stewardship plans covering 40 percent of the annual allowable cut. We dedicate \$12 million in the Forest and Range Practices Act to an evaluation program for the next three years to ensure that the new model is working.

I have come to one conclusion after being the minister of this particular ministry for the last almost year. I am gifted with some very qualified and capable people in the ministry, who are able to adapt and change and do things that are remarkable to protect the forests and build a strong forest industry in British Columbia.

A. Dix: In advance of the return of the member for Cariboo North — who is in fact, as the minister will know, our very able critic on forest issues — I wanted to follow up with the minister very briefly on the issue that was raised around the correspondence between the Premier and the Prime Minister during question period. I'm wondering if the minister would be able to tell us very specifically when he would be able to come back and tell this House and give this House an answer on that question. It seems to me that what we're talking about here is a very fundamental deal for British Columbia, for the economy of British Columbia, for all of the communities of British Columbia.

It seems, to me, important in this case. The minister will appreciate this, I think, because the minister knows that what happens when there's an absence of

information in a sector that's so central to people's lives.... When there's an absence of information, sometimes people start to ask serious questions or have serious doubts about agreements. So I wanted to ask the minister....

I know that the minister is very interested in this area, and I know he will have been working very closely in the period since question period with his staff to get an answer for all of us on this important question of the nature of this correspondence and what it is. I wanted to ask the minister if he would give this House a commitment to come back to this House at the earliest possible opportunity with an answer to the important question that was asked during question period about the relationship and about the letter between the Premier and the Prime Minister.

[1510]

Hon. R. Coleman: I think I was pretty clear in question period. Of course, it's probably in a little bit of a different environment that we ask those questions, because it may be a bit more of a different stage.

Just for the member's information, the 27th of April was the last day possible for the U.S. to protect their legal rights under an extraordinary challenge under NAFTA. They had to file that, if they were going to protect their rights, by five o'clock Eastern time on the day that we were moving through this process. And you've got to appreciate there were four provinces, a U.S. coalition on the lumber side, the U.S. trade representative, our embassy, I'm sure their embassy, our Prime Minister's office and whoever else would have been involved. As we're coming through this, we're trying to get to where we would actually be in a position to announce prior to the end of that deadline.

That just wasn't able to be accomplished, so the Americans filed their ECC, which in my understanding they will vacate as we move through to the agreement — because, remember, this is a framework agreement. The Premier wrote the Prime Minister saying that we had concerns about them filing the ECC, and the advice was that we had to send that letter to protect our legal position as we came through the framework.

What people, I think, have to understand is that what we have today is a framework of an agreement. I think the member will appreciate — and the members should be aware of and probably prepared for — that over the next 60 days, as different clauses of the final agreement have some discussion back and forth, there may be some other public play back and forth with regard to what might be in one clause versus another, as the lawyers start to work through this agreement.

The framework agreement isn't very long, but I suspect that by the time the actual trade agreement is written, it will be fairly lengthy, and it will have whereases and wherefors and clauses in it. I would caution, as we go forward, that people understand that there's going to be a little bit of this. I think we'll hear from different players in industry anywhere in Canada and the U.S. that may have issues with it as we try and

finalize that final drafted agreement. That would be the answer to that question for the member.

B. Simpson: I will come back to softwood and explore that somewhat.

I would like to make some introductory comments. Since I was appointed to this role by the Leader of the Opposition, I've been on a steep learning curve. Even though I've had ten years in the industry in all facets of the softwood side of it — the solid-wood side of it in particular — both in the United States and in British Columbia and Alberta, I've found that I had a lot to learn in terms of the policy and in particular about the coast.

During the months that I've been appointed to this role, it's become crystal-clear to me — and we've had the debates in this Legislature — that our number-one industry — the industry that historically British Columbia has depended upon as the main driver of its economy, and it still continues to be a major driver in our economy — is certainly in a state of crisis, the likes of which we have never seen or experienced. To suggest that this is stuff that we've seen before is simply masking the nature of the crisis that we have in front of us.

On the coast, though, the crisis has been painted as a crisis for the major industry. We talk about capital. We talk about the need to have a cost structure that allows that industry to be competitive in the global marketplace. We talk about it from the industry perspective. As I've travelled the coast — I've had the opportunity to be up in the Queen Charlottes; I've had the opportunity to be up and down the coast, in Campbell River and Nanaimo and Port Alberni — the real crisis, I believe, is what's happening at the community level.

Now, it's a derivative of what happens with the companies. There's a growing fear on the coast among the people who know this industry, who have worked in this industry, that because they're not included in this process — because they have in fact in many ways been excluded from this process — what's happening is that by default, the coastal forest sector will be turning into land developers and log-sellers.

That's not my fear. I don't know the coast as well. I'm learning it. That's the fear of the people who live in the communities on the coast, who have a long — in fact, generational — relationship with this industry — know it intimately. It's in their lifeblood. Many of them have given their lives to this industry, literally as well as figuratively. That's their fear.

[1515]

I was at a rally in Nanaimo on Thursday, where the road was shut down. People were out there. The concern — you could feel it. It was palpable in the air.

The other fear on the coast, and it's one that's generalized throughout British Columbia, is that communities are losing their benefits from our public resources. Lost in this debate is the fact that these forest resources are public resources and that there's an expectation that we derive public benefit from those resources. When the communities hear the minister talk

about communities that are dining out on their industrial tax base or hear the Competition Council talking about British Columbians having to lose their entitlement mentality and that social rents are too high, there's a fear growing among community leaders, workers, unions and, quite frankly, among most of the independent operators out there that we're losing sight of the fact that in British Columbia our forests are public and we have an expectation of deriving public benefit from that. That's being lost in this debate.

Then, of course, there's the fear in communities all over this province that people are losing their livelihoods. They're losing their ability to pay their mortgages. They're losing their ability to give their children education. They're losing their ability to support their seniors in retirement, because they're losing their jobs. As mill after mill closes, as community after community loses its industrial tax base because of those mills closing because of logging operations that are shut down, the communities and the workers are feeling that they've lost their connection to the land base, and they have lost their connection to an industry that historically was there for them to derive benefit from.

A lot of this is a derivative of the Liberal's forest policy. It's not just market forces. That's also lost in this debate. The Liberal government made a deliberate choice to do the 20-percent takeback. We'll get into that during the estimates debate. They also made the choice to engineer the revitalization trust the way that it has been engineered, so that some people can get access to the trust and some people cannot. They've engineered the conversion, on the coast, to log exports through orders-in-council and through the way that they changed the Forest Act for the way that tenures are allocated and the way that tenures can be partitioned and purchased and become a private, tradable commodity. We will explore that at length.

The changes to the Forest Act that the government had done over — from 2003 forward, predominantly — has retracted both the minister and the ministry from a significant level of oversight in our forests, in the industry and on our tenure system. It's beginning to have significant implications. On the tenure system, for example, we're waiting for a decision from the competition bureau in Ottawa that would see Western Forest Products — a new player on the scene which has absorbed a number of older players there, but a player on the scene — have 44 percent of the allowable cut on the coast — in one company's hands.

If one looks at the revitalization plan, the intent was to diversify our tenure base, not to concentrate it. Yet on the coast, we see one company has 44 percent. In the interior we see two companies north of 100 Mile House that have the lion's share; in the southern interior we see one company that has the lion's share. That was not the intent of the plan, but you don't always get your intent when you make the degree of changes that this government made over the last number of years.

With respect to forest stewardship, we are actually losing control. The Forest Practices Board tabled their document today calling into question the legal frame-

work, the regulatory and legislative framework for forest stewardship and forest management going forward and, in there, challenge whether or not we have the legal framework to ensure that we will be managing for the future, that we will have good stewardship practices on the ground in the future.

Again, on the coast we have Cascadia, which put in one forest stewardship plan for all of its operating area — many, many concerns expressed because of the number of watersheds and sensitive areas — all under some omnibus forest stewardship plan. That's an area that we will explore during estimates.

[1520]

As the minister and his staff know, issues around waste that is being left on the ground and the implications of stumpage and take-or-pay, issues around log exports, as I've mentioned.... All of that is growing a degree of concern on the ground the likes of which certainly I haven't seen in my ten years in the industry and in my 22 years of living in Quesnel, which is a forestry town.

It's not much better in the interior. The southern interior has been dramatically impacted by the waterbedding effect of the two-bit stumpage. I'm being told that people aren't certain what the April 1 interior log grade changes mean for them. They don't know what it means for their business plans. They don't know if it means it's going to be up or down. Most suspect that they're likely going to be carrying higher stumpage in the central interior, and it may still keep the stumpage high in the south. Many companies in the south are threatened.

In the central interior, again we have the issues of corporate concentration; the waste allowances on the ground, which I've expressed concerns to senior staff around; and of course road conditions. The degree of undermining of our road structure, both in our Forest Service roads and in our primary highways, is significant. Only this year do we have some money put aside for that, and we have a lot of backlog to catch up with.

Then, of course, the implications of the mountain pine beetle on the long-term allowable cut. As the minister well knows, the mountain pine beetle is not only eating up the older trees, the 60-to-80-year-plus, it's eating up the middle-aged trees, if you will, and it's eating up the teens now. That has significant implications for our long-term allowable cut, and that's something that needs to be explored as well.

Against all of this backdrop, there's a presumption in British Columbia that what we need to do to be competitive is get costs down and to get costs down at the expense of communities, at the expense of workers and potentially — and this remains to be seen — at the expense of what goes on, on our land base.

As the minister was apprised last fall by CIBC World Markets, the real challenge to British Columbia is that we are now entering into a market where the world is awash with wood. It's awash with logs from various sources, and it's awash with dimension lumber from various sources. As we've seen most recently, China is moving quickly toward becoming a competi-

tor, not a consumer. That is causing quite a ripple through our industry.

The CIBC World Markets indicated, in fact — and again, it was in a ministerial briefing — that what we need in British Columbia is a Manhattan Project. We need something to the degree of magnitude of a creative way of thinking about what we do with our forests, or as one of the slides that was presented to the minister said: "You might as well lock up all of your forests in parks, because that forest has more value, in many respects, than just simply to liquidate it and to try and enter the marketplace on cost alone."

The Competition Council report — which the minister, I'm glad to see, mentioned and indicated that he was looking at; I look forward to a discussion about that — further exacerbated this debate by saying that British Columbians have an entitlement mentality they have to get rid of; that social rents are too high from our public forests; that wages are too high; that management costs are too high, and we haven't deregulated enough; and that stumpage, the cost of the fibre, is too high.

Despite all of those changes, when you go back to the CEOs and ask them: "What more do we have to do?" They say: "We want more of the same. We've got to go deeper, we've got to go harder, and we've got to get more of the same." Again, the predisposition there is that it's all about costs.

I believe there's a different vision out there. As I go around this province and talk to communities and to workers, there is a different vision. That vision presumes that what we need to do in the marketplace is drive on value — not to join the race to the bottom, but to make sure that the market demands wood from the highest certification possible, and to work with nations that want to sustainably manage their forests and change the market so that we have a high demand for certified wood at the highest level of certification.

[1525]

As the minister is well aware, the truck loggers have done a large poll in their area. One of the parts of this vision is more community control over the land base, more direct community input into decisions on what happens to the forest resources. Canfor just recently did six surveys in their operating areas for their CSA certification, which said exactly the same thing — that corporations control too much of the decision-making and policy-making, that communities and workers need to get more of that control back and that British Columbians deserve to derive more from their forests.

Part of that vision — along with driving certified wood, along with giving more local control — is to drive B.C. up the value chain to derive more jobs, more return to communities and workers, and more value for every log that we take out of our forest. In that is — not a change, I guess — a historical role for the Forest Service, and that is that they focus on excellence and forest stewardship.

As the Competition Council pointed out, what it wants — what the CEOs group wants — is a Forest

Service that has more of a business mindset. They're very explicit about that. I believe we need to protect the Forest Service, particularly in a results-based code, to be more clearly focused on stewardship values and to not fall into that trap where we have only business interests or predominantly business interests driving what they do on behalf of British Columbians.

Finally, I believe that if we start to make some of those changes, we can have a competitive forest industry that positions itself in the marketplace not as a cost competitor — that would be part of it — but as a value competitor that operates off of public forests and that derives public benefit and derives best value from every log. That vision is there. The problem we have is that we don't have that Manhattan Project on the go.

Every time we ask what we need to do to address the issues in the forest industry, we go back to the CEOs. I have worked with many of these CEOs and vice-presidents in these companies. They are good people, and they are well-meaning people. But they have one driver, and that is shareholder value. The province of British Columbia and the minister's office and the Forest Service have another value, and that is forest stewardship that derives the best value to British Columbians. That's a difference that will probably flavour what we have here in estimates debate for the next few days.

With that, I would like to move into the questions. I see that the minister has senior staff with him. For reference, what I'd like to do today would be to examine some aspects of the service plan particularly around the finances, move from there into a further exploration of softwood, then from softwood move into the Competition Council reports and state of the industry, and end up today, hopefully, with a look at the Forest Practices Board and B.C. Timber Sales.

With that in mind, the explicit questions. In the fiscal plan, where we have both the revenue and the costs of the ministry, on the revenue by source — and I'm looking at page 10 of the fiscal plan; and I know that the minister will have in front of him some revenue figures, so I'll just ask my question and wait for the answer — it has revenue from forests as a line item under natural resource revenue. It has the updated forecast for '05-06 at \$1.203 billion, and then it declines through '08-09 to \$965 million. Is that all revenue derived from forests? That's all of the rents, stumpage, taxes on log exports, B.C. Timber Sales — all of those fun things that are in the ministry.

[1530]

Hon. R. Coleman: There are a number of things we take into account when we're dealing with revenues. These are the net revenues after, obviously, we take out cost for stumpage and whatever credits we give back for roadbuilding and what have you when we do the stumpage calculation.

The things that affect it the most would be the volume expected to be harvested. We think that's going to go down over the next number of years, a portion of it because of mountain pine beetle, but also because dur-

ing 2006-2007 the U.S. housing market is expected to soften. That results in lower prices for lumber and other forest products for the next several years. The continuing strong Canadian dollar will also decrease stumpage revenue for the next few years because the dollar has quite an impact. Japanese lumber and pulp prices are a challenge for us, as the member knows, and the exchange rate with the U.S.

It's basically a conservative estimate, given those factors as part of the calculation.

B. Simpson: I have, by FOI, the estimates debate binder from last time, and I have a breakdown on revenue forecast that includes timber tenures, B.C. Timber Sales, total ministry stumpage revenue, other forest revenue and logging tax. In that breakdown — and that was the estimates — in the slide as you move towards that decline, where will the biggest hits come from? If I understand the minister correctly, the stumpage revenue because of a volume decline.... What about some of the other forest revenues?

Hon. R. Coleman: The biggest hit, as we describe it, is in the timber tenures, which is the major licensees and the major harvesting, expected to drop off over that period of time for the reasons I explained earlier.

B. Simpson: Are there any other revenues derived from the forests and from what the Ministry of Forests and Range has operational responsibility over? Or is this line item, which goes from the 1,200 in '05-06 down to 965 in '08-09, the sum total of all of the derivative revenues from what the Ministry of Forests and Range is operationally responsible for?

[1535]

Hon. R. Coleman: The numbers are actually lower than what you had in the previous estimates binder because of the adjustments going forward, as we've had to do this year's movement out with the Canadian dollar and what have you.

Maybe for the member's information, the '08-09 numbers are actually expected to be \$918.9 million now. We've actually lowered our expectations on revenue. It still comes from the timber tenure as being the largest of that that the drop would be expected within. My understanding is that, except for a small amount of export revenues, it would be, basically, targeted through a different ministry. Those are the total dollars from this ministry.

B. Simpson: I'm actually not going from the last budget. I'm going from this year's fiscal plan, so I appreciate getting the further update. But again, my point is that all of the operational areas of the Ministry of Forests are covered under this revenue stream. That revenue stream is declining. It must now be 34 to 35 percent over this three-year projected period. Using the figure of 1,203, which was in this fiscal, down to 965, I have a decline of 33 percent there. So if you go down to 918, it's declining even further.

Do I understand that correctly — that the revenue stream from all of the operational areas of the Ministry of Forests is declining by about a third over the next three years?

Hon. R. Coleman: That's correct — approximately.

B. Simpson: I'm actually surprised that the volume decrease expected is in the mountain pine beetle areas in the interior. I had an expectation the volume decrease would be on the coast, because we've already seen that, and it's starting to track that way. It's only a three-year window. My understanding of the AAC uplifts and so on that are coming on.... We still have some districts that haven't done their uplifts yet; 100 Mile House is just in the process. My understanding is that in the Quesnel TSA, even up in the Vanderhoof area, the volumes are still ramping up. So why would we see a decline over this three-year period? My expectation would be further out.

The direct question to the minister, then, is: what is the volume decline that we're going to see?

Hon. R. Coleman: There are two major things that affect what happens with regards to our commodity, no matter whether we have an uplift in mountain pine beetle or not: the housing market in the United States, because 85 percent of our market that we ship is to the United States; and the continuing strong Canadian dollar, which has an effect on whether somebody's going to sell at a certain price.

The interesting thing is, of course, that these numbers were done prior to us getting to a framework on softwood lumber, which may actually have a positive effect back the other way now with regards to government revenues. But we don't know that today. It'll take a little bit of work as we walk through the agreement to get there. But our expectation is.... I think what we try and do is try and be relatively conservative. Basically, stumpage rates are determined using the comparative value pricing system. Rates are determined in two steps. First, an average stumpage rate is determined based on lumber and chip prices as measured by Statistics Canada; and second, the stumpage rate for each cutting permit is determined.

Those are specific. As higher and lower depending on average, depending on quality of fibre and a number of other things.... As the member knows, the deteriorating quality of the fibre in the interior is probably, as the market adjusts, going to actually adjust the price of what we might get for us as far as the net revenue is concerned.

[1540]

It certainly is a huge challenge. I do know as we went through this process, I wanted to be very conservative, because I didn't want to put the fiscal plan at risk by being overly optimistic on the revenues. I'd rather outperform the revenues than underperform the revenues.

B. Simpson: The minister has indicated that this is predicated on a number of market factors, which then

drive back to what the expectations are on the land base, and then you take a look at your revenue stream from the land base. If I understand the minister correctly, it's an indication of the potential softening of the U.S. housing market, and the fiscal plan supports that and so does the group that does the independent forecast for rationalizing the government's plan.

What was the estimate on price, going forward? What was the price point that the government based this fiscal plan on?

Hon. R. Coleman: I'll read it right from the document for the member, because otherwise, I'm sure I'll get it wrong:

On the price side, U.S. lumber prices have remained reasonably steady since the last forecast undertaken September 2005. The price for SPF 2-by-4s is expected to average \$338 U.S. per million — I would imagine that's a thousand board feet — in 2006-2007 and decrease to — we're using an estimate of decreasing — \$300 U.S. early in 2007-2008 and remain at that level through a number of years. All that depends on the market and whether there are more housing starts.

Obviously, we would like to find some other markets for some of our wood.

B. Simpson: Just a bit of clarification for me for later discussion. In the softwood agreement the Random Length's framing composite lumber price was used. How does that differ from the price forecasting on 2-by-4 random lengths?

Hon. R. Coleman: The Random Lengths composite is usually quite a bit higher — \$40 to \$50 per thousand. We can, if the member wants, probably arrange for somebody to give him a technical-pricing briefing versus us trying to figure that out here today.

B. Simpson: I appreciate the offer. The point that I wanted to get clarification on is that we do our fiscal projections on one metric, yet in the softwood agreement another metric is used. So it strikes me that there's a misalignment there. If, for the seven-year agreement, we're going to use the Random Lengths framing composite lumber price, why wouldn't we do our fiscal forecasts on the same so that we have an understanding of what the market implications are for being in this agreement? Why two different metrics — one for fiscal forecast and one for seven-year agreement?

[1545]

Hon. R. Coleman: Because the SPF 2-by-4 is the massive, massive majority of the business, it's the best for us for pricing internally to project revenues. The composite includes a whole bunch of other things. It includes not just 2-by-4s and 2-by-6s and 2-by-10s, but it can also include things like siding and flooring and a number of other things.

On the softwood deal it was just that it was better because that's a number we can all focus on out of the commodity markets and understand what that is. It gives us a price point. But for doing internal calcula-

tions to actually measure back, as I understand it, and be more accurate to what we're actually getting out....

Part of this whole thing is about, you know.... If we have somebody who says, "We got this many logs," we know by historical figures, I would think, that if they've cut so many logs and they're putting out this many 2-by-4s.... We know how many they actually have had. The composite would probably muddy the waters on those calculations for revenue purposes.

B. Simpson: In the discussions around softwood — I want to come back to the substantive part of the discussions — did the minister have in front of him a longer-term projection on the Random Lengths framing composite index? If so, what was that longer-term projection? It strikes me that if I'm going to sign off on a deal that has that as the metric, I need to know what the projection is to know what the net impact will be on the proposed tax.

Hon. R. Coleman: Yeah, we had all kinds of technical data in front of us as we went through this discussion, both in Canada and in the U.S. I'm happy to share the Random Lengths composite forecasting, using what we call RECI, with the member, at dinner time or something. I may need the copy in front of me, but I'm certainly happy to share it with him. He can have it.

What we did was.... We had our technical people located strategically, I guess, to make sure that the information was available as numbers were moving back and forth, so people could understand what they were. In addition to that, not just us but most companies of any size across Canada were doing the same thing, I think, as were other jurisdictions, as well as were the federal guys. It was a pretty live process.

B. Simpson: I'd appreciate a copy if that's possible. That would be helpful.

Just a quick gist as you look at the forecast. This is a seven-year deal. What happens to that particular index over the course of the seven years? You've got three price ceilings here. I just want to get a sense.

All of the market indicators that I have seen and that are reflected in the government's fiscal plan are downward pressures on prices. I'm curious to know: what does that downward pressure look like as you forecast that metric out, say, just over the next three or four years?

[1550]

Hon. R. Coleman: The expectation is that over the next number of years we will be, over 50 percent of the time, at no tax and will be shipping volume without restrictions — if you're in the tax side of this scheme. If your region chooses a quota, then the quota is tied to a market share that is predetermined and is affected by pricing going downward. There's an estimation of about two to three months' work to be done on the agreement, in which this stuff will be worked through.

I hesitate to get into a whole lot of detail about what this thing looks like, because we have a frame-

work that now leads to the agreement. The framework is, I think, fairly sound and will lead us down the road to where we need to get to. Certainly, when we did the numbers coming through the discussions, this is what drove us to make sure that the price came down to where we actually established it.

B. Simpson: That 50 percent and the no-tax range is helpful, and we'll look at the framework shortly. Coming back, then, to the projections around revenue, the minister indicated that the stumpage component was based on CVP. Did that include the interior lumber grade changes? If so, did the ministry project an upward or downward adjustment as a result of the interior log grade changes, if they're using the CVP measure for revenue?

Hon. R. Coleman: The grade changes are revenue-neutral.

B. Simpson: Does the industry, in his estimation, see it as revenue-neutral to them? Quite frankly, what I'm hearing throughout the interior is a fear that we may be seeing higher stumpages. So while the ministry has it as revenue-neutral, what's the sense and the feedback that the minister is getting from those that will be impacted by that change?

Hon. R. Coleman: A lot of work was done on this with industry. It is revenue-neutral. That's not to say that in one area — where somebody has been getting a sawlog at a discounted price because they've been calling it something that it wasn't — the grade changes might not catch some of that and maybe affect some of the averages, but certainly it's revenue-neutral across the interior.

My expectation is that it allows us to measure the value of the fibre better as we do the grade changes, because that was one of the concerns about this whole thing. The member brought it up to me before about stumpage bingo and all that, and that's what this is aimed to eliminate. We started a fairly extensive process with industry last August, moving to the April 1 deadline, and worked it through pretty well.

B. Simpson: The stumpage bingo component. Again, I'm aware of a review of stumpage bingo and the impacts of that. What's the status of that review, now that the minister has raised it? When will we see that report, and will that report be tabled publicly?

[1555]

Hon. R. Coleman: The report is done by an independent consultant. The conclusion was no statistical correlation on the quarterly assessment with regards to this issue and no impact on the safety. We're sharing that, obviously, with the people we work with on WorkSafe B.C. and also with the safety group we have, which we participate on. I'm happy to get a copy of the report to the member.

B. Simpson: Again my thanks to the minister. On all those sleepless nights I can just go through these reports and cure my insomnia, but I do appreciate looking at that. As the minister is well aware, that's something that's been out there as an issue, and I'd be curious to see what the consultant ended up saying.

Back again to the revenue projections. The minister and the Premier have indicated to the Council of Forest Industries that we're going to change to market pricing in September in the interior. With respect to the projections, the minister indicated that it was based on CVP. Was there any account taken into what the potential adjustment will be to a market pricing system? What does the ministry believe will be the net impact on revenue of switching to market pricing in the interior?

Hon. R. Coleman: We do our projections based on the system we're operating in at the time. That's where the CVP comment comes from. Basically, we've modelled the system. We've done our modelling.

Obviously, through the next number of months, as we deal with some of the issues on softwood and moving forward, we would probably, after a quarter of operation, do our adjustments — once we saw what the impact was, if there were any. We're not in a position to put in place, on a revenue side for finance, a projection based on something that's not implemented yet. Once we implement it, we will then watch the system. If necessary, we will adjust our revenue projections accordingly.

B. Simpson: I think there are lots of people who have lots of ideas of what that may do. Certainly within the industry there's an assumption of some sort of correction in the marketplace as a result of the interior log grades shifting and looking for the overall hit to them to come down.

On the revenue side, we've established a decline in revenue. I believe we've established that all the operational area of Ministry of Forests derives that revenue. I'd like to switch now to the expense side and understand and explore some of the expenses here.

[1600]

First of all, again according to the fiscal plan on page 11, the Forests and Range expenses over the same period increase from \$834 million, or whatever it is you've got, up to \$976 million. Are there other expenses that are associated with the Ministry of Forests and Range's functional obligations that are not included in these expenses — that are associated with the operations on the land base but are not included as a line item? I'll come to the service plan, where the line item is out. But are there other expenses that accrue to government from managing our forests, which are not shown in the Ministry of Forests and Range line items?

Hon. R. Coleman: No, this is the operational cost of the ministry, and that number the member is quoting also includes the other part of the ministry, of course. That's it, except if we had an extraordinary fire season, which would then have an impact which we.... Us-

ally, I think, we have a notional access to contingencies if we needed it.

However, when I flew back from Edmonton the other day, I was very happy to see the level of the snowcap that's existing. I look at the snowcap differently than I did when I was worried about floods. Now I look at it and think: maybe it might stop the forest fires.

B. Simpson: I say a hearty "amen" to that comment.

The point I want to get at, though, is that for example, the revenue functions from the Ministry of Forests and Range have been put over to Revenue branch. There are expenses accrued to Revenue branch from collecting some of the stumpage and finances as a result of the operations. I'm seeing nodding. Does the Revenue branch then break down its costs associated with that particular aspect of managing our forests?

Hon. R. Coleman: We do the pricing and the billing, which is the big cost. Revenue does the collection. I guess you'd have to ask the Minister of Revenue what he spends on it. They do the collection. There is some cost recovery, I understand, back and forth between them and the forest companies as well. Our budget deals with the pricing and the billing, which is the most expensive part of that whole package of getting the revenue.

B. Simpson: Part of what I'm getting at is that there are dissipated costs for the work that we do to extract our forest resources and to have the forest industry work on our land base. Revenue branch is one of them. Some of the work that Agriculture and Lands would do around LRMPs, LRUPs, and so on, is costs that really accrue to setting objectives and doing plans and so on that the Ministry of Forests and Range then derives the operational plans from. So that's a cost of doing business in British Columbia that accrues to the Crown.

Minister of Environment bears costs. Economic Development and Community Services would bear costs, particularly now around some of the activities that they've got in mountain pine beetle and growing our presence in the Asia-Pacific.

[1605]

Even recently the Office of the Premier is having Ken Dobell involved down in Washington doing softwood negotiations. So while the line ministry is seeing this increase in costs, there are also a number of dissipated costs throughout government that need to be factored in there.

To the minister: at any point, has anybody sort of sat back — and I know this goes across governments and across parties — and said, "What does it really cost us to run the forests for industrial activity in this province?" to get a sense of that more holistic cost structure?

Hon. R. Coleman: I just simply don't have those numbers.

We have the integrated land management branch that does certain things on the land base. The member

is right. We participate in land use planning, but in some cases it benefits us as well, because we can actually have some certainty on the land base. We have forest roads that we've constructed also, obviously moving into some of the recreation values of the land base.

It's one big land base, and we manage our end of it and deal with our revenues and costs on it. I guess when well over 90-some percent of the land in British Columbia is owned by the Crown, it's going to be a big function of a lot of ministries of government. We're responsible for the forestry side where we know what our cost is to deal with the tenure, deal with getting the plan done, getting the approval out the door, collecting our stumpage as to what we think is the revenue coming off that base.

But there are all kinds of other values on the land base, of course, as the member knows. There was some argument that used to be made by his former MLA, prior to him coming into public office, about the value of a cow on the land base versus the value of a log. There were always some interesting discussions that took place with regard to that too.

I don't know that you would ever get to.... I think the integrated land management branch tries.... We do that integration, particularly things like oil and gas and other resources, but the reason we have other ministries is because there are so many values that come off the land. You have mining, you have oil and gas, you have tourism, you have agriculture, and you have forestry, of course, which is our responsibility. I'm simply not in an integrated position to give the member that answer today.

B. Simpson: I take the minister's point. There are other derived values, but there are also some explicit costs associated with just the forest activity on the forest land base that aren't shown — and that's the only point I want to make — in the ministry's cost structure. However, they are more directly related to what the ministry derives as revenue from that Crown land base.

Before we get into the breakdown, it appears to me, just from the gross numbers, that the Ministry of Forests and Range becomes a cost centre in '08-09 — that it derives less revenue than it costs to run the Ministry of Forests and Range. Is that correct?

[1610]

Hon. R. Coleman: Just so we can make sure we're talking about the.... In '08-09 the Ministry of Forests budget will be \$745 million. The \$976 million includes the difference, which is Housing. So if we're going to have a discussion around numbers, let's start with that one. The \$976 million includes Housing, which also has some offset revenues that come in from agreements we might have with the federal government and all of that.

We don't get credit for those offsets in our budget. We get the budget to actually operate from, and the revenues in '08-09 are \$918.9 million from forestry. There are offsets as we go through, and we actually

calculate costs that get offset against roads and silviculture and that sort of thing as well.

I don't know how we get to the answer the member is looking for, but even if you did the base from there, it's still \$100-and-some-odd million net if that was the cost of all the costs of forestry and all the revenues to government.

B. Simpson: Well, maybe what would be helpful, since the minister obviously has different projections in front of him, is just simply to go to what the forest revenue is in '05-06, '06-07, '07-08, '08-09 — because they're working off of different numbers than we've got here — and then what the actual Forests and Range portion of the ministry's costs are. I can make a quick table in front of me here so that I can see those figures lined out.

Hon. R. Coleman: We'll see what we can do about that. I just want to also remind the member that when the guy who drives a logging truck buys his gas, he's paying provincial gas tax. When he buys a tire, he pays the deposit to the environmental thing that would go into the tire levy. When somebody builds a mill, puts in capital and employs a few hundred employees, they all pay provincial income tax, and then the corporation pays tax.

So the dollar value that's driven out of the forest — a portion of it is actually the revenue to government off stumpage. The rest of it... Well, that's where actually the biggest impact on our land base is, as the member knows. Even something like a pulp mill — which has a huge impact economically in a community, employs a lot of people and that sort of thing — is not caught in the revenue projection of the ministry because the ministry actually performs a lot bigger service than just the collection and calculation of stumpage. It actually drives the entire sort of infrastructure of forestry in B.C.

But we will try and get a table so that we're talking about the same numbers back and forth. We'll get that to the member.

B. Simpson: Again, I take the minister's point, but the minister is also aware that we are losing jobs, we are losing mills, and we are losing road construction contractors, logging contractors. During this same time period where we're seeing a decline in revenue to the Crown, we're also seeing a decline in the forest sector in those additional revenues that are derived from activity on the land base.

So the minister's point is taken. But during this same period out to '08-09, we're going to see a decline on those additional multiplier revenues to the Crown as well and have, quite frankly, already seen it in many, many communities. My preference would be, if the minister has the figures in front of him, to put them on the public record by simply giving me those two figures now.

[1615]

Hon. R. Coleman: I'm going to do that, but I would caution the member. On Friday I'm going to Port Alice

to reopen a mill. In the member's own riding, Dunkley invested \$75 million in the last year and a half. So let's not say that everybody is closing and everybody is vacating the field.

Actually, a lot of the response I have from the value-added people is that they're about to reinvest because they now have a stable marketplace, which they can actually ship into, for things like siding and flooring and that sort of stuff that they've been disproportionately taxed and hit with duty for at the U.S. border.

We recognize that we've got some challenges, but it's not all doom and gloom everywhere. We've seen some other investments take place, and we should recognize those. We also know, as the member knows because the member was in the industry, that it's an industry that actually changes and adapts over time. Some come; some go. More additions; different things. We're dealing with the OSB issues up in the interior and pellet plants and those sort of things that we're trying to get going.

Out of the service plan of '06-07 to '08-09, the re-stated estimates for the costs of running the ministry in '05-06 was \$652.803 million. The '06-07 estimates are \$723.814 million; in '07-08, \$738.261 million; and in '08-09, \$745.778 million. I think I said millions, not thousands, on the previous one, but it is millions. It would be nice if it was thousands, I suppose.

On the revenue side, the performance indicators. Crown Forests and Range gross revenue in billions in '04-05, the predicted number, actual, was \$1.322 billion. In '05-06 the estimated actual estimation is \$1.157 billion. In '06-07 the projected is \$1.073 billion. In '07-08 it's projected at \$962 million. In '08-09 it's projected at \$919 million. That's stated in the service plan as \$0.919 billion, but that's the same thing.

I think when you deal with a commodity and predicting its revenues out for any lengthy period of time, it is always a huge challenge. Something could happen in the United States with regards to a major event like a Katrina or something like what happened in Florida with hurricanes, and it could change the entire projection of our revenues because the value of our product could go up. That's the challenge governments always have with commodities, whether it be this one or something like natural gas. Natural gas, for instance — we were spiking in December. If somebody had said, "Let's use the number we're spiking at," we could have actually tried to think we could book a whole bunch more money. But it moved down about \$3 or \$4 in a short period of time, per whatever the measurement is, and each dollar is \$300 million to government.

The challenge on a commodity is going to be... Even looking at the historical projections of forestry over the last number of years by Revenue branch, it's pretty hard to hit the target — the nail on the head — when you're projecting out that far on a commodity. You don't know what could happen with the commodity. As the member talked about earlier in his comments, there are some other challenges outside of North America with regards to our products from ju-

risdictions like China, and the Russian wood that's expected to hit some mills in the eastern bloc that are being built and that sort of thing. It's going to be a very fluid file, I think, over the next few years.

B. Simpson: Fluid is a term we use in our caucus for when we're in the House here. That's why I giggled a bit there. Yes, fluid is a good word.

With respect to the minister's comments about the versatility of the industry, the ingenuity of the industry and so on, the minister is also well aware that we can't sugar-coat what's going to happen in the pulp sector. Everybody who's looked at it says that we're going to be hard pressed for that sector to come out in the next decade with any mills left in British Columbia. It's that competitive in the global marketplace.

[1620]

We're also going to be particularly hit in dimension lumber, because where most of the world's fibre supply is going to come in at is dimension lumber. They're going to be targeting the U.S. market. Yes, there are a few bright spots around, but as the minister knows, in the southern interior it's very hard to point them out. I know that one of the drivers for the minister in getting a softwood settlement was getting that cash back for some of those mills there. Without it, those companies are in trouble, and there's no way to sugar-coat that.

We see that even in Canfor's case, they took their pulp mills and flipped them into an income trust because they are looking at the future and, I think, doing the right thing from a shareholder perspective. But it really calls into question the long-term viability of those pulp mills.

We'll talk about value-added shortly and the future of value-added, but I think the minister and I both agree that that's where the future has to be. It can't be in the commodity business as our sum total of activity.

Back again to the revenue projections. I just need one figure, if the minister has it. It used to be tracked, so I don't know if it still is. That's the number of jobs, direct employment, derived in the B.C. industry in 2005.

Hon. R. Coleman: I look forward to the other discussion about value-added, because the member is correct. A large dimension mill that is actually a modern mill can operate with very few employees, given the technology that's out there today. When somebody is making finger-jointed 2-by-4s or siding or what have you, we have to start to learn how to drive that value out, because we are going to face some international and world challenges with regards to this stuff.

That's why, just to let the member know, in the softwood memorandum of agreement there is a third-country measurement to market share. I think we've finally got the U.S. to recognize — as I've been saying to them for a long time — that while you're fighting with your neighbour to the north, somebody's sneaking in your back door and stealing your marketplace, and you should pay attention to that.

I'll give the member the Canada stats. We will get the B.C. stats. We don't have them here, but we've just sent a request for them. The Canada stats in 2005: for forestry and logging, 7,150 jobs; support activity for forestry, 5,164; wood product manufacturing, 34,284; and in paper manufacturing, 12,396. To anticipate the next question from the member, this is down slightly from '04-05 in the first three — actually, in three out of the four. The wood product manufacturing seems to have held pretty steady, and the other two are down slightly.

B. Simpson: Those are the Canadian stats?

Hon. R. Coleman: StatsCan.

B. Simpson: StatsCan? Okay. If the B.C. stats come in on that, I'd like to see those figures as well. Thank you for that.

Let's take a look at page 17. Again, by the looks of it, this has changed since this was published, so I'm just going to have to work off of the page in the service plan that we have to work with. With respect to staffing....

[1625]

I have to say that I find the current service plans not complete enough. It's very difficult to pull information. If I go back and look at service plans prior to this changeover, there was certainly a lot more information and a lot more detail in the plans. I could get how much silviculture activity by region and broken down. I could get cut levels. I could get employment. There was all kinds of detail in the plans.

I know from the perspective of streamlining and people being able to have a palatable summary or report.... But as the critic, the more detailed report actually would truncate some of the questions that we might have. There are some questions here that go to the lack of detail in this.

In the FTEs — and I want to talk about the explicit parts of this shortly — I don't see and hear where we have our line item for contractors and the cost of contractors. In the old service plans we used to actually have it broken down, and you could even break it down by district. Does the ministry have a figure for contractor costs?

Hon. R. Coleman: We don't have the number right in front of us. I do know that the largest number is actually in B.C. Timber Sales, out of the number that we have for consultants and contractors. We will get those numbers for you. I actually take the member's comments fine on the service plan. One of the criticisms of them that we had from the public was that they were too big and too cumbersome for most people to even get an opportunity to have an understanding of service plans. So there was a corporate decision to try and make them more, I guess, user-friendly to the public.

There is a more detailed business plan for the ministry, and we're more than happy to give it to the member. It is also, as far as we're concerned, public

information, which would give you a lot of that detail that you wouldn't normally get in a service plan. It's the stuff that we talk about in the past. We will endeavour to get you a copy of that.

B. Simpson: I think that would be very helpful. Again, there is the public consumption of what's going on and taking a look at it. But in my obligation to the public, I'm supposed to look at the more detailed portions of it. The business plan, if that detail is in there, would certainly be beneficial.

One of the things about the contractor costs that I'd like to know is: does it then appear...? It's not a line item under the FTEs as they used to.... They used to have a table, and I'm looking at one just now from '95-'96 that has a breakdown by region, has salaries and benefits and the FTE allocation — then professional services or contract services broken out as well. Given the government's downsizing and work that was done — and we had this debate in the last session — it would be nice to know what was shifted.

I can tell you from my own experience in the industry, I have helped to engineer a number of downsizings. If you don't track your professional services or your contract services very, very closely, you quickly find out that all you've done is outsourced the work, and the costs have not gone away. So from a metric perspective, that is a very important metric for tracking, particularly after you've so-called right-sized an organization. I would certainly like to see the contractor figures.

With respect to what's on page 17 of the service plan, are those contractor figures included? As the minister indicated, most of it's in B.C. Timber Sales. Are they then included in that line-item cost just as part of the cost of B.C. Timber Sales?

[B. Lekstrom in the chair.]

Hon. R. Coleman: Yes, they are.

[1630]

B. Simpson: With respect to how the ministry, even in their business plan, tracks contractor costs, how does it track it? Does it identify it by region? Does it identify it by specialty area? How are those costs tracked?

Hon. R. Coleman: First of all, I'm very aware of that challenge, as a matter of fact, so much so that I've actually been tracking this with my ministry. We can do it by business area. We can do it by region. We can do it by classification.

As the member knows, in B.C. Timber Sales, for instance, it could be a forester, or it could be a geologist. It could be a number of things. There are codes for all of this that allow us to track them, so we are watching them.

B. Simpson: Are those tracked out in the business plan, or is that a separate report that the minister then gets if the minister is tracking it? Does he get it as a

separate report to him, or is it just part of the business plan, and you break it out?

Hon. R. Coleman: Let's be clear. I get the general information that I ask for. I don't track the daily operation of the ministry. That's the deputy's job, and he gets that information in way more detail than I do. I actually ask what the general numbers are as we go through budget. I ask questions with regards to how we're managing contracts. I have expectations on the measurements, and my expectation is that they're doing that. So that's how it's done.

I'm not the one that's actually looking at XYZ contract by XYZ regional office. They all have their spending authorities within the budget that they're supposed to be responsible for. The finance department and the deputy monitor that. I ask the general question on a relatively regular basis to say: where are we at with certain things? That information is provided to me through the deputy minister.

B. Simpson: The point I'm getting at, though, is that I think it's a metric that the public needs to have. Across all of the various ministries, we did a significant downsizing. Again, anybody who's worked in a large corporation in the private sector will tell you that you get creep. You just come right back up again. You come right back up, whether it's adding to your own workforce or through contract services. So every five years you have to go in and do some housecleaning, because you just get creep.

In this case, as the minister well knows, one of the negotiating items with the BCGEU was no more contracting-out of the government services. I think from the public perspective, and certainly as the person responsible for engaging the ministry with respect to transparency and accountability to the public, I'd like to see those figures.

If the deputy minister is tracking those figures, then I think that's a report that the public would like to see. I would like to see a year-over-year breakdown of contractor services to the ministry relative to the FTEs, starting back in the 2001-2002 fiscal. Is that kind of report available?

[1635]

Hon. R. Coleman: The operating expense level is reported out through Public Accounts. We don't do anything in this ministry that we haven't done historically with regards to professional services that would have any difficulty with the BCGEU.

B. Simpson: I'm not sure what the last comment meant. The BCGEU was explicit publicly that one of their negotiating points in this last round of negotiations was no more contracting-out of their services. One of the concerns is whether or not the line services that are being done by individuals were jobs that were let go from the ministry.

The point I'm making is that from a fiscal management perspective, this is an item — and the minister

has already admitted it — that you'd want to track. You'd want to know whether you made gains or whether all you've done is outsourced at a more expensive rate. Now, rather than paying a regular wage and benefits and pension, you're paying a day rate for consultants who try to accrue all of that into their day rate, and you can quickly run up a tab that's more expensive than if you had those people as employees in the ministry.

Again, my question to the minister is: how can I find that information? How can the public find that information — if, from the cuts that this government made to today, we haven't simply had creep and we haven't simply gone back up, but we've done it through contract services as opposed to FTEs?

Hon. R. Coleman: We do the best we can. I mean, the ministry has changed. For instance, we dropped recreation, which is now in another ministry, which affected an operational cost in our ministry. On the other side of it, we gained inventory because of what we took back on the takeback, and that affected what we do at B.C. Timber Sales. But as we've done that, we've always....

This has always been a ministry that has a certain amount of professional staff within the ministry and also has some professional contracts outside the ministry, depending on volume and what's going on in any specific year and what impacts the service plan on the land base.

If I can answer the question to the member as best I can, I am comfortable as the minister that I haven't had scope creep within this ministry in the last couple of years. I'm comfortable with how we're handling our contracts and how we're making sure that we're managing those within our fiscal plan in the manner we always have.

Frankly, I'm comfortable with my management team. As I've worked through the last ten months as a minister, as we've got to know each other, as we've understood how the ministry operates — how I can look at the historical side of the ministry as a ministry, look at previous service plans and finances and ask the questions — I'm satisfied that we don't have scope creep, and I'm satisfied that we're managing the ministry properly. So I'm comfortable with my management team and their performance at this point in time. On the best advice and information that I have, I believe that we're in good shape.

B. Simpson: Again, I'm glad the minister is comfortable. My job is to see if the public is comfortable. That's the question today in estimates. Is the public comfortable?

I'm not talking about scope creep. I'm talking about whether or not we have simply swapped out a bunch of jobs to contract workers who don't have benefits, who don't have pensions — whether or not what we've done over the last number of years, since what people in the union and the public call Black Thursday, is simply ramp back up again with a whole bunch of con-

tractors. Quite frankly, again I state that we used to track this.

I'm looking at a service plan here that used to track — and it's not that hard — salaries and benefits by region and professional services by region. I'm not saying that we never use professional services. What I want to know is: what's the balance? Have we now simply switched out and have professional services costing us? As I look at the FTEs here, we're growing FTEs in a number of areas, and I want to look at those areas to see if they're appropriate.

[1640]

If we're growing FTEs and we're growing a whole bunch of contract services, I would argue that the cost of contract services often exceeds the cost of having somebody in your organization who's part of your organization, who helps to boost the morale of your organization, who works with the team in the organization — as opposed to having a bunch of contractors coming out and doing a bunch of bits and pieces that bolt on.

My question isn't whether the minister is comfortable. My question is: where can I get the information?

Hon. R. Coleman: First of all, we'll get you the numbers.

Secondly, you know, the member may want to refer back to Black Thursday, but we have a collective agreement with the BCGEU for four years. That certainly tells me that there's some proof in the pudding as well. If there weren't, we wouldn't have that agreement. If they were not satisfied with how we were going to operate and how we are operating, they wouldn't have signed a collective agreement for four years with government. We follow the collective agreement, to start with. That's number one.

Number two, within the agreement we use the business case analysis to determine the best delivery mechanism. That's how the ministry should operate, and there's no argument there with anybody with regard to that. We're happy to provide the numbers on the contractors. The member will actually find that.... He should look at it, when he does look at it, in light of the new roles and duties that have been adjusted as we've taken on B.C. Timber Sales and adjusted how the ministry operates. We're happy to provide the numbers to the member and have all the debates in the world about how many contractors we should or should not have, depending on what we're doing on the land base.

When the member looks at that and enters into that discussion, I would ask that he keep in mind the large increase we've had to deal with in the annual allowable cut in the interior of B.C. with regards to what pressure that puts on our staff and the number of staff we may have had to bring on, which may not have been appropriate in 2001 when the first business plan was written simply because at that time there was probably less of an understanding of the impact of the pine beetle.

B. Simpson: My first question was just: where can I get the numbers that led to the debate? I'd be happy to look at the numbers, and I will keep in mind what the

minister has indicated. But I also, as I've indicated, have lots of experience in downsizing and watching the creep, and I think the public deserves to have some transparency and accountability on that.

Let's look at the FTEs then, since we're taking the contractors. Where we've got protection against fire and pests, the indication by all counts, as the minister has already suggested with respect to the snowcap, is that potentially we are going to see an increase in catastrophic fire events. We've got greater potential for fire — and we'll get into fire more explicitly — yet I noticed the protection against fire and pests flatlines in terms of FTEs post '06-07.

We also have significant pest issues, as the minister already indicated in his opening comments, well beyond the mountain pine beetle. My understanding is that the ministry was starting to look at adding more forest health specialists. I have two questions this time. Do forest health specialists fit into that increase between '05-06 and '06-07? Is that where they come? And how would we accommodate if we do have an increase in fire activity and fire work on the ground, with that FTE count being fixed? Do you just adjust it on an annual basis, or what do you do?

[1645]

Hon. R. Coleman: The answer to the first question is yes. On the second, we keep a number of staff on full time with regards to fire. What we then do within the ministry is we have people that are part-timers whom we call up, depending on the fire season. The reason that number flatlines is that basically it's based on a historical number, and it adjusts up and down depending on the fire season. It affects the ten-year average, actually, on fire seasons. We basically try and establish the best projection, and then we see what the season looks like. That can then affect the next year's out-projections with regards.... We have a 23-person FTE increase in forest health in there.

B. Simpson: Part of fire, though — and we had this discussion in the last debates — is looking at fire differently as a management tool, as something we do very differently on the ground. We actually go and do more prescribed burns. We use fire in different ways. My understanding, again, is that this doesn't include that. Does that mean that as the ministry projects forward, they're not projecting to have more staff under protection against fire and pests to deal with fire very differently than just protecting against it?

The report from the ABCFP and the report from the Forest Practices Board both indicated to the minister that fire needs to be looked at differently. We need to use it as a tool above and beyond protection. I'll come back to fire more deliberately later on. I just want to be clear the assumption in here is that this is predominantly fire protection. There isn't a lift in here, or there are no projections in here for actually having fire used differently on the land base and, hence, some more functions added to the ministry to use fire more as a forest management, forest health tool.

Hon. R. Coleman: Both. In there is to deal with fire as a tool to manage for protection and for forest health and also an increase to deal with forest protection. It also includes Filmon, of course, because that sort of goes both ways on that. The dollars are there for both.

B. Simpson: As I said, we'll explore fire in a bit more detail a little later on, but that's helpful context for me.

With respect to, again, some of the FTEs here.... Compliance and enforcement stays static across the projections at 292. In order to put this in context, what were the inspection numbers for '05-06? And if the ministry projects out over the service plan period, what is the projection year over year to '08-09?

First off, I need '04-05 and, if we have it, '05-06. Then, do you project out the number of inspections for C and E in order to come up with your costs and your FTEs?

[1650]

Hon. R. Coleman: We expect our inspections to be about the same over the next period of time as they were in '04-05, which was 16,651. That's the number that seems to be the trend over the previous two years. Our expectation would be that it's probably the same in this past year and will be the same or thereabouts going forward depending on a number of factors, but that appears to be our historical capacity.

B. Simpson: As we switch to a results-based code, which we start this year, all the FSPs have to be in by the end of this year. The ministry's promise during the consultation process in the forestry revitalization plan was that we would give the trust up front on the FSPs, and we'll get into those. We will give the trust up front, but we guarantee to the public an extensive C and E regime on the ground to be looking at whether or not we are achieving those results.

One would think, given this is a new program and the new program actually hits the ground in terms of operations next year, that one would want to put some more C and E resources out there in order to see what's going on — at least in the early years, if nothing else — until the regime change occurs.

I'm actually quite shocked that the C and E budget stays fixed and the number stays fixed when the government promised an extensive C and E regime, particularly if one looks at the decline in inspections year over year. From 2000 to 2001 there were 31,109 inspections; '01-02, 25,151 inspections; '02-03, 21,000 inspections. Then we come down to '03-04, and there are only 16,000. Effectively, we've cut inspections in half since 2000-2001.

We're going into a new results-based regime in which the government promised that the trust we would give in the FSPs would be supported with an extensive compliance and enforcement regime. Yet compliance and enforcement remains static based on today's number of inspections, which are half of what they were historically.

I'd like to understand the thinking of how the projections around C and E, both in budget and in terms of FTEs, matches with the promise to the public of this province that the results-based code would be managed hard on the ground through a C and E regime.

Hon. R. Coleman: Well, first of all, the 2000-2001 number — 31,109 — is a number that's based on what was not a consistency or a measurement of any kind of what actually constituted an inspection. So in the last couple of years we have identified what the actual record of inspections was and what actually was defined as an inspection. That's why that number varies from then.

[1655]

Secondly, on our C and E side, there is more of a focus on some more legalistic and more complex investigations as well as our inspections. But on top of that, the Forest and Range Practices Act resource evaluation program budget has also been increased by \$12 million over the next three years to increase the effectiveness evaluation of FRPA and how it is being implemented.

B. Simpson: Where is the FREP cost itemized in this cost sheet?

Hon. R. Coleman: It's in the stewardship budget.

B. Simpson: Again, the real question here, though, is: is the minister saying FREP is going to do field inspections and investigations?

Hon. R. Coleman: They go hand in hand actually. FREP helps to ensure that our forest practices actually deliver on our commitment to sustainability and proper stewardship. Our compliance and inspection goes out, after we work through that process and they're on the land base, to say: did you actually do what you said you would do and make the inspection on compliance and inspection? The two of them go hand in hand.

We launched it in 2003. Since then, we've worked with stakeholders and have identified 41 priority questions that need to be asked as we evaluate our success on issues like biodiversity, water quality and soil disturbance. I think it's important that everybody understands what the standard is so that when we're doing a compliance and inspection on these things, we have that ability to measure on our inspection and compliance side. A lot of things go hand in hand, and these two go hand in hand.

B. Simpson: How does FREP report out?

Hon. R. Coleman: We expect to publish regular reports publicly on FREP.

B. Simpson: When?

Hon. R. Coleman: With the programs ramping up, we expect to have the first report out in the next few

months. Last year the ministry staff in 18 districts monitored for biodiversity and riparian fish values on 190 cutblocks and 280 streams. The data is being analyzed to see how we measure up when it comes to sustainability.

This year's funding is going to allow us to expand the program to all forest districts in B.C., which was always our intention as we ramped up to the end of this year. It's going to help us prove what we already know, help us with what we know and what we should know better. I'm sure that at the end of the day, it will actually show that we're still a world leader in sustainability and forest management.

It will be reported out in two ways: publicly and also by use of a website so that information is made public as we come through this process.

[1700]

B. Simpson: If I understand what the minister just said, FREP is on the ground doing work just now. Isn't that looking at Forest Practices Code regime when the intent of FREP is to look at FRPA implementation, if I understand that correctly? Why is FREP on the ground now looking at practices that come under the FPC?

Hon. R. Coleman: There are standards for biodiversity and stream management and those things on the land base right now. A lot of licensees will probably continue to use that as their base case, so we're out there monitoring that.

At the same time, I think it's important that the forest resources evaluation program be ready to hit the ground running so they're in the field doing some of this — working with the districts to look at what the existing values are so they can have an understanding that if a licensee in the future, when they're doing a forest and range agreement or doing a plan on a land base.... If their biologist or whatever says, "We can do this one this way," they'll have some understanding of the base standards there and what they can do.

My understanding is that we're working with the stakeholders, like I said, on the 41 priority questions. Those folks are out in the field. They're starting to develop the indicators on 11 of the 12 key FRPA values. They're implementing the monitoring protocols on three FRPA values, which are the three I mentioned earlier. This is going to allow us to expand the program to all forest districts. So it's really, I guess, a transition period.

B. Simpson: I wasn't intending to explore FREP just now, but since it's here, let's just do a little bit.

Will FREP be looking at the legislative framework of FRPA as well? Is the land base work going to be a derivative of things like the FSPs? Again, we'll get into that shortly. As FREP looks at what's happening on the ground, will it also — as an example — look at some of the FSPs next year with respect to what they see on the ground and give counsel to government around the alignment of the legislative framework, the forest stewardship plans and the actual practices on the ground?

Hon. R. Coleman: Eventually it might. In order to accomplish its objectives, FREP is going to develop science-based, peer-reviewed monitoring and evaluation indicators and protocols. It's going to evaluate the status and trends of the resource values under the Forest and Range Practices Act. It's going to determine whether resources are being managed in a sustainable manner.

It's going to communicate the results of the evaluations, and it can recommend improvements to forest and range practices, policies and legislation in the future, as we go through this. So it's a process that allows us to develop, evaluate, determine, communicate and recommend.

B. Simpson: Will FREP be looking at the FSPs this year, then, as part of their work as an independent entity looking at what the FSPs do? It's our one kick at the can between now and December 31 of this year.

[1705]

Hon. R. Coleman: FREP is for the monitoring of the FSPs over time.

B. Simpson: Does that mean that no, they won't look at the FSPs with a view to what it is they're going to have to monitor?

Hon. R. Coleman: They're not doing the day-to-day review of the FSPs. That's the role of the statutory decision-makers.

B. Simpson: I'm not asking if they're going to be doing the review of the individual FSPs, but surely somebody within the ministry must be monitoring the rollup of what the FSPs are telling us because it's our first pass at a results-based code. The minister is fully aware that the Forest Practices Board issued their report today. We've raised, in this House, that there are significant concerns around the FSPs.

My question is not whether they're going to examine every FSP. The minister indicated that FREP would look at legislative issues. FSPs are butting up against legislative issues, and again, we'll look at this in more detail. I'm just trying to understand why FREP wouldn't examine, at a 10,000-foot level, what FSPs are doing and give advice to the ministry with respect to what the implications might be on the land base if this is the regime we're locking ourselves into for five years.

Hon. R. Coleman: First of all, the forest resources evaluation program is monitoring the land from the time the plans come into place. The statutory decision-makers — the chief forester, the assistant chief forester, the people that will monitor those plans and their preparation to bring them to fruition — are already on the ground. They're called the Ministry of Forests staff, and they're going to do their job. My understanding is that's what they're doing. Now, I don't see why I should create a different overlay on top of that when I already have the statutory decision-makers in place.

B. Simpson: I'm not asking you to create something; you've got something that's created already. You've got something that's created with a view to examining what the on-the-ground impacts of the Forest and Range Practices Act will be. The on-the-ground impact is going to be a derivative of the forest stewardship plans, and as a consequence — because the minister already said that he would seek advice from that group — they would be closely aligned with the on-the-ground impact versus the rollup of all the plans that are there. The individual Ministry of Forests and Range district officers and designated decision-makers are dealing with what's in their area.

Let's come back and look at that within FSPs so that we can examine that a little bit more closely, so we understand the implications of that. Let me close off FREP with a question. As the minister has articulated FREP, reading the Forest Practices Board service plan, it looks like the Forest Practices Board is going to be doing a lot of work on how you look at the work done on the ground with respect to the Forest and Range Practices Act. It's shifted the emphasis from compliance to prescriptive rules, and then from their plan it says that this change requires extensive revision of audit and investigation systems to recognize the move towards objectives-based legislation. They talk a lot about some of the work they're going to have to do to reposition themselves.

What's the relationship between the Forest Practices Board — and its obligation from a monitoring, investigation, third-party standpoint — and FREP?

[1710]

Hon. R. Coleman: Well, the Forest Practices Board's work is targeted. It's based on risk assessment. It's site-specific indicators of monitoring.

As the member knows, the Ministry of Forests work is broad. It's provincewide; it's larger in base and tenure and information. It's based on science, in sampling and in theory. It takes the entire broad operation of the land base into account.

The Forest Practices Board, to repeat, is a targeted one. It's based on risk. It does an assessment. It's probably more targeted to licensees than the overall management of the forests.

B. Simpson: What structure, then, exists within the Ministry of Forests and Range to do the 10,000-foot-level evaluation of these FSPs if they come in? I had thought and obviously made an assumption, and we know what happens when you make an assumption. I had thought that FREP would have picked up that responsibility. But where in the Ministry of Forests and Range is there a group or some individuals that are sitting and examining the FSPs' implications as they come in? My understanding is that we've got about 30 that are approved, and we've got a whole bunch more to come in. Who's learning the lessons early and feeding that forward throughout the organization?

Hon. R. Coleman: It's the team. It's the forest practices branch, the regional offices, the district offices, the

planning process. The district personnel will be actively involved with licensees at the preplanning stage, discussing expectations and exchanging information. There'll be more dialogue amongst professionals and increased reliance on information on the non-statutory realm.

Innovation and flexibility to adapt to local conditions is what we want to bring about, while meeting environmental standards. We must meet FRPA's legal requirements. We're relying on professionals to collect, analyze and interpret information from a variety of sources, including the public. The professionals will prepare plans which identify and manage the risks. For FRPA to be successful, each partner needs to fulfil their new roles and responsibilities.

For the member's concern or the issue that he brings up, it's the forest practices branch, our regional and district staff that are doing that work.

B. Simpson: I take it there's not a distinct, discrete group in the ministry charged with the responsibility of examining the implications of the early forest stewardship plans with a view to giving advice to all of the designated decision-makers in all of the regions about what they're learning from those early plans, so that it feeds forward into this big lump of plans that we're going to have coming forward in the third and fourth quarters.

It strikes me that if you're in a change process as significant as this, where we're changing the whole ground rules, you would want a group that was managing that change in a lot more sophisticated and distinct fashion than just dissipated conversations within the organization.

Surely there's a change group here that's managing this process a little bit more tightly than the minister's last comment would suggest.

[1715]

Hon. R. Coleman: Maybe this will clarify it for the member. We have the forest practices branch, we have regional directors, and we have district staff. Integrated within the ministry with those people is what we're calling the provincial implementation team, which is tracking the submission of FSPs. There's a group working within that, which is tracking that. That's the tracking group, if that's, as I think, what the member is trying to get to.

Obviously, my more broad answer was the forest practices branch, the regional and district, but within that there is also an implementation team that's monitoring and tracking the submission of FSPs.

B. Simpson: How does this provincial implementation team report out and to whom?

Hon. R. Coleman: They report through to the ADMs, the deputy minister and the chief forester.

B. Simpson: How is that different from the group that met October 26, 2005 — the joint ministry-industry operations forum — in which a group was brought

together to look explicitly at things like FDPs, FSPs, silviculture prescriptions, CP applications, reappraisals, etc., with a view towards trying to streamline these processes? Again, you've got FSPs rolled in here, but you've got all of the other activities.

According to one of the slides that was presented, one aspect of that was delivering consistent approaches from the provincial to the regional to the district levels on administering the legislated required policy, required plans, etc., while preventing a cookie-cutter approach. So is this a different group? Is this a standing group of industry and ministry staff that's doing this similar function?

Hon. R. Coleman: That's an example of the provincial implementation team's work — that one. But there are some other examples that also include COFI's FRPA training on how to create an FSP guide; the Ministry of Forests and Range training, including focused training for decision-makers; Ministry of Forests and Range administrative guide to FSPs; info flips for contractors and ranchers; other FRPA bulletins; the provincial implementation team's FSP workshop on tips for your first FSP guide; and other workshops.

That is one of the things that group has put together to help in the transition and education and understanding of FSPs. They're the ones that are the coordinating body. They're the ones working within the ministry, and then they work with those other groups, like that workshop the member refers to. They were part of that. It's part of the overall integrated approach, as I would understand it, with regards to these things.

[1720]

B. Simpson: Has this provincial implementation team raised any concerns with the minister about the legislative framework around FRPA and concerns about the first 30 FSPs coming in as legal documents as opposed to stewardship documents?

Hon. R. Coleman: Frankly, it's too early for that. We're early in the stages of all these things as we come through it. There's obviously acknowledgment that it's going to be a continued improvement process and a continued process to try and get to the results that we're looking for. But at this stage, as we're going into it, to bring up legislative changes when we're just in the early implementation and measurement stage in tracking of submissions of FSPs.... It's probably a little too early for that part of it.

B. Simpson: The minister had used the word "fluid" before, and I appreciate the staff being fluid as we follow the flow of the thinking here. I will come back to some of the financial stuff, but since we're on this topic, let's pursue it a little bit further.

I find the logic of the "too early" troublesome, because you would think that you would want.... The degree of concerns that are being raised around FSPs.... Surely the minister must be aware of it. The deputy minister must be aware of it.

In the Cascadia case, I was inundated with queries from all kinds of people around that FSP. There were queries up north. The Forest Practices Board released a document today expressing very serious concerns around FSPs. We're almost halfway through the year, and according to the ministry's own time frame, we have to have all of the FSPs approved by December 31.

So if it's too early just now to make an assessment of what it is we've created here and what some of the traps in the legislative framework are causing, then when will be the appropriate time, particularly if this provincial implementation team is supposed to be looking at continuous improvement? Why don't we have a continuous improvement process for FSPs that is evolving FSPs this year? At the end of this year, it will be five more years before we get into them, and we will have locked the whole land base into something which today the Forest Practices Board called into question.

If it's too early just now, when will it be an appropriate time? When we've passed them all, we can sit there and go: "Oh jeez, we've just locked ourselves into five years under these FSPs, minimum legal documents, that don't tell us what's going to happen on the land base."

My question to the minister is — and let me be very explicit: is the provincial implementation team the place that is tracking all of the provincial concerns — the first nation concerns, the community concerns, the foresters' concerns — around what we're doing with these FSPs now with a view towards evolving the FSP process this year before it's too late?

[1725]

Hon. R. Coleman: First of all, legislation can be dealt with at any time as you go through the transition and the growth and the adaptation of what you're doing. It's too early to draw conclusions about the efficacy of FRPA and the FSC, but not too early to learn from the board and others. Yes, the provincial team is monitoring and is the tracking body for those concerns the member outlined.

Government, industry — the team are all working hard to implement. The Forest Practices Board recognizes that the code's prescriptive regulatory approach was ready for a change and that the new results-based approach is a major and potentially world-leading innovation. Obviously, the member knows that when you start to do change, though, it is.... I hate to use the word "fluid" again, but I will.

The board's report is timely at this point, as far as I'm concerned. I find any report timely, and it's a useful contribution for continuous reports. The provincial team, the implementation team, will review that, as I will. We will work through that. We will continually monitor and watch this process as we go through. Certainly, our ability to respond is there. I think the big thing is that it's just too early to draw any conclusions at this point in time.

B. Simpson: The minister indicated that you can change legislation anytime. In reading the Forest Prac-

tices Board report today, it's indicating that there is substantive change that has to occur to make these FSPs work. The board indicated — as every submission to government indicated — that for a results-based code to work, you had to have in your overarching plans explicit, measurable results.

The board has indicated what you're getting, and it's my experience.... I've read these reports. I've met with foresters out in the field, both in industry and ministry staff, and what we're getting are legal documents that set objectives, not results. These are not results-based plans we're getting. We're getting objective-based plans that are qualified by legislation — by a legislative phrase, with the "unduly" clause.

As a consequence, the board is raising the alarm today. It is not a gentle statement today. It's a very deliberate statement today that there is a fundamental problem with forest stewardship plans if we're going to fully realize a results-based code that will realize good stewardship values and not lose our position on the land base and in the marketplace.

The board said today, and they were quite clear — I was on the conference call with the board — that this is a bad start out of the gate and that there's the potential here to undermine the results-based code as a result of this bad start. It is releasing the report now, because this is the time. If we're going to change FSPs, we need to do it now.

Based on the minister's words that we can change legislation anytime, that suggests to me that we get all the FSPs in. We look at all 300 or however many there are going to be, and then next spring we say, "No, those weren't good enough. We didn't get what they wanted," and change the legislation and go through the process again. That seems like an exercise in futility. Certainly if I were out there in a Tolko or West Fraser or Canfor, it would drive me nuts.

This is the time. We're almost halfway through the year. We have 30 in the bag, so to speak, that are approved. It's not too late to go back and do some work around 30 as opposed to waiting until we get to 300 or 400 that we're going to get and say: "Oops, this didn't work."

My question to the minister is.... Let's be very specific. Has the minister seen the letter of submission from the council of Haida nations with respect to Cascadia's FSP, in which they state explicitly that this will force them to take this whole process to court because FSPs do not meet any finding on accommodation and consultation with first nations?

Let's even start there. I'm hearing from all the first nations that it's the position they're going to be forced to take if we don't change the FSP process in mid-stream. It strikes me that if we've only got 30 now and we've got the bulk to come, now is the time and not December 31 and then do an "Oops" and legislation next year.

Is the minister aware of the CHN letter and aware of the substance of the CHN's concern, which I believe mirrors first nations' concerns that FSPs are not constitutional?

[1730]

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

Hon. R. Coleman: I'm aware of the letter, and that's all I'll say about that.

I believe our team is working hard to resolve the implementation issues as they've been addressed by the board. I think it's a healthy process that we're going through. The member may decide he doesn't like FRPA, and I guess that's what he's indicating to me, because he doesn't think we're ever going to do this. But you can't tell me that over the last ten years the old forest practices thing worked particularly well with all the mounds and mounds and mounds of paper that existed under it, particularly for the forest industry.

I think it was actually one of the member's former colleagues that one time said he thought we put a billion dollars of additional costs onto the forest sector when all of those things were done and not one job was recreated as a result of it. I mean, obviously, we're always trying to find places for sound forest practices. They're being practised in B.C. today. We believe that. We believe that FRPA will work. We believe that the FRAs are going to work.

We believe it's healthy to have a board look at some of these — and some of them were drafts; some of them weren't complete plans that the board looked at — and we will sit down with the board with our implementation team and our senior management and work through the issues. We will work through to the balance of the year to try to see if we can implement this thing in the way that it should be implemented. Frankly, that's what we're going to do.

Change sometimes comes to people that don't like it, and if the member opposite obviously has a different opinion on the change, that's fine. We think that in the long term, it is going to be good for the forest sector in British Columbia. The forest sector tells us it is. The board itself has actually said that it's very innovative and important, even though they question how we are on some things. I take that because I think it's important to have the other set of eyes that comes back with some comments that we can sit down, discuss and work forward on — because we're learning. We're learning new roles. We're learning new ways of working together and making new models work.

The member referenced one letter, but I can tell you that I've sat down and now done 104 forest and range agreements with first nations. I just did a First Nations Summit. I'm not getting back from first nations that they've got a whole bunch of issues with this process. That's probably a different debate, but the reality is that I think that the board regularly sees thoughtful and innovative professional management and fully expects implementation. I think the board wants to work with government, which is their role: to give us advice and to outline some things.

You know, I'm happy for this. I think it's great that for the first time in a long time, the public, the Forest Practices Board, the communities, my team of people, my implementation team and professionals in the field

are working together on a model for forestry in British Columbia. It's not all going to be perfect, as we go through it. There are going to be challenges, but we will get past the challenges, and we'll get to the end goal and achieve what's important for the forests in British Columbia.

B. Simpson: Minister, I don't know what forest and range agreements have to do with FSPs. We'll get to that debate. Certainly, he's got a letter from CHN indicating that there's an issue with FSPs from their perspective. I have sat in the operations in Quesnel and heard directly the concerns from industry around this process.

Quite frankly, I find it interesting that the minister goes back to the Forest Practices Code and says it was a mess and everything else, and yet argues that FRPA needs time to find its way to the ground. As the minister may or may not know, that was feedback that was given to this ministry when they did the consultations on the results-based code — that maybe what you're doing is not allowing the Forest Practices Code to morph into something that's functional and works on the ground.

[1735]

In 2003 under this government's forest revitalization plan, they quoted the Forest Practices Board in which the board recently reported that responsible forest practices once considered outstanding are becoming standard operating procedures in B.C. — that's standard operating procedures under the Forest Practices Code. Today in the conference call the Forest Practices Board stated for all of the licensees and by all of the checks they've done on the ground, that people are in compliance with the Forest Practices Code.

Don't put words in my mouth: I'm not undermining the results-based code. I haven't actually taken a position on whether I think a prescriptive code or a results-based code is better. What I am saying is the board has given an early warning today. The minister and the deputy minister must be seeing the letters from a number of folks who are concerned about these forest stewardship plans. At 11:30 today a forestry campaign was launched by environmental groups — that have not come together since the war-in-the-woods time — against forest stewardship plans and have targeted West Fraser Mills, specifically around logging practices.

We have the potential, and it's what the Forest Practices Board is warning us about. If we don't do the results-based code right on the front end, we have the potential to engage in another market-based campaign against our forest industry — instead of opening ourselves up to do a correction midstream. In fact, the West Fraser campaign involves mailing out to every shareholder a mock annual report.

We're back to the bad old days. The Forest Practices Code was intended to stop that. According to the Forest Practices Board, we were well on our way to doing that. We were well on our way to making responsible forest practices, once considered outstanding, standard

operating procedure in this province, and that's what people are concerned we're going to let slip.

Now back to the substantive nature of this. I'm being told by foresters, in both the ministry and industry, that they are being forced to go to default objectives. They're being forced to have lawyers write these forest stewardship plans instead of foresters, and the Forest Practices Board today said that what that will do is undermine the province's ability to have professional reliance work, which is the cornerstone of making a results-based code work.

If the Forest Practices Code is saying they're too legalistic, they're minimum objectives, not results, and they will not allow professional reliance to come in and be full-blown, one would think that it's not too early for continuous improvement to kick in. Maybe it's time for a pause, and let's have a look at this early warning sign.

My question to the minister is: would the minister consider extending the deadline for all of the FSPs to be in until December 31, 2007, in order to allow us to get this right?

Hon. R. Coleman: The short answer is no. My advice from my professional staff within the ministry is that we don't think that's necessary. We can work through these issues and meet our deadlines.

B. Simpson: On the Cascadia and other large FSPs that cover entire operating areas, one of the things the Forest Practices Board had suggested was that we extend the public consultation time frame. Will the minister consider that?

[1740]

Hon. R. Coleman: I'm not going to sit here and make that decision in this Legislature today. I will consult with my staff as to what the Forest Practices Board has dealt with today and will have conversations with them with regards to that. I don't make decisions on the fly like that.

B. Simpson: I wasn't asking for a decision. I was asking if the minister would consider it. I hear that the minister has indicated that he will consider it. Fair enough.

The other question around FSPs is the role of other professionals — the role of biologists, for example — with the Ministry of Environment. What is the role of other professionals in other ministries in the approval process for FSPs?

Hon. R. Coleman: The statutory decision-maker is the ultimate decision-maker, who actually consults with all of those folks or takes information from them. The decision is made by the DM. I think it's the deputy minister level or the ADM level.

There is participation by the professional reliance task team, which brings the self-governing resource professionals into account — which is engineers, biologists, agrologists, geoscientists and forest professionals

— to define the principles of professional reliance. The statutory decision-maker takes input from all of those bodies with regards to making the FSP decision. How that happens.... I can't, just off the top of my head, give that to the member as to how each ministry would feed into that.

The statutory decision-maker — I should correct myself — is actually the district manager in the region. He or she is the statutory decision-maker.

B. Simpson: From a legal perspective, who owns the professional reliance, then, when a district manager signs off on an FSP? To whom does the professional reliance go under law?

Hon. R. Coleman: If it's in their scope of practice in the plan and they've signed off and they have the professional responsibility for it, the statutory decision-maker takes on the responsibility for government.

B. Simpson: Back to the work that the provincial implementation team was doing at this October 26 meeting. There were some items under "Culture Change" that talked about "full and proper implementation and professional reliance and accountability."

Does the ministry have an internal team explicitly examining the implications for professional reliance?

[1745]

Hon. R. Coleman: First of all, there's the Association of the B.C. Forest Professionals, who, along with the chief forester and the ADM of operations, which is the first step.... Secondly, there's a professional reliance task force in which these bodies participate in and add in other professionals. Then there is the provincial Forest and Range Practices Act implementation team, which I was speaking about earlier, who reviews the application of professional accountability. Ultimately, the licensing body for the professional foresters is ABCFP, where that accountability comes back to the licensing and professional accountability. The RPF signs off on the plan and is obviously taking a professional responsibility for the plan. It's done in conjunction with that outline.

Hon. C. Richmond: Noting the time, I believe it would be a good idea for us to recess for dinner until 6:45.

Motion approved.

The Chair: The committee will recess until 6:45.

The committee recessed from 5:49 p.m. to 6:50 p.m.

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

On Vote 32 (continued).

B. Simpson: I would like to, since we're being fluid about agenda items, stay on forest stewardship plans.

We might as well finish them off during this juncture. I understand that the minister has the staff here to do that.

I know the staff members who are there. I'm not sure if the minister needs to introduce them for the record; it's certainly not for my benefit.

Interjection.

B. Simpson: No? Okay.

With respect to forest stewardship plans, again, as we'd indicated before, they hinge on professional reliance and also on measurable outcomes. I want to explore those two aspects to close off this portion of the debate. With respect to professional reliance, the minister did mention the professional reliance task force. What is the status of that task force, and when will it report out?

Hon. R. Coleman: My understanding is we expect that report to come out shortly.

B. Simpson: Is that task force also looking at the implications of what is in the forest stewardship plans to date with respect to how professional reliance will be implemented or will play out in terms of putting those forest stewardship plans into play?

Hon. R. Coleman: We'll be tangentially informed by their recommendations, but that won't drive the entire thing. Professional reliance is.... What they're doing is inputting into its evolution with regards to forest stewardship plans. The three-point outline that I gave to the member before dinner is the answer. It'd be the three groups that are affected by this.

The professional reliance task team, basically, brings the self-governing resource professions together — the engineers, biologists, agrologists, geoscientists and forest professionals — to define the principles of professional reliance. When they do that, they are doing that in conjunction with the professional foresters, my ministry, the statutory decision-makers and those people who are working on the overall plans. It is a very cooperative relationship.

B. Simpson: I want to be clear on what the minister's answer was with respect to their input to FSPs. My understanding of how it is structured is that FSPs will drive what happens post-December 31, 2006. Again, we go back to the whole issue of the Forest Practices Board indicating in their report today that the plans are such that they won't allow professional reliance to really kick in the way everybody understood they should kick in. So if this task force is going to table a document soon, will that inform any kind of continuous improvement in the forest stewardship plan process this year?

Hon. R. Coleman: Yes.

B. Simpson: Well, up until this point the minister has been saying that it's too early to change the FSP

process. This document is going to be tabled soon. The Forest Practices Board has tabled some concerns, as I've indicated to the minister.

[1855]

I've got the press release in front of me. ForestEthics, Wilderness Committee, Sierra Legal Defence Fund and the Sierra Club of Canada are jointly participating in the campaign with respect to what FSPs mean in terms of public certainty around what's going to happen in the future under the results-based code

There's a lot of activity right now, in May, that would allow us to bring some people together to ask: what can we do to improve FSPs now rather than waiting till later on? Again, I'm not clear why now is too early, given that there seems to be enough data for us to do a midstream correction if a midstream correction is required.

To the minister: is the end of May too early? Is June too early? When will we actually sit back, reflect and say that maybe we need to change this midstream, and that this is what the changes look like, because there's enough data coming forward to suggest the changes needed?

Hon. R. Coleman: Maybe this will help the member opposite. It's not too early to make adjustments. We're going to make adjustments. That's what the Forest Practices Board report was about. They looked at 15 plans that they reviewed, with some that are still in draft form. They looked at that. Our PFIT team and the provincial FRPA implementation team are looking at developing themes. It's still very early for the Forest Practices Board, even though they looked at the 15. We are actually adjusting — that's the whole point of all these groups and all these agencies and all this cooperation and collaboration. It is May, so we have a long way to go before the end of December, and we think we're going to reach our goal.

B. Simpson: Maybe it's just that the dinner break caused a change in flavour, but before the dinner break it was that it was too early. Now what we're hearing is that it's not too early; we can start making adjustments now.

One of the adjustments that everybody's calling on is that we are getting objectives — minimum legal objectives — not results. Again, along with professional reliance, all of the input during the consultation process indicated very strongly that for a results-based code to work it needs results — clearly articulated, measurable results that not only were clearly articulated, measurable and that you could hold the licensee accountable to, but that the public could clearly understand as well.

In the case of the Cascadia FSP, which the consultation process has closed, the public clearly stated — and the minister must be seeing the same letters I'm seeing — that they don't understand them. The operating area is too large. The watershed implications, water quality implications, are minimum objectives. People are rightly saying: "Is that the watershed in my neighbour-

hood? Is that the watershed that I hike in? What does it look like on the ground?"

There are no results in that FSP on that macro scale for the public to give meaningful input to, and the public asked the minister to extend the consultation period. That didn't happen. The public asked the minister to get Cascadia to break up that FSP into its tree farm licences and major forest licences and to put more explicit, plain language results in there that not only could the licensee be held accountable to, but that the public could understand what the heck they're talking about. All of those requests have been submitted; the FSP window now is closed.

What do those people do? What do the people who gave input to Canfor do? What do the people who gave input to Pope and Talbot do? Is there room in this continuous improvement process not only to learn lessons now and feed it forward into the approval process, but also, what about those 30 now that are submitted and/or approved? Do the people that live in the Cascadia region get an opportunity to go back at a new and revised FSP?

What does this continuous improvement process look like this year for the public that wants more in these plans than what are in them right now?

[1900]

Hon. R. Coleman: Nothing's changed since before dinner. I said that we were in the early stages before dinner. We're still in the early stages after dinner.

Industry and government staff are meeting to discuss FSP evolution and expectations in each forest district as we speak. They've been instructed at the regional manager level by the ADM to conduct those consultations with regards to the evolution and expectations of the forest stewardship plan. They're high-level strategic plans, not specific operational plans.

You know, hon. member, we're at a pretty early stage in this, like I said, and we're working through it. I guess that's just what's going to happen. We're working through it. We think we can achieve our goals. That's what my professional staff have advised me of as we work through this, and I'm comfortable with the process that they have outlined.

Obviously, anytime you enter into something new, you will adjust and learn as you go, and we'll continue to adjust and learn as we go.

B. Simpson: Just so that the minister is clear, I'm not talking about workload. I haven't even addressed the issue of workload. I'm talking about the content of these plans.

For the minister to suggest that they're high-level strategic plans, that they're not operational plans.... That's the whole point. These are the piece of the results-based code that drives the operational plans. These are the piece of the results-based code in which the public gets its only opportunity — and I emphasize that — for five years to give input, required by legislation, on what the operation area is going to look like with respect to the objectives that the government seeks to intend.

Instead of getting results, what we get are statements like the following. I have the permission of the individual to use this. In Cascadia, which covers all of Cascadia's operating area — all of their tree farm licences, forest licences, everything else — they have an objective which they set for water. The quote is:

The objective set by government for water being diverted for human consumption through a licensed waterworks in a community watershed is to prevent to the extent described in subsection (3) the cumulative hydrological effects of primary forest activities within the community watershed from resulting in (a) a material adverse impact on the quantity of water or the timing of the flow of the water from the waterworks, or (b) the water from the waterworks having a material adverse impact on human health that cannot be addressed by water treatment....

Then the objective goes on and gets qualified by the clause from FRPA, which qualifies all other values. It says that the objective set by government "applies only to the extent that it does not unduly reduce the supply of timber from British Columbia's forests."

How is somebody who lives on the coast — where there are multitudes of sensitive watersheds, multitudes of sensitive rivers and streams and community water flows — supposed to make sense out of how on earth they can give input to this, which says: "We'll meet the minimum objectives. We'll make sure that this can't be addressed by a water treatment facility. And oh, by the way, timber takes pre-eminence"? That's how the public perceives it. That's what the public is looking at because of the way that these plans are being written.

The Forest Practices Board, again, says today: "We need to move these from these minimum legal documents involving strategies, and we need to move them to results that people can give meaningful input to." That's what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about workload yet.

[1905]

I'm talking about the content of the plans. How will those contents change? If we're going to somehow change that content, which the Forest Practices Board says will require amendments to FRPA, then what will happen with the plans that are already approved? How soon can we do that so we don't have more plans approved that meet the minimum legal requirements and mean nothing to the public, who get only one kick at the can on them?

Hon. R. Coleman: I think we should be careful with what the member just said there, so I'm going to make sure I'm clear here. Nothing in what we are doing means that timber production will trump all other resource values — nothing. Nothing in the plan to do with FRPA, nothing to do with FRAs says that timber will trump resource values. In actual fact, the whole objective of this is to continue to have and to build on the entire value of our forests and how we do conserve forest values and other values on the land base together.

We do have to acknowledge that at some point in time some harvesting is going to take place on the land

base. If that harvesting is going to take place on the land base, then it's done in an environmentally sensitive and responsible manner: the riparian areas are protected, community watersheds are protected, and values our communities have with regards to environmental impacts are protected. As we go through that, we are putting some professional responsibility on people that actually know the science — they are a geologist or an agrologist or a professional forester — to write a plan that meets that and stays within those values and meets the rules, frankly, and the law with regards to protecting the values of the land base.

I don't want to go down a road where somebody is going to.... I'm not saying the member is saying this; let's just be clear. I want to be clear. Timber production does not — does not — trump other values on the land base — right? The only thing that was ever sort of discussed in this thing is that we would try and have the ability to manage the annual allowable cut within FRPA as we went forward so that we could actually have, for lack of a better description, farming of trees in British Columbia in a sustainable manner for the future of the communities that rely on the forest sector.

In order to accomplish that, you have to work pretty hard to build a plan. As you build that plan, you do engage with the public and with companies and with professionals. There has been a lot of work done on this. As I've gone through this with my staff over the last number of months, and as we've looked as we're coming, I've asked the questions, just like I do on everything else: "Can you reach your objective? Can you achieve the goal you've set for yourself in the time that you can? Can you do it in the manner that you have legislatively been designed to do and do it within the protection of the land base and the resource value and the community values?" The answer I get is: "Yes."

[1910]

As we go through that, there is going to be — for lack of a better description, I suppose — the odd bump in the road. When we get those bumps, we're going to try to work through that with communities, with professionals and, frankly, with the opposition critic and his party as well, because there's one thing that is very, very clear here. It is that the land base of British Columbia is important to all of us. That land base is not going to be put at risk because somebody feels it should be.

I've outlined, basically, the three-phase thing here — with the Association of B.C. Forest Professionals, their licensing body and the Professional Reliance; the chief forester; and the ADM of operations — expecting certain input from them and from others; the fact the regional offices are now meeting with industry and communities and other interest groups with regards to the FRAs; that the Professional Reliance Task Force is there; that the implementation team is there; and that we're going through this process. They think, and the best advice I'm getting is, that we can accomplish this and that we will accomplish it at the same time as sustaining our values on the land base. That's our goal, and we'll do that together.

If, at a point in time, they come forward and say, "Well, actually, no, it's not going to be able to be done in that time frame," then I'll take that advice at that time. But at this point in time the advice I have is pretty solid, and from what I have read and seen and discussed with my staff with regards to how this is rolling out and how we've engaged with the professionals and communities, I think that we're on the right track.

B. Simpson: Has the minister read an FSP?

Hon. R. Coleman: I actually didn't read the whole thing. I guess I could admit to the member that I don't know that it's my responsibility to get down to that detail as a minister. I did see one. I did skim it. I haven't read it cover to cover, so it would be unfair for me to tell you that I had.

I can tell you that one of the comments that was made in the Forest Practices Board about some of the language is something I think is important — that we have language that people understand as FSPs come through. That's one of the things the board said today. Obviously, I've only had those comments since today, and because I've been here, I haven't had time to get into any more detail with regard to those comments.

B. Simpson: To those who suggest that that's what we have staff for, I agree wholeheartedly. However, this is a fundamental change, and in order for a minister who is also seeing these for the first time.... I think it's a fair question to take a look at these because, quite frankly, I looked at one for B.C. Timber Sales, at Cascadia's, at one for Canfor down in Pope and Talbot, and I have to agree with the assessment. I don't get what they're about.

This is supposed to be a results-based code, and what I've got are minimum objectives where I don't have a clue about how these people are supposed to achieve these results. Yet fundamentally and philosophically, this was supposed to be about driving innovation. There is no innovation in these plans — none.

What I'm being told by both industry representatives and the ministry is that what happens is: if the industry puts in innovation, puts in some unique and interesting ways of finding things — again, I'm speaking up to this juncture; we've got a lot of plans to come — then what happens when it goes over to the ministry is that the ministry now has something they can get their teeth around. They have something now that they can begin to look at and say: "Is this accomplishable? Will it achieve the stated objective?"

It's a true result, a descriptor of how to achieve the objective. The ministry starts to look at that, and because they're going to be holding the legal and Crown obligation for professional reliance, they start to drill down and see whether it is possible or not, and they get into a back-and-forth loop.

[1915]

The easiest way for the industry to get an FSP approved is to simply put in the minimum legal objectives that the designated decision-maker cannot ques-

tion. They cannot question because they are the legal requirements. Hence, I'm being told by both sides that the way the process is constructed, it drives the lawyers to write the plans, not the foresters. Yet the foresters have to put the stamp of professional reliance on it.

If you look at the board's report today.... And I find, again, that it's an interesting comment from the minister, because I had the draft of this and knew what was coming down quite a while ago. I know his ministry staff must have been aware of this and must have been briefing the minister on what was going on with this. But the board's report states explicitly that one of the issues here is the fact that the language is not explicit, that it does not allow accountability and that the public cannot provide meaningful input to it.

All of these things are not about workload again. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the content, and to date and today that content is under question to the point that, as I indicated to the minister already, we have first nations who are saying, and I can quote it now, directly from the CHN letter to the minister that he says he knows he's got: "The FSPs do not meet consultation requirements. The courts keep stating that government has a legal duty to provide full information to first nations so we can determine how our rights and title will be impacted. FSPs do not even come close to providing full information. And again, expect legal challenges from first nations on FSPs."

There's a group in Powell River that has sought legal advice and is contemplating a legal challenge against the ministry around FSPs and their lack of public consultation capacity for the public to have any idea what the results are that they're committing to for five years. You've got a beginning of a forestry campaign against FSPs, so this is an issue of content and substance.

The minister, before the dinner break, indicated that I was showing a predisposition against a results-based code. That's not the case. If this is the regime that we've committed to, then let's make sure it works. As the head of the Forest Practices Board said today: "This is a poor start out of the starting gate. This will undermine it, and if anything, what it will do is drive us back to a prescriptive code." That's the last thing the board wants, and I think it's the last thing that we can sustain in the industry — to do another flip-flop back to a prescriptive way of doing things.

I guess as the critic, having been fed all of this information and seeing the report today capturing that very adequately.... Again, I've been in the Charlottes, I've been up-Island, I've been down south in the Kootenays, and I've been in the interior hearing the exact same thing. I think the first move that the minister should consider is extending the deadline, not for workload reasons but to get this part straightened out; to allow people to have meaningful consultation on this, because we're locking in for five years here; and to allow the public to get their heads around what this results-based code looks like so we can make it work.

I'm trying to get continuous improvement here. I think it says it all in the Forest Practices Board docu-

ment: new forest stewardship plans need more details and improved accountability. That's right out of the starting gate.

Again, to the minister. He's indicated that he's working on this. In the working on this, will the minister consider — and I asked the question earlier, but we've come to a different place here, where we've gone from "it's too early" to "it's a work in progress" — extending the deadline, not for workload issues but in order for us to sit and look if there are legislative and regulatory requirements around changing this now — so that people can breathe. We can bring some people together. We can talk about this, bring these first nations and environmental groups together and say: "How can we make sure this results-based code is going to work, and how do we get measurable results into these plans that the communities can consult on?"

[1920]

Hon. R. Coleman: I want to just quote to the member from the chair of the Forest Practices Board. "The board recognized that FSPs are only one part of the overall framework for forestry management in B.C.," said Fraser. "Sound stewardship is possible even with vague plans, and we will continue to monitor practices on the ground as the FSPs are implemented," which is what my expectation would be.

The board says that sound forest practice is already being practised in B.C., and it does not expect this to decline under FRPA. So we've got that. Then we should remember that FRPA's legal content represents the smaller component of the overall results-based environment. To have everything brought into the FSP would bring us back to where we started in an unwieldy, costly process. FSPs were designed to work in concert with other important elements in the system in a way that minimizes overlap and duplication and promotes synergy. They are part of a continuous spectrum of elements in modern forest resource management.

The other elements include other provincial as well as federal legislation; professional reliance, including codes of ethics and other statutory obligations; evolving case law and administrative law principles; market-based certification schemes, including external audits and public advisory processes; compliance and enforcement; effectiveness evaluations; the Forest Practices Board; and site plans, which are available upon request.

These elements all work together along with a healthy commitment to continuous improvement. While our communications tend to focus on FRPA, the next step will be to build greater public awareness in the overall system. I'm hearing from the member that he has some concerns that we're not doing a good enough job of that.

An example of the effort to build public awareness is a pamphlet that is available and that I'm happy to share with the member. In it, it's fairly clear to the public that the people who are doing forest stewardship plans have to advise us what they're getting back and

what their consultation process was with the public when they were doing them.

We're always willing to listen. I try and listen to my own staff. This isn't about workload issues. I should just caution the member about that. That's not been the context in which I've asked the question. Are you going to achieve the goals and objectives as laid out here, as to what we're trying to do? Can you achieve them within the time frame? The answer up to this point has been yes.

However, I know that any time you make changes and you grow as a ministry or a society or an industry or whatever the case may be.... If over the next few months we hear a very extensive need to extend those deadlines, then I will certainly consider doing so. I'm not getting that at this point in time. Like I said, it's pretty early in the process. I'm told we don't believe that we have to, but who knows? Maybe in August or so our folks will say: "Well, actually, minister, we think you might want to consider that."

If that's what they advise me, then I will take the advice of my professionals at that particular point in time. I think we're working down the right way. FSPs are one part of the results-based process, and I outlined the rest of the process.

[1925]

I think we'll see. I will say.... I guess in the realm of politics to say "never" is an impossible thing anyway, so to say I would never move that date would be wrong. I can say what my advice is as of today: they don't think I need to, so at this point in time my position would be that I don't need to.

If as we go through this process and work through what the Forest Practices Board has told us in the early stages, and as we come through and see how the FSPs are evolving and the concern the member's actually mentioned about language, which is a concern to me too.... I believe that these have to be understandable by the public.

I would like to, and I don't know if the member is prepared to share, but if he could give me the specifics of somebody who said: "We sent something to the ministry, and they sent it back...." It's always tough to deal with sort of the circumstantial without the basis, so if company A says, "Well, we submitted this; we thought it was pretty innovative, and we got it bounced back because of B, and then we just decided to let the lawyers write it," then I would like to see A to B to C, because that allows me to say to my staff: what happened here?

I remember years ago, under the old Forest Practices Code, a plan that I was shown by a company in the interior that was bounced because of inconsistent language. The inconsistent language was that in one part of the presentation it said it could be logged all year round, and the other part said spring, summer, winter or fall — and it took three months to turn it around.

That's what we're trying to avoid this time around. It's not going to be, as you and your colleagues know, particularly easy to just change culture and move

things along, but I honestly believe that the people in forestry today — whether it be the professional foresters, the Forest Practices Board, members of the staff of the ministry, the industry itself — actually want to work to get this thing to work. I don't think there's an objective for failure.

I think it's important that we be open-minded to that, and I'm prepared to be open-minded. If the member's got those examples — I wouldn't break confidences, so it's up to the member, and certainly without prejudice — I don't mind having that discussion with my staff with regards to some of these things, because you know what? There are going to be things we'll find that maybe will help us through this. We may find, as we go through this, that we need to extend to whatever date the member's talking about, but we don't know that yet. We're too early.

I think if one thing is good, and I was very pleased about.... It's funny. Most ministers would say: "I'm very upset that somebody released a negative report the day I started my estimates." It doesn't bother me, because I think it's actually helpful. I think it's helpful because that's what I expect of that independent body. I expect them to challenge us to thought, but I also think that when they do challenge us to thought and they do bring out issues, we also recognize the other good things they said in their report with regards to forest practices in B.C. already being practised — that it does not expect those to decline, that they also recognize it's only one part of the overall framework and that they think the stewardship is possible.

I take the member's concerns to heart. I will certainly keep them in mind as we walk through FSPs. If over the next few months we have to do something with regards to this on the extension, if my deputy minister comes and tells me that and my ADMs come and say that, then I'll probably say: "Well, how come you said you could do it by then?" But at the same time, I will take that information and not be dogmatic in the decision.

B. Simpson: I appreciate the minister's candour and will check with the folks who I had a discussion with about having that explicit discussion with his senior staff.

The critical thing here, the minister's comments notwithstanding, is that we operate in the legal framework, whether we like it or not. There may be the desire to do stewardship on the ground, but the FSPs and the results-based regime are the primary legal framework, and that's what has people jittery.

[1930]

I think, as the minister's well aware, we're having a situation on the land base, particularly if you look down in the United States where the corporate owners of the land base are changing.

One of the things about giving the trust upfront on FSPs — where you don't have explicit objectives that are accountable and that you can hold people accountable to — is that you may sign off an FSP for X company that over the life of the FSP becomes Y, Z and

starts back at A again, and ultimately, you end up with an income trust or something that doesn't have the same history. That is a compounding effect with the nervousness that's out there now.

It's not, as I've been told on the coast, the old MacBlos that were there forever and that you had a 30-year or 40-year relationship with and so on. It's all related. Everything all comes together. The degree of nervousness out there just now around what's happening with corporate concentration, the continued corporate buy-outs, the movement of income trusts.... Anybody who's aware of it knows that's where the land base is moving in the United States, and that's where we'll move private lands to here on the coast. That's possible.

The other thing, and I'm sure the minister's well aware, is that post an FSP, operational plans do not go through a government approval process. That's my understanding. Therefore, the legal framework and the default legal position is the FSP. The government has also changed due diligence regulations, so the due diligence is a complete defence, not an administrative defence.

Anybody who's in the know from the legal perspective will be saying to you: "We have plans that are the only legal requirement, that have objectives, not outcomes." We have professional reliance that the Forest Practices Board says doesn't really work, with that one legal document being the pre-eminent document. We have changed the due-diligence documents, so as long as you've said, "I'm going to try to do this," and you try and do it, you're okay. That's the degree of nervousness I'm talking about. Again, I'll say it ad nauseam: I'm not talking workload; I'm talking content. I'm glad to see that the minister is interested in looking at a possible extension.

Let me clarify one other point. Then I have a question, and we can start wrapping this piece up. When the minister says that we don't have a timber pre-eminence in this province under FRPA, I would suggest, then, that the Cattlemen's Association would likely beg to differ. Other users of the land base would beg to differ. In fact, every FRPA value by legislation is constrained and qualified by the "unduly" clause.

People quip that FRPA is a timber pre-eminence law. Again, that just simply compounds the nervousness. The "unduly" clause is something that I know the original draft of the Forest Practices Board report said should be removed. I also know that this coalition of environmental groups wants it removed from the legislation as well, because then you have a true results-based code that manages all values while extracting the timber values from the land base. That "unduly" clause is seen by those in the know in the public as a timber pre-eminence clause, whether the minister believes that or not.

Let me just simply ask the minister: while his staff are saying, "We think we're okay," are staff also hearing from their Ministry of Forests and Range staff out in the field concerns about the emptiness of these plans, the lack of definitive results and innovation? Is ministry line staff feeding this up to senior staff?

[1935]

Hon. R. Coleman: There are two questions there. I'll deal with the second one first.

We do get feedback from our staff. Our professional team, which is putting this together, actually has tentacles right down into that level. We're getting both. We're getting some, at some level. Sometimes we're getting some concern that's on it. The other thing we're getting back is that there's some really good stuff in here too. At the early stages, I guess, that's what you would expect to be the case.

Relative to unduly reducing timber supply, I think it's important that I read this into the record about this clause:

This does not mean that timber production trumps all other resource values. Rather, the first reference of every objective under FRPA is to conserve the forest value while acknowledging that some harvesting will occur.

The phrase acknowledges that we will allow some impact on forest values because of harvesting. It's a phrase that balances the strong directive to conserve. This phrase provides guidance to resource professionals that conservation still allows for the wise use of the resource.

That's what it is. It is the Forest and Range Practices Act. It's not the mining act, it's not the watercourse act, and that's what it is. Obviously, it's going to have some comments on the resources it's dealing with.

There's no trumping of all other resource values. I think I should make that really clear, not for the member but for the fact that I will use this in the public record when someone says that we're trumping all other values in our land base. We're not, and that's not the intent of what we're doing.

B. Simpson: That may not be the intent. We've had this discussion with some of the bills in this House that we have passed. Intent and practice can end up being two different things if the language gives the leeway for a different intent to be realized.

While the minister can read that comment into the record, I'm sure that senior staff are well aware, as the minister likely is, that there is a concern out there that we have gone too far with timber values, that we have turned our forests into fibre farms. Again, it's a compounding effect with respect to the nervousness that's out there around FSPs.

Just one final question. In terms of staff development and so on, at the joint ministry and industry operations forum of October 26, there was a next-steps that said that we need to take a look at full and proper implementation of professional reliance and accountability, understanding and implementation of calculated risk-taking. What does that mean?

Hon. R. Coleman: I'll try and contextualize it from what I can understand. Obviously, in the development of strategic plans, one of the inputs is actually the risks. I guess one example of a risk would be something like climate change. You're actually saying: "When we're developing a strategic plan with regards to forest management...." If we were developing a strategic plan in forestry 15 or 20 years ago, it would look a whole lot

different, because we didn't have a pine beetle epidemic in the interior.

[1940]

Of course, there's a risk. A drought can be a risk. Climate change can be a risk. There are also other cataclysmic things — I guess forest fires, etc. — that could have impact on the risks.

When you're developing the strategic plan — I think when we say that.... That was what the workshop that the ADM had put together was geared to: let people know that as you develop strategic plans, you also have got to remember that there's always an element of risk, even when you try to do innovative forest practices or even when you want to think you can do certain things that will improve the biodiversity.

As the member knows, many years ago we planted one species of trees in a certain area, and when it went above a certain tree line, they all died because of the climate — things you learn, I guess, as you go along. So any plan has to have a risk assessment attached to it. I think that's what they were trying to explain in that particular workshop that the member is referring to.

B. Simpson: I appreciate the minister giving the potential for leeway on this. In my assessment it's a lot healthier than, "It's too early," to move to the fact that maybe we need to be open to the possibility of this needing some more time and more reflection. Certainly, the folks who I've been talking to out there would find that helpful.

I would like to move on for a few minutes to cap this part off, because it related to the Forest Practices Board. Again, if the minister needs to change staff, then....

Interjection.

B. Simpson: No, we're okay? Sure.

With respect to the Forest Practices Board, for my own edification, when the board tables a document like it did today, what's the normal routine? It's the independent watchdog. It's in the Ministry of Forests service plan. As the independent watchdog, is there sort of a routine that it goes through in order to respond to the board? The board deals with complaints, with special investigations, and then reports like this.

We had a discussion in the last session on the Forest Practices Board paper about fire and recommendations on fire, and I have to admit that I left that wondering what the process was and what the government's obligation was to respond to the Forest Practices Board. If we can use the FSP one in order to segue, what are the next steps? How does that work? How will that be worked through the system? And what obligation does the ministry feel to have to act on whatever the Forest Practices Board says?

Hon. R. Coleman: Well, we're not bound by the recommendations. Obviously, we review and assess the report and its recommendations by our profes-

sional internal group that I've mentioned before, as well as the forest practices branch. We do give them a written response as to what we agree and disagree with or what we feel — where else we need to do some work or they need to do some work. That would be it.

They don't have the power to trump the statutory authority of the statutory decision-makers within the ministry. It's really a recommendation and information. We respond to them, and I think our guys actually have a pretty good back and forth with the board when they make the decisions. Sometimes they do it like they did today.

As far as doing it, they might do a press conference. Sometimes they will just put out a notice that they've posted the results of the review on the website, because it might be a more minor item in their mind. I don't know if they actually have an internal policy as to how they do that. That's their choice, I guess.

We incorporate the learnings in the workshop training and for continuous improvement. That's the whole idea of that relationship with the board.

[1945]

B. Simpson: With respect to this one particular document, if the minister can walk me through it: does it just come over here, and then nobody gets it? Does it go to specific department heads? Is there a lead, depending on the topic, that takes it and gives back to the board? I note that in some cases the board actually puts an explicit date that they expect to have a response by from government. So it must go on somebody's workplan or on somebody's table to then take that and deliver it.

I don't believe this one is a dated one, but the "Improved Management of Resource Roads" had a date on it. What's the iteration between the ministry staff and the Forest Practices Board, and how does that work?

Hon. R. Coleman: We actually have a person, the head of PFIT, which is the Provincial FRPA Implementation Team. That person actually receives it and disseminates it to the appropriate bodies for input and response — as does the ADM and the deputy minister and, of course, I get a copy too. The internal workings are that we actually have a person who does make sure that those processes take place.

B. Simpson: That's helpful. With respect to the role of the board — and I'd like clarification on this before I go on to my next point — if I understand correctly, the board had a budget cut a number of years ago, and now the budget has been, generally, fixed. I notice, as we go forward here, that it's capped and fixed through the next fiscal cycle. Is that correct?

Hon. R. Coleman: My understanding is that the budget was affected the same as all government was affected, back when we tried to put the fiscal house of government in order. Everybody had to sort of tighten some belts. Since then, I think that the budget's come back to a level that.... Well, actually, it seemed to work

at that level, but there has been an increase in budget, and there has also been some individual funding for individual projects, I understand. The person who can give me that detailed answer isn't in the chamber with me right now, but we will get that information for the member.

B. Simpson: The Forest Practices Board has indicated in its service plan, which it submits, a fairly significant.... It's involved in all of the significant changes that are going on out there.

It's involved in the implications of the mountain pine beetle. In fact, I was able to work with them when a rancher put in a formal complaint against some logging practices. So they're impacted by that. They're impacted, as they indicate, by the issues around fuel accumulation on the land base, implications for fire — they've already tabled a fire report; and the new licensees, which they say in the service plan means that they're dealing with groups that have limited professional forest management experience, and the implications of what that looks like for their audit process.

Under the Forest and Range Practices Act, they state quite categorically that this change requires extensive revision of audit and investigation systems to recognize the move towards objective-based legislation. Then they look at the whole implications of third-party certification and so on.

[1950]

In that plan they state: "The implications for achieving the government's objectives are uncertain. The public needs independent assurance that certified licensees are effective in maintaining environmental values and achieving government objectives." I find it intriguing that moving into the results-based code, where.... If you read all of the government documentation around it under the forest revitalization strategy, it stated that a results-based code, because it puts the trust up front, requires greater compliance and enforcement and audit programs. The Forest Practices Board wasn't an area that got a lift in its budget for the amount of work that it has to do.

What is the thinking behind that? C and E didn't get a lift. This group didn't get a lift. Was it deliberate, or was it just the fact that you rolled over the budget for the next three years?

Hon. R. Coleman: Not to go over old ground, but the forest resources evaluation program got \$12 million, which is a complementary process to the C and E side of the ministry, which didn't have it there before. On the Forest Practices Board side, that's what they get. They live within their budget, and my expectation is that they do that. They haven't come to me and identified a risk to that budget, which would be my expectation if they had one. The member knows, of course, that there's not a bottomless pit of money. I have to have them be as fiscally responsible as my expectation of the ministry is to be fiscally responsible to do their job.

That's the budget we agreed to with them, which we took through our budget process, and we received

our allocation. I'm sure that if you talk to the Minister of Finance, you would find that in most cases somebody would always like a little bit more. But then, you know, there isn't a little bit more to have. I think we have to be fiscally responsible to our budget and stay within it. That's my expectation of the board, and that's my expectation of the ministry.

B. Simpson: Did the Forest Practices Board ask for a lift?

Hon. R. Coleman: Everybody asks for more money. I believe that they did ask for a small lift. I said that managing the fiscal side of this ministry, we were going to be responsible and not look for a lift to the budget this year, because I felt it was important. I felt that with the risk to the labour side that had to be dealt with and the issues that government was facing on the larger fiscal side with regards to the pressures that may be existing in other ministries, this ministry could keep its belt tight, manage itself and do a good job of it. So did my professionals.

[1955]

B. Simpson: Having been involved in many budgeting processes, I know that everybody asks for a lift. The key question is: looking at all of the things you've got, where do you strategically allow for lifts in budgets? I guess that's the question here, because if I look at the ministry's budget, there are lifts for things like pricing and selling timber. B.C. Timber Sales has a fairly substantive lift as you go forward to '08-09.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

Again, from the discussion we've had around FSPs.... We're kind of doing this sea change from prescriptive to results-based and so on. It just struck me that the Forest Practices Board might be an area in which some more resources to change, as they've indicated, all of their audit processes and figure out what it needed to look like on the ground to be the watchdog that is going to be even more necessary under a results-based code.... That's why I was curious about whether they had asked for one and what the rationale was for getting one.

My sense from the minister, and I don't want to put words in the minister's mouth, is that they didn't get one simply because everybody's got to belt-tighten. I think there are some strategic questions in here as well.

With respect to the Forest Practices Board, the management of resource roads, that report is there. How does that correlate with the resource roads act that we've been told we should be expecting? Is there a correlation between what the board said needed to be done and the resource roads act that we're supposed to be getting at some point?

Hon. R. Coleman: First of all, I cannot and will not comment on what could be in future legislation. It would be completely inappropriate of me to do so,

even if I had seen a draft of legislation, because it has to go through the legislative review process, and it actually has got to be introduced in the House before I would ever comment on it.

On the second part of it, we've used their comments with the input with regards to our resource roads. As the member knows, we're having some significant challenges because of some of our volumes in certain areas of the province, which we're looking at. We're trying to work with the Minister of Transportation with regards to some of that.

We also are hoping that as we come through the next tranche — well, we'll wait and see what the federal budget does tomorrow, if there is something more for pine beetle — we would have the ability to look at some of that to enhance some of the infrastructure with regards to our forest roads. Frankly, in some communities there are roads that are being significantly affected throughout municipalities because of the volume that's coming through them in a couple of communities in the interior of B.C. I'm sure the member is aware of those. I have met with those particular mayors or councils and said we'll work through that with them, as well, as we go through it.

What it does is inform us of what I think we already knew with regards to access and maintenance and issues in and around our resource roads. You know, I think there's something like 50,000 kilometres of forest roads or resource roads in British Columbia — more than the amount of highways there actually are in B.C. — so it's an interesting management challenge, as well as setting the priorities as to what roads you would decommission and not decommission for the future. A road that's left open that isn't used for resource actually is a cost to the ministry that you can't necessarily sustain. But then sometimes you have to look down the road far enough and say: should we keep it open because it's a resource we're going to be accessing in, let's say, five or ten years?

[2000]

One of the challenges we have is to try and set to where we would have the window of decommission played back on numbers as to time. We've done some work on that, but that part is an ongoing process. Resource roads are always a challenge because they're built to a standard, and then there are issues in and around them after they're no longer needed and that sort of thing.

Then you also have to take into account some of the people who have recreational values with regard to those roads, but the recreational-value user doesn't necessarily want to pay to maintain them. The expectation is that maybe this ministry shall, and that's really not our objective with regard to the management of roads for the resource purposes.

B. Simpson: I wasn't asking the minister about the content of the actual act. I was just asking if this report was informing the process. I understand the legalities and the constraints that are on the minister, just whether or not.... This was a fairly substantive report.

It gave lots of detail and lots of information, and it would be a shame to lose it.

Let me ask that question more deliberately, because there's a point that I want to make out of this. Is it informing the process? That's all I really wanted to know.

Hon. R. Coleman: You may have noticed that on both sides of me the officials are both nodding their heads, so I'm going to say yes.

B. Simpson: I must say that sometimes when you get the answer in advance of the minister having to stand up, it's in those cases that we need to have some signals, which I think one of the other ministers was practising a little bit earlier on there. He's too busy, though.

One of the things in this document. The document's dated November 2005. That's why I was interested in how Forest Practices Board documents are dealt with, because in November of 2005 this document explicitly stated that FSPs needed to be changed. Yet we don't have that.

On page 2 of the document it says:

A key part of the Forest and Range Practices Act framework is legal objectives established by government. In the absence of government objectives for road access, forest stewardship plans do not need to address access issues or respond to any public or resource industry concerns about access. Access management direction, provided in land use plans, must be established as legal government objectives in FRPA in order to ensure forestry roads are consistent with that direction.

Here we have a circumstance when, in November of 2005, the Forest Practices Board stated that there was a gap in the legislative framework around FSPs. We're now writing FSPs with that gap, and as a consequence, FSPs, then, according to the Forest Practices Board, won't have legal objectives for road access in them. They'll be missing in there.

Again, how does that process work, when the Forest Practices Board, which is the independent watchdog, says something needs to be changed? In this case that change might have been capable of being done before FSPs were all completed by the end of this year. It's not been done. Where is the accountability of government to what the Forest Practices Board says, as the government underwrites the Forest Practices Board to give them this kind of advice?

I'm missing the connection here, where you get an explicit statement like that, it's not covered off, and we're now writing FSPs without these, which may mean we have to go later on and change them all. How does that work? How does the government decide not to act on something like that?

[2005]

Hon. R. Coleman: The first comment from my staff is: it is difficult to get to the detail when we don't have the report in front of us, so we're going to try and answer the question. Or I'm going to try and answer the question. They'll pull me down if I'm getting the answer wrong.

The Forest Practices Board does not dictate legislation to government, first of all. Let's be clear. We are informed by recommendations and information from them, and we work with the Forest Practices Board to achieve the goals. As we go through, we're being informed by that report as we look at possible future legislation with regard to resource roads. FSPs can have legal objectives added to them after the fact.

As you go through this is.... I said I hated to use the word again, but I'm going to use the word "fluid" because it seems to be our word for today. Last week it was "synergy" in the discussions I was in with the other file I had to deal with.

It really is that we can add as we evolve on any new legislation with regard to resource roads. I think we should be aware that as we come through that discussion from the Forest Practices Board and into a discussion on resource roads, it's probably going to be one of the healthier debates that we've had in this province for a while, because I think one of the things that has been lost in all of the discussions with regard to the land base in B.C. is these roads.

You get complaints from people who say, "Why did you take out that culvert? Now I can't get my skidoo through there," or my ATV or whatever the case may be. I'll say: "Well, we don't need the road for the resource use anymore."

At some point in time, I suppose, as we go through.... Let's say, if we do get to a legislative framework where we have the debate, we'll have to have the discussion about what constitutes what. I think it's probably going to be healthy, because when there are 50,000 kilometres or more of these out there in B.C., it's a significant challenge to budgets and to objectives. I think we'll have to balance those.

We will balance them through, as we do any future legislation, and will be very mindful of those roads as we go through the standards — certainly the standards of construction and all the rest of that, which would be the expectation of them under forest stewardship plans. That would be done by the professional alliance, because obviously an engineer, etc., would be involved in designing the road, making sure the loads are correct and all that sort of thing.

Certainly, I'm aware of the report. I don't have it here in front of me. The portion the member quotes from does tell us that they think, in future legislation, we should look at it and that would be.... In answer to the member's question, those types of reports would inform the development of that type of legislation.

B. Simpson: Thanks for the clarification. I'll leave it at that.

I guess it is one of those things where we have the situation to be pre-emptive. One of the things the Forest Practices Board said in their report today is that we need to be careful that we're not creating a whole patchwork of fixes to something that we will get stuck with in 2007. It strikes me that there was some pre-emptive advice given here that now may end up being part of that patchwork in 2007.

With respect to the next hour — less than an hour — I'd like the minister just to let me know whether or not we can have a discussion about B.C. Timber Sales to close off, and I'll just carry over softwood over until tomorrow.

[2010]

B.C. Timber Sales was specifically and explicitly targeted in the Competition Council's report for independent review. Is the minister aware of that and aware of what the Competition Council has indicated with respect to B.C. Timber Sales so that we can engage in that discussion?

Hon. R. Coleman: Yes, I am, and so are my very expert staff, including David Peterson to my left, the assistant deputy minister for B.C. Timber Sales, who will probably be the person I will consult as you ask your questions through the next little while.

Yes, I am aware of it. I did meet with the people from the individual committee groups, not from the actual overall Competition Council but with those who prepared the pulp report and the lumber report, and I had some discussions with regard to it.

B. Simpson: There are some comments I need to make, going forward. I'm looking at the wonderful picture of the assistant deputy minister, and I mean no disrespect to the assistant or to any of the staff. I don't want to fall into that trap, which we did in the last estimates. I'm not impugning any staff member or any of the staff. What we're going to talk about is B.C. Timber Sales's position in the marketplace and in the operations and the kinds of activities that are going on, on the ground.

I have to tell you that of all of the range of things that have come across my desk, B.C. Timber Sales has probably got the biggest target on it in terms of complaints, in terms of how it's working or not working in the marketplace. It didn't surprise me when I saw the Competition Council target B.C. Timber Sales for an independent review. Let's start there.

The Competition Council was charged by government to go out and answer the question: what do we need to do to make the forest sector more competitive in the 13 sectors in total? The Competition Council indicated that they released the two forest sector reports because of the sense of urgency in that particular sector.

In there it stated that B.C. Timber Sales needs to be rethought. What was the initial reaction from the minister, and at what level is the minister interested in engaging in that potential for an independent review of B.C. Timber Sales?

Hon. R. Coleman: I really wanted that report out so that the member opposite would have some cannon fodder for discussion in the debates of the Legislature during my estimates, which I thought would be a good thing to have.

Actually, I think we've already, frankly, moved on that. The ADM is going to co-chair a review with a

consultant, and we're going to use B.C. Timber Sales's advisory committee as part of the sounding board with regard to that review on B.C. Timber Sales.

[2015]

B. Simpson: Are there terms of reference for the consultant? What's the scope of the review? Is there a document or something so that we can understand the nature and scope of the review that will be initiated? Also, what is the time frame for the review?

Hon. R. Coleman: We move fast. The terms of reference are being developed now. Obviously, as the member knows, this report came out just recently, and so they're being done. The terms of reference are going to be developed in consultation with the stakeholders to do that, and they're being worked on now.

I'm not sure of the expectation of the time frame. I think we have to get the terms of reference done first, and then I would be able to advise the member at a later date of how long they think it would take. Given that the report's not even a month old yet, I think that's pretty good so far.

B. Simpson: Thank you to the minister. I would certainly give the minister kudos for speed on this one, or the assistant deputy minister — whoever deserves it.

With respect to the terms of reference, maybe what we can do is spend some time, and I can express what comes across my desk as the range of concerns and see if that can flavour the terms of reference.

One of the major concerns is in the 20-percent takeback. It's the apportionment of the land base in the various TSAs that are available for the first nations, the community forest and — ultimately, whenever they happen — the woodlots. What I hear as a complaint is that the first cut is B.C. Timber Sales's and that often what that does is constrain the viability and availability of diverse values, as well as a diverse range of timber values, on the land base for those other users.

Will that issue of B.C. Timber Sales locking up in the TSAs as a first cut be addressed? Is it possible, then, in some of the TSAs, for land to be freed up that has a better profile — more viability, ease of access — so that these smaller licensees can get a more viable operation? Is that a consideration for part of this review?

Hon. R. Coleman: B.C. Timber Sales areas are representative of the profile in the areas. They're no better or worse than the average. It is not in the terms of reference of B.C. Timber Sales to do what the member has described.

B.C. Timber Sales is actually driven by the need for a representative area for pricing. The decisions that the member is talking about with the other operators — those they have the opportunity to bid on with B.C. Timber Sales.... Other types of timbers or tenures or NRFLs or whatever the acronym is for this particular day are actually outside of theirs. That sits with the district and regional managers on the deputy minister's side of the ministry.

B. Simpson: Just for clarification, what I'm talking about is when we did the 20-percent takeback. The minister may be speaking to this, but I'm just not clear about the answer. When the 20-percent takeback was done, that left a certain profile. While I understand that for operational purposes, B.C. Timber Sales wants a profile, for the most part the driver for that is their two metrics: optimize revenue to the Crown at the least possible cost. In a number of TSAs that meant that B.C. Timber Sales took pre-eminence over getting their increased volume prior to the other ones that were targeted in the revitalization strategy: first nations, woodlots, community forests.

[2020]

As a consequence, for example, in the Quesnel TSA there's an area left where B.C. Timber Sales is effectively saying, "You've got to fit your woodlots and your community forests in there," causing the community forest and the woodlot folks to come together and compete for a very limited scope, whereas the woodlot association is saying: "Hang on. There is wood available in other places." But they're being told by the ministry: "Well, B.C. Timber Sales has first priority." That's happened in other districts as well. It's happening in the Boundary region and so on.

That pre-eminent right of B.C. Timber Sales to get what it needs to meet its operational metrics may also undermine the rights of others, who are going to be given small tenures under the same revitalization strategy — not the NRFLs, not the forest licences, not the bid stuff, but the one that was targeted under the revitalization strategy.

I think, again, that if we're going to look at B.C. Timber Sales holistically.... It certainly, in a number of districts, has been raised with me as a concern that that pre-eminent first cut of what B.C. Timber Sales needs operationally has maybe limited the viability of the other licensees, which were supposed to get some of that 20-percent takeback.

Given that explanation, could the scope of the independent review just simply take a look at it? It's not a lot of work.

Hon. R. Coleman: There have been times when the community forests, woodlots and other licensees have had to be arbitrated with, with B.C. Timber Sales. That is the function of the deputy minister, the ADM and the regional managers. The review of B.C. Timber Sales is going to look at its operational side, keeping in mind that the area has to be representative of the profile for pricing and not just for revenue.

The other challenge, as the member knows, is that there are some expectations out there from a number of players on the land base that exceed, in a collective manner, the amount of fibre that's available to anybody. Some people would like us to say, "Well, here's 150,000 cubic metres," because they need 150,000 cubic metres. That doesn't mean that there are 150,000 cubic metres available.

In some cases some of the players that have concerns with regards to BCTS don't want to bid. They

want to be given a tenure of some sort. There are competing interests, but it isn't the function of B.C. Timber Sales to determine the breakout of its land base. Its job is to manage what it has, and if there's something that needs to be arbitrated or looked at, it would fall to the ministry staff and the regional manager on the statutory decision-making side to have those discussions with BCTS.

[2025]

B. Simpson: I'm not talking about bids. I'm not talking about direct awards. I'm talking about the land base that was taken back in the 20 percent and the promise of a percentage allocation to these other licensees. These licensees were actually told by the government that they were going to get allocations. That's the issue I'm addressing. The other issue, of direct awards and all that stuff, I'll come to momentarily.

In the revitalization strategy a targeted amount was made for first nations. A targeted amount was made for woodlots and a doubling of the woodlot program. And for community forests, a targeted amount. What I'm being told is that because of operational considerations B.C. Timber Sales gets pre-eminence. That's the issue.

They're not all sitting down together saying: "What is the best reallocation of this 20-percent takeback?" B.C. Timber Sales says: "Here's what we need for our operational constraints." Then what happens is that the others, who were promised tenure of one form or another in the revitalization strategy, are now left with non-viable areas.

I'm not quite sure if the minister clearly understands that I'm only talking about the reallocation of the 20 percent that was committed to by the Liberal government. It has nothing to do with B.C. Timber Sales bids, direct awards, licences or anything of the kind. It's just the 20-percent reallocation, and the BCTS pre-eminence for first cut of that, making some of these other allocations that were promised non-viable allocations.

If it's not going to be reviewed in this process, does the ministry have a process to actually engage and examine that issue?

Hon. R. Coleman: Well, BCTS doesn't have all the 20-percent takeback to start with — right? Because of the importance of market pricing, we have, in general, given priority to BCTS in getting appropriate representable areas. But the member is right. Disputes do exist.

In those cases, if there is an operating area issue with a community forest or a woodlot, we encourage them to raise it with the regional manager and deputy, who are the appropriate persons to arbitrate that concern for those particular areas.

Timber reallocation is still going on. Not all of it has actually been reallocated as yet. We found, as we've done this, that there were a number of other people who have arrived on the scene, subsequent to the initial move to do all this, who want to be "me, too." There may have been a number of communities, for instance,

that want a community forest, but now there are a whole lot more.

There may be some woodlots that have been affected in their operating area by pine beetle, for instance. The woodlots were traditionally for families so they could, over a cycle of time, as the member knows, have some sustainability, and they're losing their entire woodlot. They're watching it die before their eyes because of something like the pine beetle, so there's an impact there. There are other people that want to have new entries into the woodlot program, in balance of all of that.

I guess the answer to the member is yeah, we do put some importance on what BCTS has to do, because it has a business plan that I'm holding it responsible for. At the same time, we need a representative area for them for other reasons, including our market pricing.

There is still timber reallocation to be completed. It's not completed in many areas, and we're going to work through that with the communities.

[2030]

We've managed to do quite a bit with first nations, because we now have 104 agreements with first nations. We've managed to handle that. It is an ongoing process — and will be for a bit yet, frankly. As we do that, we have to be mindful of the objectives of the ministry.

If there's a particular area where the member has a concern, particularly with a timber allocation, I would encourage that community or group to raise it with the regional managers so that they could look at it, because that's where we are arbitrating those concerns on the land base.

B. Simpson: We'll leave that alone. I understand the allocation went back to MOFR, and B.C. Timber Sales comes to the ministry and gets their reallocation. The intent is to eventually ramp up B.C. Timber Sales so that it has 20 percent of the total cut in the province. I understand this, and I take the minister's comment to go back to the district level on this. It seems like there's a bit of generalized concern around the viability of what's left.

I was curious about whether or not it was in this independent review. Let me ask some explicit questions about the independent review. Will the issue of zero-bids be looked at in this independent review?

Hon. R. Coleman: Yes. We've done some things on variable pricing to get away from the zero-bids already, but yes, it is part of the review.

B. Simpson: Will the claim about B.C. Timber Sales creaming the profile be addressed as well? Again, from the perspective on the coast, the lessons learned around market pricing were that the zero-bid and not logging or bidding the profile caused problems in setting a market price. I mean, if you don't have a market correction in the system when you are not entering the no-bids into the system, and what you're doing is getting sales for the higher profile, you then are not hav-

ing a market pricing. I understand that on the coast there has been a change. The variable pricing system, as I've been told from my sources, looks like it has some of the correction, but there's that same nervousness in the interior for September around the market pricing system and those same issues around B.C. Timber Sales.

If zero-bids are going to be looked at, will an assessment be done of B.C. Timber Sales actually putting the profile out for sale — and the contention that what they're doing is creaming the profile and putting it out for sale?

Hon. R. Coleman: I'm just having a little glib moment of my own here, because I was going to say that was discussed last week at TSAC. But nobody else, other than the critic probably, would know that that's the Timber Sales Advisory Council. It's an ongoing discussion of the operations. We've gone to variable pricing. It's allowed across the province, not just at the coast. We actually want to find out who wants to bid and buy the wood and at what price. Obviously, that will drive market pricing.

It's an ongoing discussion that's already going on and has been for a number of months. It's not necessarily part of the review, because we do have that Timber Sales Advisory Council already working with the ministry and BCTS on that.

B. Simpson: Zero-bid is in there. I notice that the ministry changed the outcome indicators. We had the discussion last time about optimizing revenue to the Crown and the cost effectiveness, and it's simply the percentage of the AAC auction by B.C. Timber Sales. Is the review, then, strictly of the effectiveness of B.C. Timber Sales in the marketplace and the effectiveness of B.C. Timber Sales as an operational entity?

[2035]

If that's the case, then it prevents me from going in and asking some of the business questions as to the net revenue falldown with B.C. Timber Sales through '08-'09, when you're putting the same volume out for sale, relative to your cost structure increasing over that time period. Is that operational component of B.C. Timber Sales going to be looked at?

The other aspect of it from the Competition Council is the whole question of a Crown corporation or actually privatizing — because I think they floated that out as an idea. Is this independent review going to look at the position of B.C. Timber Sales in the marketplace and its basic operational structure?

Hon. R. Coleman: There were a number of questions. First of all, no, we're not going to privatize B.C. Timber Sales, so we could sort of put that one aside. I don't think our collective agreement would actually allow us to contemplate that anyway, but I felt early on that it was something that needed to be clarified. I said that some months ago.

The other side of it is this. At this point I wouldn't say that there's a reason to make it a Crown corp. I

don't think there's a reason to do that. B.C. Timber Sales has a shareholders' letter of expectation similar to a Crown corp. with the ministry. They have a service plan. The review is going to be on the effectiveness and structure, including the operating structure, of B.C. Timber Sales.

B. Simpson: Will the terms of reference and the intent of this be posted on BCTS's website when it's complete?

Hon. R. Coleman: Yes.

B. Simpson: I look forward to seeing it then. Again, congratulations for the quick response on that item on the Competition Council.

The next part that I would like to go into is that B.C. Timber Sales has chosen to only go with ISO 14001 certification. In the B.C. Timber Sales FSPs that have been put in, they have also chosen to go — as was pointed out by the Forest Practices Board — to these default objectives. It strikes me that B.C. Timber Sales, acting as a Crown agent, should lead the way in forest certification.

I have had personal experience in putting ISO 14001 in both forestry and milling operations, so I'm very familiar with that certification. It is one of the few ISO certifications that is a self-auditing process, in which you state your own objectives. We actually had operations that said: "Yes, we recognize we're polluting this particular waterway, and we'll try and be better, and we'll get ISO 14001 certification." It is a minimum standard.

Will B.C. Timber Sales consider, as a Crown agent, leading the way in forest certification, looking at raising the bar and going after something like FSC — or at least a higher certification standard — in the very near future?

[2040]

Hon. R. Coleman: All BCTS business areas have ISO as a first step. They have a plan for sustainable forest management. Their objective is, over the next number of years, also to move to the other types of standards that the member spoke of. They actually have an objective to go higher than where they're at today.

They will be working on that through '05-'06, where they will achieve CSA or SFI standards on three of 12 of their areas; or for matters for certification in their areas, by '05-'06; five of 12 by '06-'07; and ten of 12 by '07-'08. They do have that objective. They're alive to the member's issue. Frankly, given the age of the organization and how early it is in its evolution, I think that's a pretty good step for them.

B. Simpson: Why SFM and not where people are suggesting British Columbia needs to go to — FSC certification?

Hon. R. Coleman: We do anticipate going to FSC in some areas, and that's as we sort of evolve through

this. Most of the industry in Canada is going ISO, CSA or sustainable forest initiative standards, and there will be some areas where we can achieve FSC as well. They are obviously operating with that in mind. I don't think necessarily today that those areas have been identified this early in the stage of BCTS.

B. Simpson: I know that the ADM is in his seat recently and has been getting out and about. I know that people are quite pleased to see him out there trying to figure out where we're at with B.C. Timber Sales.

One of the issues, I guess — and to the minister's comment about where the rest of the industry is — is that one of the five great goals is to be a leader in this area. Where the rest of the industry is isn't necessarily indicative of where British Columbia and particularly B.C. Timber Sales should be. I'm glad to see there will be some FSC certification and, hopefully, more of that.

I have on my desk here a series of significant concerns about B.C. Timber Sales and where they're putting cutblocks. If I take a look in the Boundary area, for example, it has to do with heritage designation and the fact that the B.C. Timber Sales Arrow boundary stewardship plan.... It says, "I found the plan vague, as no specific information was offered to the public," which is the same trap we have had a discussion on already.

In this case, it has to do with the historical Great Northern Railway through there and the fact that B.C. Timber Sales has cutblocks planned to log the only remaining rail grades that are in that historic site. This person is extremely frustrated and has written to me because of a lack of progress down there.

We have in the Canoe-Lund Bay area proposed cutblocks by B.C. Timber Sales that again cause people grief with respect to water quality and other issues. I'm sure people are aware of one of my favourite spots, the powerhouse plunge in the Squamish area. I have ridden it many, many times and have broken fingers on it. It was set to be logged by B.C. Timber Sales.

The Geoff Creek watershed — I've got lots on that — and settlers' road, trails, all kinds of things that normal licensees, I'm being told, would stay away from. They just wouldn't engage in going near these trails or watersheds or heritage, yet B.C. Timber Sales puts cutblocks in their plans around here with no explicit constraints around the values people have. The degree of frustration is very high.

[2045]

That degree of frustration goes to the local B.C. Timber Sales offices, where they believe that what they were driven by is the optimized revenue to the Crown. They have to generate the revenue, so they're putting these cutblocks out there.

I had the privilege of being in the Yalakom Valley and walked Ore Creek and went up and looked at Ore Creek. All the history of that is nobody would go near Ore Creek. During the LRMP process, Ore Creek was basically a stay-away. Yet B.C. Timber Sales, in their operating plan, has four contiguous cutblocks there that would open up a huge area on a very steep slope

that nobody can figure out how you would even get a road to.

With the ADM going around, one of the things that I'm wondering about is: how are these being addressed? Why do these end up, out of frustration, going to the political level? It seems to me in each case there is a substantive reason why those things ought not to be put out as cutblocks or proposed blocks, and yet they are. In some cases the actual logging is done, and people find out about it. What is it about B.C. Timber Sales that seems to attract this much attention to it?

Hon. R. Coleman: B.C. Timber Sales continues to work on addressing these areas the member has brought up. They are still discussing these with the local residents, but I should remind the member of this, just so we're clear. They have to go through their process, but the statutory decision-maker that ultimately makes the decision on whether the cutblock goes ahead is actually the ministry.

The regional and district managers have the statutory decision-making powers. A long time ago, they took those powers away from the minister. I don't actually make any of those decisions, and that's so that I can't, I guess, be influenced by political purposes to allow somebody to cut trees in a place that I might deem fit.

They're continuing to work with it. They do know there are challenges. I'm not surprised that there are concerns with some of the issues on B.C. Timber Sales, because it actually literally has become one of the largest licensees in the province. Are there going to be issues from time to time with where they're looking at to go to work and what consultation they have to go through? I would expect that. I would also expect that as we go through that, both the statutory decision-maker and the agency — which is B.C. Timber Sales — would deal with those concerns in a balanced manner.

All I can say to the member is the processes that have always been the statutory decision-making processes would affect them as a licensee the same as they would affect any other licensee. I think they'll basically do their work, and some they'll get and some they won't get, I guess. That will be the decision of somebody that neither one of us has any influence over.

The Chair: Member for North Coast, noting the time.

B. Simpson: I'm Cariboo North. Just noting the time, one quick question so we don't have to have the ADM come back in on this item tomorrow. The dynamic, though, in the ministry offices.... Yes, you've got the designated decision-maker as a district manager, but B.C. Timber Sales is a revenue-generator for the Crown. That creates a dynamic that causes some of these to escalate to a different level than maybe some other where you have a different relationship with the licensee. I guess that's the issue.

I'll just leave that there. The minister seems to understand that there are those issues there, and hope-

fully, the assistant deputy minister, as he goes around and does his tours, looks at this.

Noting the time, committee rise and report progress.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 8:50 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

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

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

Tabling Documents

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, I have the honour to present the Auditor General's report No. 1, 2006-2007, *Strengthening Public Accountability: A Journey on a Road that Never Ends*.

Hon. B. Penner: That sounds like the debate that took place here tonight, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I move the House do now adjourn.

Hon. B. Penner moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

provide the names of staff who are with me today. To my right is Sheila Wynn, Deputy Minister of Community Services. To my left is the assistant deputy minister of women's, seniors' and community services, Barbara Walman. Behind me I have assistant deputy minister of local government, Mr. Dale Wall. Also behind me is the assistant deputy minister of management services, Shauna Brouwer.

With that, Mr. Chair, I'll entertain questions.

D. Thorne: Goal five of the service plan states that women have the opportunity to reach their economic potential. However, Stats Canada has recently released figures showing that women with young children under six are leaving employment in very high numbers. In fact, I have one article, which was in the *Vancouver Sun* on April 22, referring to exactly that.

Many at StatsCan suspect that day care availability plays a role in this change. According to their top economic analyst, when women stop joining the labour force just as baby-boomers start to leave, we've got a problem. It illustrates how closely linked the labour market is to child care availability.

I just have a couple of questions to start on the child care situation. I'm wondering. Since the minister is committed to helping women reach their economic potential, has her ministry played any role in ensuring the creation of new, affordable child care spaces in British Columbia?

Hon. I. Chong: I can certainly tell her that members on our side of the House absolutely are committed to assisting every British Columbian to take advantage of the vibrancy of our economy and the economic opportunities that exist around. Absolutely, with 52 percent of the population being women, I particularly am interested and keen to see women do well and to participate in as many areas of economic and employment opportunities as possible.

[1505]

One of the things we've done is with our mentoring program.... Our Empowered to Work program certainly looks at a variety of options, not just traditional roles but non-traditional roles — those in construction and trades. As well, by partnering with other organizations such as the Minerva Foundation, the YWCA in Vancouver and the Women's Enterprise Centre — they also look at providing assistance for mentoring women to be in self-employment opportunities and for women who wish to balance family and home life with work experience. Those opportunities certainly are there.

The member speaks about child care. I would imagine that she would have canvassed this thoroughly with the Minister of State for Childcare, but I can tell you that we have worked hard over a number of years in our first term to increase the number of child care spaces, offering flexibility. I can tell her, as she probably did canvass the minister of state, that the system we have here in British Columbia is certainly more flexible than those in other jurisdictions. We will con-

PROCEEDINGS IN THE DOUGLAS FIR ROOM

Committee of Supply

ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF
COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
SENIORS' AND WOMEN'S ISSUES
(continued)

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

The committee met at 3:02 p.m.

On Vote 21: ministry operations, \$236,621,000 (continued).

Hon. I. Chong: Before we begin this afternoon's debate, I would just like, for the benefit of members, to

tinue to work with our providers. We will continue to have dialogue with people in the community to ensure that this will continue so that women can realize their economic potential.

D. Thorne: Thank you to the minister. I guess, more specifically, I'm wondering if the minister had asked her staff to be actively involved in presenting this perspective — that women need child care in order to be actively involved in the economy — during recent discussions on the whole child care issue in British Columbia, specifically around the cancellation of the federal child care program, the concern about the loss of the \$463 million to the child care system in British Columbia and the obvious concerns around how we're going to make up those dollars now.

Hon. I. Chong: I appreciate the questions that the member's bringing forth. Again, the technical information and the background information very much rest with the Minister of State for Childcare. However, I do want to assure her and other members that my deputy minister serves on a number of deputy ministers' committees. We work cross-ministry to ensure that issues that affect a number of ministries are discussed and dealt with so that we can have the best, broadest and most flexible programs and initiatives in place. Certainly, child care is one of those.

We continue to work closely with our colleagues in the Ministry of Children and Family Development — the Minister of State for Childcare, as well — and the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. It is important, as I say, to note that the budget for early childhood development — and child care, as well — was funded at \$284.4 million in '05-06. We are continuing to ensure that there are enhancements implemented and that those will be implemented this fall.

We have a committee that's called the Strong Start B.C. committee, which deals specifically with a number of ministries, dealing with families, dealing with ensuring children's health — the best, strongest start possible, dealing with particularly zero to six. Not only do we have early learning there, but we will deal with issues of child care in that matter.

To provide some reassurance to the member opposite, this government remains committed to ensuring that the old ways of doing things — where decisions were siloed, sometimes, in ministries — do not continue and that we work cross-ministry. We still have a ways to go. We're going to continue to do that. At the end of the day, I believe the product will be that families will be best served, as well as children, with a cross-ministerial approach.

D. Thorne: Just to reassure the minister, I think that the concern is more around.... It's not just affordability of child care; it's the actual spaces and how we are going to make up, in this province — and, I guess, in other provinces across Canada, as well — the money that we won't be getting now from the federal child care deal that would have built a lot of the new spaces.

As the minister and her staff know, the waiting lists are already quite large at most child care centres across the province, so this is going to be a challenge that we're all going to have to work very, very hard to counteract.

[1510]

I actually had quite a conversation yesterday with the chair of your Child Care Council, who happens to be a friend of mine, and you know, she shares all of our concerns about what's happening and the loss of the money.

Moving on to a group of women that is quite affected by the whole child care issue: low-income women. StatsCan issued another report in March that shows that women make up a disproportionate share of the population with low incomes. This, of course, would not be news to any of us. It talked about unattached women as well as families headed by single, lone-parent females. There's clearly an ongoing link between poverty and women.

Before we leave this section of questions around economic equality, I'm just wondering: is there a mentorship program offered specifically to women on income assistance? Are there any other, similar kinds of programs specifically targeting women on income assistance — through your department or through some cross-ministry initiative?

Hon. I. Chong: I didn't pay attention in the ministry estimates of the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, but I understand that some of these matters were canvassed — a number of employment programs and what was available. I am familiar with the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance providing a number of programs strictly to do exactly as the member suggests. They are about women on income assistance and finding ways to help them into employment streams.

The ministry has, I think, spent some \$300 million on employment programs for people on income assistance — this is men and women, and even persons with disabilities and those who are vulnerable — and the ministry continues to work to improve these programs to focus on, in particular, vulnerable individuals. So I do believe there are programs that are there.

Our ministry, for obvious reasons, does not fund the program, because as I say, the employment program is already being funded by the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. That's where it should be, as they have connections to those clients who are requiring that.

The one program that I think is worthy of note, of course, and that I am familiar with — and I'm sure the member opposite is — is the \$4 million towards the bridging employment program for assisting clients, who have experienced violence or abuse, to overcome employment barriers and make successful transitions to sustainable employment. I know it is a very special program, particularly dealing with women who have faced or experienced abuse. They have unique needs, and this program will certainly deal with those specific and unique needs.

D. Thorne: I'm sure the minister would agree with me that we should offer low-income women the same opportunities as other women, and I would encourage the ministry to think about maybe enlarging the mentorship program to deal with women on income assistance specifically. Most of those other programs.... I mean, a lot of these women have not experienced violence, so they wouldn't fit into any of the current programs that we have.

A mentorship program for women on income.... I can't think of anything that would be more valuable, really, not just for the low-income woman in the relationship but for the mentor as well. I think it would be a wonderful program if we could enlarge it. Mentorship programs, as we all also know, are probably one of the most cost-effective ways of dealing with a lot of social issues, and they're very rewarding for everybody involved. I'm sure this is something you've probably talked about before. I certainly would be really happy to encourage that, to help to do anything.

Referring to the same Stats Canada report, they talked about aboriginal women being three times more likely to be victims of violence specifically, and especially spousal violence, than non-aboriginal women. I'm just wondering: what kinds of programs are directed specifically at aboriginal women to address this issue?

[1515]

Hon. I. Chong: I thank the member for her passion and her interest in ensuring that we find ways to assist women to move from the lower incomes into higher incomes so that they can support their families and thereby have stronger communities and an overall stronger province. I will state and assure her that the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, in fact, for the clients that they are aware of.... They have, I believe, employment programs that will allow for that. That particular ministry continues to work and improve and enhance their initiatives, their programs.

In terms of this particular ministry, it was a new initiative for us to move into a mentorship program, whereby we did want to move women from one level of income, because these were not clients of income assistance, necessarily. They were women already working, perhaps in low-income jobs, who wanted a new opportunity, which is what the member alluded to earlier in her comments. That's why the mentoring program.... I have seen women enter into this. The HardHats program is one such program. As I said, there's a woman who said she was serving lattes six months ago and is now working with a Skil saw. She hopes to one day be a foreman on a jobsite and perhaps even build her own house.

We certainly know that there is opportunity there. We're working on that. As I've indicated to the member, at the end of the mentorship program that we've initiated these four pilots for, we'll evaluate that and see how we might make it better. I just wanted to ensure that the member is aware that we are working in that effort.

As to the aboriginal women experiencing spousal violence, she's absolutely correct that statistically there are a number of population groups of women who are ranked proportionately higher in terms of violence. Aboriginal is one of them, which is one of the reasons why our Community Action for Women's Safety grants, announced earlier this year, in January, were focused on those four areas and those four distinct women's population groups. We also saw some of the funding going to aboriginal organizations so that they could deal with community safety for women.

Also, for the benefit of the member, I just wanted to tell her that with the dollars that we are providing to fund our counselling services, we have increased funding for three aboriginal transition houses on reserve and also for counselling and outreach services in locations with a high population of aboriginal people.

D. Thorne: I'm pleased to hear about the aboriginal women's centres. I'm wondering: are any of those centres up along Highway 16? That's certainly an area where aboriginal women, as we're all aware, are encountering many problems these days.

I was just up in Prince George for the symposium, and it was probably the most powerful meeting that I have ever attended in my life. The aboriginal women I met at that workshop certainly need a lot of assistance and a lot of targeted programming I would think. If none of those three centres are in that area, I would encourage the ministry to look very seriously at putting some centres in up there or some kind of specific programming in that area.

I'll just wait for an answer before I say more than that.

Hon. I. Chong: There are three aboriginal women's transition houses, not aboriginal women's centres. That is the funding that we've increased and where they also may be providing counselling services. I, first of all, wanted to make that clarification for the member.

As a result of the women's safety grants, we will have a look at and evaluate those as well. As I mentioned to the member, I think last week, we are going to have, I guess, a form of symposium, after which we will gather some of this information and just take a look and see how these grants have been successful and also take a look at some practices that may be shared from one area to another.

I do believe that.... I don't have the names of the aboriginal transition houses with us. We can provide that to the member so that she's aware of where they are. But as I indicated, a number of counselling and outreach services have been provided in parts of the province where there is a proportionately larger amount of aboriginal people. I would say that her concerns are being addressed. I know she is interested in more being done. We will be able to do that.

[1520]

I've just been provided with some further information regarding Prince George. The Prince George Elizabeth Fry agency is the one with the transition house,

and it also provides STD counselling, outreach and the Children Who Witness Abuse program, to a total of almost \$689,000.

The Prince George Sexual Assault Centre Society also provides a program that it delivers for us, the STD counselling there — about \$95,000.

The Phoenix Transition House Society is another transition house, and it is funded for that house as well for the Children Who Witness Abuse counselling services — about \$514,000. That was the transition house that I believe I visited a number of years ago. They're doing excellent work there.

The Prince George Native Friendship Centre delivers a sexual abuse intervention program. Although this is not directly funded through us, it is by the Northern Health Authority.

There are those amounts in the Prince George area directly.

In Vanderhoof, as well, the Omineca Safe Home Society received almost \$500,000. Nechako Valley Community Services Society — \$102,000.

Again, a variety of services are being provided. We try not to have the same service be duplicated if it's within that region or area so that there's a complement. Transition house services are, as I say, being provided in Prince George, Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, Smithers, Terrace and Prince Rupert. In the 2006-2007 budget year a total of \$2.949 million — almost \$3 million. I hope that is helpful to the member.

D. Thorne: I would like to know how many — not specific programs — program areas are offered specifically to aboriginal women and how much is the total funding committed for the year.

Hon. I. Chong: I'm not specifically clear if she is looking for programs that are being provided by this ministry for counselling and outreach only for aboriginal women. Oftentimes what we will do is fund an organization that may have aboriginal women as a majority of their clients, but that's not to say that they're only aboriginal women in a particular society that receives all aboriginals.

As I've indicated, even when we announced the \$1 million for Community Action for Women Safety grants, we did say we wanted to provide additional focus on these particular population groups. So when we fund the organization, we would expect that its focus is on those areas.

In past years we have also provided a number of aboriginal women's organizations with some dollars to do capacity-building. Again, sometimes it's just a bit of a push to ensure that they can build capacity, and then they carry on from there.

For example, \$20,000 went to the Métis Provincial Council of B.C.; \$30,000 to the Pacific Association of First Nations Women. As well, they received dollars, actually, in a subsequent year for an aboriginal women's forum.

Those are, as I say, opportunities for aboriginal organizations focusing on aboriginal women to build

capacity and to look at ways to enhance existing programs. As the member is aware, for those matters that deal with aboriginal communities, more information can be received through the new Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. Again, I do want to assure her we also work with that ministry cross-ministerially to ensure that women's issues are identified and that we have input into grants programs and initiatives that they also fund.

D. Thorne: Is this ministry the lead ministry on aboriginal women's programming, or is it the aboriginal relations and reconciliations branch?

[1525]

Hon. I. Chong: As I indicated to the member, there are a number of programs and initiatives that focus attention on aboriginal people — and on aboriginal women in particular. In our ministry our program funding is primarily for matters of providing safety, such as transitional safe houses, second-stage housing, counselling programs and outreach services, as well as trying now to initiate more in terms of mentoring and those areas.

That is the primary focus of what this ministry does. In the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation they do a number of things, as well, and we have input in that. They have in the past funded a number of women's initiatives, such as a sexually exploited youth committee, the Métis women's secretariat, an aboriginal women's leadership forum, the Minerva Foundation aboriginal women's strategic consultation. They have things that they're doing in that particular ministry.

As well, in the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, as I indicated, they have the bridging program, which deals with women who've experienced violence or abusive situations, but many of those clients happen to be aboriginal as well. The Ministry of Advanced Education has programs as well. They do mentoring for new aboriginal nurses.

A variety of services, programs and initiatives do occur around various ministries. Again, for each and every opportunity that there is to ensure that we look at particular population groups that may need further assistance, we continue to do that. This ministry does work across ministries. My deputy minister, as I've indicated, serves on a number of deputy ministers' committees to ensure that the voices of women — aboriginal women, as well — are heard.

Recently at the federal-provincial-territorial level, where we have responsibility for status-of-women issues, my staff attended a working group, a forum on aboriginal women and violence that was held in Ottawa last month. Again, I would imagine that their findings, their recommendations and their information will come out as a result of the working group in collaboration.

This is a matter that was raised, at least that I'm aware of, two years ago when I was first the Minister of State for Women's and Seniors' Services, when I at-

tended the FPT in Newfoundland. It was very clear and continues to be very clear that the issue of violence against aboriginal women and aboriginal women's circumstances in general be one that we all — provincially, federally, territorially — address together with one voice.

D. Thorne: I can understand why it's difficult to answer my question about how much funding is specifically committed for programs for aboriginal women. I gather from your answer, just to make sure I have it clear for the record, that in some of the programs — for instance, in Prince George, like E. Fry and some of the other ones — aboriginal women are clients, but so are non-aboriginal women, whereas the women's centres and specific services on the reserves — and I'm specifically interested in that Highway 16 target area — are specifically for aboriginal women. I'm assuming that if a non-aboriginal woman ended up there, she would also get a service, but it would probably not be broken down in statistics. It's just a funded service.

[1530]

Back to just a final question on the highway of tears area. I'm still going to want to talk some more afterwards about the cross-ministry initiatives, but I'm assuming that the highway of tears issue would be one area where the ministry staff would be working in a cross-ministry way with other ministries — probably several other ministries. If so, who would be the lead ministry? Would your ministry be one of the lead ministries in this area? It certainly is a women's issue.

Hon. I. Chong: To the member, I appreciate that she does understand that sometimes when you fund organizations, they won't make it exclusively to a particular client base, especially with women-serving agencies. They do serve anyone coming in for assistance. In terms of Highway 16, which the member refers to, I can tell her that we do work cross-ministerially. Because of the particular nature that has been raised around Highway 16, the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General is the lead insofar as looking into the matters that relate to the disappearance of women, into the investigation and that nature.

However, the role that our ministry can play and does play is looking at issues that relate to safety and that relate to ensuring that services are available for women who are fleeing abusive relationships so that they know they can and they don't end up in a situation where they, perhaps, are missing. But from the pure safety side and ensuring that the investigation proceeds, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General has the lead on that. As I say, we work with them.

We have met with women-serving agencies and organizations in the area that she has mentioned. We also were part of providing some financial resources towards the symposium that took place in Prince George, so we're very much included in looking for the resolution or solutions for this. I hope that provides some information for the member.

D. Thorne: A final comment on the highway of tears. Unfortunately, women who are fleeing a relationship are often the ones with no transportation, who can end up in trouble on Highway 16. It's a huge issue, and it's going to take a lot of ministries working on it, I think, to even begin to try and deal with the issue.

I just wanted to move on to my last section I have in here for questioning. It's women's equality. I know that last fall there was some time spent in estimates talking about women's equality. At that time, the minister stated that a women's website and directory was at one point maintained as a reporting mechanism to assess progress and advances in gender equality. She explained that the staff had been reviewing whether this was an appropriate or adequate way to gauge women's progress. I'm wondering: what were the results of this review?

[1535]

Hon. I. Chong: Before I leave the last matter that the member referred to, on Highway 16, I should let her know that the symposium that was held.... There are recommendations. The document is being drafted now and prepared. I'm sure she will be interested — we all will be — when that's available. I think it's a matter of just waiting for that to take place.

In regards to the website the member is referring to. Yes, in the past we had maintained and kept a website to provide information. What we're doing is still working with Statistics Canada and B.C. Stats to ensure we have relevant information and also comparative information that will be informative to users of it. We are still, I guess, working to make sure there's access to reliable information — also about programs and services — so that the women's website directory, in fact, will be more complete and more comprehensive. Staff are still working on that.

D. Thorne: I'm wondering if there's any target date when this work will be completed, and are you considering also having a phone line, providing parallel information for women that don't have access, as most low-income women don't, to a website?

Hon. I. Chong: I just wanted to ensure I had the correct information for the member. I was also trying to understand the question that she posed. If it's about women having access to reliable information on programs and services, that is still available through the general B.C. inquiry line. But as I indicated to her last week, as well, with the 211 line coming in, that will be available toll-free and around the province. Anyone will be able to call up and ask for information in their community with non-emergency community services.

They're still working on that. It's due to be launched this October, as I understand it, through the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services. It should be an additional tool for anyone who has no access to a computer to find out what kinds of services are available in their community or in their surrounding communities.

D. Thorne: The website will be up and running. Did I miss that answer? Sorry; I may have.

Hon. I. Chong: The website is there, and we do continue to find ways to update it, as I say, with relevant and comprehensive information. In the 2004 calendar year there were approximately 6,100 visits to that particular website, which is an average of about 500.... In the 2005 calendar year — again, the statistics are done here on a calendar basis — there were about 14,000 visits to the website, which roughly adds up to about 1,200 per month.

Part of the reason for the increase, which is actually very heartening, is the fact that the largest increase was in October of 2005 when we launched a guidebook about women in business — a guide to resources for women starting their businesses and that. So it's as a result of that launch. It solicited more interest, and so the number of hits to our particular website was much greater.

[1540]

We have found that when we have initiatives out there and have some assistance in the community in publicizing them, when we indicate that the information is on our website, more often than not the website gets pretty busy with visits in that particular month.

D. Thorne: Moving on, a couple of years ago the government cut some funding to sexual assault centres in B.C. I just want to read this into the record, for Kamloops. "When this funding was eliminated, some communities, such as Kamloops, lost vital services, such as their victims' crisis lines. There are no victims' crisis lines now in Kamloops, and women in that community are left with no resource other than to call the provincewide victimLINK line, operated by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General."

I also have a letter here from the Queen Charlotte Islands Women Society, who point out chronic wait-lists for all of their Stopping the Violence programs. I'm wondering if the minister is aware of the wait-lists across the province, specifically the Queen Charlotte Islands Women Society, for violence counselling programs. I'm wondering what the ministry is doing right now to actively reduce those wait-lists.

Hon. I. Chong: The victims' crisis line, I believe, that operated around the province in a variety of ways — whether it was through a sexual assault centre or another resource society, etc. — was changed a number of years ago, which is one of the reasons why victimLINK was set up as being a 24-7 access line. I'm not familiar with this in its entirety, and I do want to suggest that the member refer to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, where the funding for much of the crisis line information and programs was in fact being provided.

This was done on the basis of ensuring that a confidential, toll-free, multilingual crisis telephone line would be in place and that it would operate on a 24-7 basis. It is also there to provide information referral

services for all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of domestic and sexual violence. VictimLINK was set up to ensure that there was work done with multicultural organizations as well, because of the diverse number of calls that have been taken in place.

[1545]

Now, as I understand it, with the Kamloops Sexual Assault Counselling Centre Society.... Our ministry has funded our Stop the Violence counselling program, and I believe in '05-06 approximately \$11,641 was provided. In '06-07 I believe that's closer to \$19,000 being provided. So they're obviously doing more in terms of providing that service.

The member also asked about the Queen Charlotte Islands Women Society. When I was in the Queen Charlottes in December, I actually made a visit to the society. We did discuss the issues concerning the women needing assistance there, and I asked what their requirements are. Oftentimes, although there may be what they call a wait-list, it's also because there is not the capacity to bring in a trained person to provide those services. I do know that in Queen Charlotte City approximately \$75,000 has been provided for a number of services and that in '06-07 an additional \$35,000 has been added to that.

Again, we are addressing the concerns that are brought to our attention and raised with us, but I do have to say that sometimes it's not just about adding the dollars to a program as much as it is ensuring that the trained personnel or counsellors are in place to provide that number of hours of services that the community is requesting.

D. Thorne: Mr. Speaker, sorry there. I was a bit distracted, but I'll read *Hansard* to get the total answer.

I know it's part of the ministry's rationale to enable community-based agencies to deliver services in their own communities, where the best knowledge and expertise is located, to respond to and prevent violence against women. I'm just concerned, when I hear about the wait-lists, etc., whether the ministry is effectively providing services for women who have been victims of sexual abuse. I have to ask the question: is there or will there soon be any funding available to restore the cuts made to the sexual assault centres across the province?

Hon. I. Chong: As I've indicated, the fact that our government has provided one of the largest increases ever for women's safety and for women fleeing abuse — \$12½ million that we received in January of 2005, going forward.... In terms of sustainability, that ensures that we do have additional dollars and provide additional services — not just for the safety of women in transition houses, in our second-stage housing and in our safe homes but also for additional services for counselling. We are meeting those needs with the counselling, the outreach services sometimes, as well, and with children who have witnessed abuse.

Sometimes in communities it's not about having the service and having people come to that particular

agency seeking help. The outreach service is also a very important part of it, which in the past had never been given the attention it had.... We have now provided the additional dollars to organizations to do the outreach necessary, particularly in the multicultural communities which require that as well.

In terms of the other matter that the member raised, again I would ask that she refer the questions she has to the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. Perhaps he can enlighten her as to additional services and programs that his ministry also provides that complement some of the other services in the community.

[1550]

D. Thorne: Not only were cuts to women's centres damaging because women lost access to information and support, but, coupled with cuts to legal aid in 2002, advocacy for women's issues and services to women with legal aid were decimated. I have a lot of statistics here, but because my colleagues are in a hurry to ask their questions, I am not going to read them all out. I think we're all aware that there's a long list of services that specifically impact on women that have been cut since 2002.

One of the worst was the cuts to legal aid. Women have been severely impacted and have been denied assistance. Without proper legal representation, women are losing custody of their children, have given up valid legal rights to support and have been subjected to harassment through the courts. Certainly, this covers a wide gamut of services that have been lost to clients of legal aid, and they're estimating that 90 percent of those services are impacting women more than men.

This has been very, very tragic for women in British Columbia. I would like to know if the minister will commit to reviewing whether funding for legal aid should be reinstated or, at the very least, doing a review of legal aid services specifically for women as a cross-ministry initiative of her ministry.

Hon. I. Chong: I thank the member for her comments. What's really tragic is the miscommunication and deliberate misleading of the public of what is actually happening here. When the member talks about reductions in some areas, she forgets that there are increases in a variety of other areas that provide for additional safety and additional programs and additional services for women and children escaping violence and abuse.

Again I refer her to the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, where she can canvass more fully and more directly about the victims' crisis line. I do know that the consolidation of sexual assault, women-assault and specialized victim services programs into a single community-based victim service program was intended for greater consistency in service delivery, and I believe it has done that. Again, she can find out through the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General how that is occurring. There is funding there. It's been maintained. She will see that.

In regard to legal aid, the amount of dollars that have been provided to that.... An additional \$4.6 million was allocated entirely to family law and child protection matters. The idea is to ensure that there is access to services for women who need legal aid. They do continue to receive that, contrary to what the member is trying to allude to. There are dollars provided; women are accessing that. Funding will remain stable for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. If the member wants additional details as to where these are, she can certainly canvass the Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism.

D. Thorne: I will try and access some of that information. Thank you to the minister.

My last question is pretty much a total departure from any of my other questions. It concerns the Bountiful issue, which — there is no doubt — we all know is a women's issue. The reality is that — I have a study here on the issue — polygamy in a closed community where male leaders are in control is the very context in which polygamy as such harms women and girls.

My question to the ministry and to the minister, to finish up this afternoon, is: how do we ensure that women's voices are full participants in the ways in which minority groups are defined in law and public policy in British Columbia? I mean, how do we ensure that, as a practical question to the women's ministry — and if there's any consideration of any cross-ministry initiatives to work with the other ministries — obviously, legal ministries, because it is a legal issue — involved in this issue? Certainly, I believe that your ministry should be involved in this as the key voice for women in British Columbia. With that, I'll say thank you very much.

Hon. I. Chong: I think the member and all members do know that polygamy is illegal under subsections 292 and 295 of the Criminal Code of Canada. Having said that, I think what's important in the area of Bountiful is that the women and their children who want to leave Bountiful know that in fact there are services for them if they choose to leave. We do want to ensure that services are meeting their needs.

[1555]

I want to assure the member that recently my deputy minister visited the area and met with a counsellor who is providing service to those who have left Bountiful. We're currently reviewing if those services are adequate or if they need to be expanded. We've had that dialogue specifically with a counsellor who's been there on the ground, and I would hope and expect that the member would agree that's important.

Certainly, I and our ministry staff are aware of the concerns that have been raised and the general allegations that have been made about abuse that has occurred and that has been said to be a result of the practice of polygamy. I have spoken to the Attorney General, and I've been assured by the Attorney General that specific complaints of sexual assault or sexual abuse, if brought forward, can be addressed under the

Criminal Code and will, in fact, be prosecuted whenever there is available evidence to support such a prosecution. The Attorney General is very much aware of this, and again, if the member wishes to more fully canvass this with him, I'm sure she will do so.

It's important, from the perspective of our ministry — while we work with the Ministry of the Attorney General, while he is looking at specific cases or specific allegations that they may be able to work with — that we continue to provide services in the area for women and children who choose to leave Bountiful and that we also try to educate them — that they can leave Bountiful.

B. Ralston: I have two questions in the area of urban agreements that I've previously given your staff notice of, providing some documents that set out just what the city of Surrey has done.

My first question — and we canvassed this in the fall estimates — would be... Given that previously the city of Surrey had not moved forward on the opportunity to create an urban agreement and now apparently has done so, I'm wondering if you can advise, first, what the status of those negotiations with the city of Surrey is. Second, how much money is there in any program where concluding an agreement would entitle the city of Surrey to access it? This is obviously a concern, particularly to my constituents in the city centre of Surrey.

Hon. I. Chong: First of all, I want to thank the member for providing that information to the staff so that we can have updated information available to him.

Of course, the member knows that we're all anxiously and eagerly awaiting the federal budget of tomorrow to see, in fact, what kind of details may be in there for urban development agreements. These are tripartite agreements. We certainly need the federal government to be involved and to be engaged in the goals and the aspirations of communities who want to put this in place.

That's, in part, one of the reasons that we don't have an allocation that we can be specific about, because we don't know how the federal government will be providing that. We have been in contact with them. We have been talking with them. It's important to note that even with the Vancouver agreement — which is the first urban development agreement, if you will, that was established — for the first three years it was unfunded as well. That may be something that we have to be considering. Again, it's premature to suggest that this would take place without knowing how the federal government would like to move, on that end.

Typically, it has taken as much as two years to get an urban development agreement in place. I think we're just coming up close to that time period now. We continue to work with the municipality of Surrey. We continue to dialogue with them. We will continue to do that.

If the member is interested in any specific aspects of it, we'll try to keep him informed. I know he is very

concerned from the aspect of his constituents asking about that and the mayor, in particular, wanting to move ahead on that.

B. Ralston: Just to conclude on this topic, I appreciate that the federal budget is due to come down very shortly and that budget secrecy prohibits the disclosure of the government's spending intentions. Obviously, since it is a tripartite agreement, it can't move forward without federal support.

[1600]

I'd just ask the minister to advise both me and the city of Surrey of the status of that program with the federal government, in order that in the event it is approved or there is an allocation made, this agreement could be put forward. As you'll be able to see from the document that has been provided, the city of Surrey seems to have finally gotten up to speed. I think the proposed agreement is the one that has a great deal of potential in a number of areas, not only social but economic, for the city of Surrey.

I appreciate the minister keeping me briefed in order that I can continue to pass that news on to people in my riding.

Hon. I. Chong: To very quickly sum up some of what has happened, the framework for an urban enrichment agreement was approved by city council on February 13, 2006. The member probably is aware of that. The first community advisory council meeting occurred on April 19, 2006, with representatives from the province who attended that as well.

I understand that the next community advisory council meeting, what they call the CAC, is planned for May 17 — in about two or three weeks' time. They will then meet monthly to develop a community engagement plan and support the development of identifying key priority areas and actions and key foundational documents that will be used to include the city of Surrey's comprehensive social well-being plan.

The urban enrichment agreement did receive \$30,000 from VanCity to hire a consultant for initial planning stages. I can say, as well, that Surrey has not yet requested any provincial or federal funding for the urban enrichment process, because they are in this early planning stage. Once they get past it, I'm sure they will be putting in a request.

However, the province did provide \$50,000 towards Surrey Solutions. Again, we will continue to work with Surrey. When I have the information that I can share with the member, I will certainly do that.

The Chair: Welcome to the member for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: Just to flow from my colleague's questions around the urban agreements, I would like to ask a few questions around the Vancouver agreement. I should also just note the minister's statement about the first three years of the Vancouver agreement not being funded. I do want to note, though, that there was sig-

nificant money that flowed to the Vancouver agreement. For example, 600 units of affordable housing were set aside, in terms of dollars, to support the Vancouver agreement in its initial signage. I don't want to revisit history, because I was the minister responsible for the Vancouver agreement then, and I know exactly how much money went in and from what envelope and from what ministry and so on.

What I am interested in now, though, is where things are at with respect to the Vancouver agreement. What are the new programs that are in place? What's being planned, and how much money is in fact available for the Vancouver agreement? In other words, how much is the province contributing to the Vancouver agreement at this point?

[1605]

Hon. I. Chong: I'm just ensuring that I have sufficient information for the member for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant, because I know we have some time limitations.

As she is aware, the agreement was originally signed in the year 2000 and expired in 2005. I'm assuming she is aware that the Vancouver agreement was renewed for another five-year term and has been approved by all levels of government. We have committed \$2.5 million to the renewal, but we are still waiting for the federal government to tell us to what extent they still want to be involved in urban development agreements.

The priorities with the agreement have not fundamentally changed. As the member would know, they are still priorities related to health, housing, safety, economic revitalization and employment, and those will continue to be part of it. I have a variety of statistics I could read into the record, but for the sake of time I will leave it, unless the member wishes that. In that case, we can send the information over to her.

J. Kwan: What I'm really interested in is the breakdown of the \$2½ million and what programs it funds, more specifically. If the minister doesn't have that information, I will be happy to receive that in writing so that we know what the funding has gone into and what it is supporting. What is the contribution from the provincial government? What is the contribution from the federal government to date? I understand the budget is coming down tomorrow, and there may be new developments. What is the contribution from the city of Vancouver?

When we set up the Vancouver agreement, the notion was this: an understanding that there are different parameters of different levels of government and the different things they could do. The whole idea was to see who could contribute what to make it work and not necessarily to say that one level of government is contingent on the other in order for the thing to move forward.

I would hope and think that the Vancouver agreement is still premised on that. The \$2½ million, really, at the end of the day, is not a whole lot of money. If

you calculate out, for example, 600 units of affordable housing.... I'm going to just sort of leave aside the increase in costs of house-building. With 600 units of affordable housing at \$100,000, which is a low estimate of cost per unit, it far exceeds the \$2½ million in terms of commitment to the Vancouver agreement. That's just one area of examples of where the commitments were when it was initially set up.

With \$2½ million, what are we talking about in terms of specific programs? The more detail the minister can provide, the more helpful it is in terms of getting that information out to my constituents and to the communities, who are, of course, very interested in the success of the Vancouver agreement. I'll just park that and assume that the information will be forthcoming.

I would like to just ask the minister what her position is or if she has a view on the safe injection site. As the minister knows, the safe injection site was an initiative that came out of the Vancouver agreement, on which much work was done by Philip Owen, the former mayor; myself; and of course, Dr. Hedy Fry — the first signatories to the Vancouver agreement.

We now have a new government, and we don't know where that is at in terms of whether or not there will be a continuation of support for the safe injection site. I wonder whether or not the minister has written to the new government on this issue, and if so, if she could share with us what her position is right now on the safe injection site and, particularly, the continued support of the safe site in Vancouver.

Hon. I. Chong: To the first part of her comments about the \$2.5 million: certainly, we can provide the breakdown of what's been spent to date and what this is going to look like. We haven't yet determined how the \$2.5 million for the next renewal will be spent, because we are revising some of the strategic plan for the renewed agreement. As soon as that is available, we will make sure it's available so the member has it.

In regard to her last area of concern regarding safe injection sites, I can say that we have seen this to be a successful initiative, in that the death rate due to alcohol and drug use and overdoses, HIV/AIDS, suicides, etc., has declined since 2000. So it has proven to be successful.

[1610]

I think it's fair to say we do believe that measures which deal with harm reduction, areas where we can prevent death, are a good initiative overall for society as a whole. I think it's important to say that we will continue to work with Vancouver and the federal government to see if there are other initiatives and enhancements — or how we can ensure that the success we've had to date in terms of reducing deaths due to overdose and the decline in drug use can be achieved.

We're still having, I believe, discussions. On the Vancouver agreement, as I say, there's still information coming forward. I believe that the Vancouver agreement.... As a group, we had sent a letter of support to the federal Health Minister regarding the safe injection site. I don't have a copy of that letter. I don't know if I

can get that for her. If I'm able to, I would certainly send that on to the member for her benefit.

J. Kwan: I would appreciate a copy of that letter. If the minister at a later date can provide it, I would appreciate that very much.

I'm glad to hear, actually, of the minister signing on to the safe site. It has been successful in terms of reducing overdoses, saving lives, the spread of diseases and so on and so forth, so hopefully, we won't have to re-fight that fight to re-establish it with the changing government on the federal side. That's good news.

I'm also wondering, related to this on the harm reduction continuum. The mayor of Vancouver, Sam Sullivan, is now on record supporting heroin maintenance as an initiative for Vancouver. That, too, flows out of the harm reduction arm of the Vancouver agreement. I wonder whether or not the minister has taken a position on that and what's her response with respect to Mayor Sullivan's proposal.

Hon. I. Chong: I thank the member for raising the matter. I think to be fair, for her to have a fulsome answer, she would need to refer this to the Minister of Health in his estimates. I think he'll give her all the information she needs in this area.

J. Kwan: I will do that. Thank you.

M. Farnworth: I want to let the minister know I have just a couple of issues that I want to pursue with her for a few minutes. One of them we canvassed briefly last estimates session, and that was on section 32 of the charter. Last time I asked the minister if the ministry kept track of complaints of citizens around issues on section 32 of the charter, and in particular, the issues between municipalities and local citizens. I'm wondering: are they tracking, or is it the same as last time?

Hon. I. Chong: I apologize to the member for the slight delay. I just wanted to get specifically the information in regards to the number of complaints he has regarding section 32. Prior to the member raising this matter last year, we had had none on record — that we had received a complaint. After the member had raised it, we received one complaint. I was just checking with the assistant deputy minister to ensure that that is absolutely correct, that we have received only one complaint formally.

[1615]

M. Farnworth: The reason I raise that is because I think you are receiving more complaints. Whether they're being formally recognized or not, I would ask the minister to go back and check within the ministry, because the complaint that came forward last time was as a result of my asking a question. The answer was: "Well, we're not having any complaints."

That aside, the issue that is occurring is on an increasing number of landholders whose property is be-

ing expropriated for various different rights-of-way. People are feeling aggrieved by the powers that local government is using and given under section 32. You are already familiar with one of the cases that was raised, because you received a response and asked the individuals to be referred to the Ombudsman.

The second case is around a family, a small landholder in the same area, whose property is being expropriated. They asked if they could at least take the standing timber off, because it was well into being second growth, and they were told no, they had no rights to that either. This is their property, and they're being told that a piece of their property is being expropriated. That's bad enough, but when told that they can't take the timber off, they were extremely upset and felt that local government has too much authority in this area.

I'm raising this because I think what needs to happen, and what I would like to ask the minister to look at and ask if she's got any thoughts on this, is around the issue of an arbitration panel. Court cases can be extremely expensive, particularly for small individuals. They don't have the deep pockets that large landholding or development companies do. As a result, they feel squeezed. People are complaining that the assessed value or the value they're receiving for expropriated land is extremely low.

One of the possible solutions is a non-judicial — so you don't have to go through the court system — arbitration panel that would allow for resolution of these types of disputes that occur under section 32 and that could resolve these types of problems without having to go through an expensive litigation process. I'm asking the minister if she will look at that type of panel, look perhaps at what's being done in other provinces, as a way that we could see something like that being introduced here in British Columbia.

Hon. I. Chong: I'm just noting down a number of things so that I can ensure I have the answers for him. First of all, in regard to the particular case he mentions with the landowner and the timber, that has not been brought to our attention. If the member has more information on that, we would be happy to receive it to see what we can glean from that and whether there is any assistance we can provide, so he can let his constituent know we would be prepared to have a look at that.

In terms of the other matter — the idea of an arbitration panel — while at first blush it sounds reasonable, right now we're not in a situation where we have a lot of cases we're dealing with. To set up such a panel without the basis to do so would, I think, be premature. Certainly, we can look at the idea of that, but we would have to do so in conjunction with the Attorney General, who has some of the authority with the setting up and establishment of arbitration panels.

[1620]

The member has made that request, and it's on the record. We can perhaps speak to the Attorney General and see what his views on that are, unless the member wishes to canvass that with the Attorney General.

M. Farnworth: I will canvass that issue further with the Attorney General.

The reason I'm raising this issue is because what is starting to happen is that you're starting to see.... This applies, in particular, to the Burke Mountain area of my constituency, where you are going to see over the next number of years — the next ten, 15 years, approximately — at least 25,000 new people moving into there and a massive series of developments taking place. There are large landholders with deep pockets — Westbuild is an example — who are going to be doing the major amount of development taking place on there. You also have a significant number of individual landholders of the five-acre, two-acre, ten-acre parcels who are finding they're being impacted by the decisions as development takes place.

In some cases you're finding parcels of land that are being, to use the term they're being told, "sterilized" so that they have no developmental rights on their particular piece of land. You're finding others who are finding that the development and expropriation process is leaving a very bad taste in terms of the compensation that is being offered, and they're feeling very hard done by.

What you are seeing now is just the tip of the iceberg as development takes place. I think this is going to be a growing issue for the minister and for the Attorney General's ministry, and it is costly. People expect to be treated fairly. That's why I'm raising the issue. If there's the ability to look at doing a tribunal so that you can get this dispute out of a court and into something less intimidating, I think that you would find a way to resolve a lot of the problems that are starting to crop up.

In many cases you're dealing with people who have been landholders and living on these particular properties for 30, 40, 50 years and who are elderly, and young families who were brought up there ten years ago. Change is coming, but they are feeling extremely disadvantaged, and they're pointing to the expansion of powers that were given under section 32 as a prime cause.

You're going to hear more about these complaints, so that's why I'm raising that issue for the minister. I thank her for her commitment, and I will give her more information on the case around the timber so that she can look into it.

The second issue I would like to raise with the minister is the issue I raised in the House with her on two separate occasions, and that's around municipal campaign financing. I know that the minister would be disappointed if I had just let the issue drop in question period, so....

A Voice: I know I would be.

M. Farnworth: My colleague said he would be.

Basically, I want to ask the minister.... It's been some weeks now since I canvassed that or asked her the questions in the House. Has she given any more thought to the issue around campaign financing at the local level and, in particular, closing the loophole that

allows for campaign donations to be made through the third party — to non-registered organizations who run as political parties, campaign as political parties, act as political parties but are, in fact, not political parties and can avoid declaring who the donors are?

Hon. I. Chong: I appreciate his first matter that he raised. I want to just say that yes, because the Expropriation Act does fall under the Ministry of Attorney General, that would be appropriately where the matter is canvassed. I do want to reiterate, which is a bit disconcerting, that he is aware of a number of matters coming to his attention which we haven't been made aware of. This is, you know, in terms of development.

[J. Nuraney in the chair.]

Again, I'm very surprised, and I don't know where those letters may be going — if there are concerns being raised — but they certainly have not come across our desk. If they have ended up in another ministry.... They usually would be referred to us, but we haven't seen that. I will pay close attention to that. In any event, I thank the member for that.

In the area he talks about, the municipal campaign financing, I'll just give him a brief update. There is, in fact, a deadline for submissions to our ministry: May 5. This weekend will be the last date that we will receive information.

This is a result of the survey that is sent out that I indicated to the member. So far, about a hundred submissions have been received from election staff — these are the municipal people who work around the province to coordinate the elections — and about a hundred from candidates.

Once all that information is received, along with any other we receive up to this week, we certainly would have a look at that. I think I did make it clear to the member when it was canvassed in the House that I would be receptive to making changes in time for 2008 if and when required — if required, depending on what the submissions are. And when required, of course, could possibly be for 2008, if that's necessary.

[1625]

I think it would be fair and appropriate that we wait for all the submissions to come in to see the extent, to see the broadness, of the kinds of issues that are being raised so that we don't just look at one area as opposed to another.

While this member is concerned particularly about the financing, the disclosure side of things, I'd be interested to see, with the 200 submissions so far that we're aware of, whether that, too, has been raised, because we certainly want that to be, broadly, an idea or an initiative that's viewed as a necessary change.

Finally, as he's aware, having been a Minister of Municipal Affairs responsible for local governments, it's important that UBCM is brought into this discussion, as well, to see that they appreciate and understand the extent of any changes that may be undertaken.

I hope that update gives the member some assurance that the matter is still being reviewed and looked upon, certainly in time for 2008.

M. Farnworth: I just want to make one quick reference, though. There are letters, minister, which you have signed and sent back to the people — as with this particular case, which I raised with you last time — recommending that they go to the Ombudsman. I don't want you to get the idea that somehow I'm bringing stuff for you that your office has not been aware of. In this particular case they have received a letter from you saying: "Go to the Ombudsman." The other case is a new case that's just happened in the last few weeks, and as I said, I'll commit to getting you the information.

Back to this issue. What concerns me in the minister's response is that she has raised the issue around waiting till the surveys come in. That's fine, but the minister herself knows that this is an issue. It's been raised, so I'm asking the minister: has she taken or will she take an initiative on her own to say, "Hey, this is something that the ministry needs to be looking at," and not have to wait for reports coming back from different parts of the province?

The fact that you have over \$100,000 being declared but no donors attached to it in the case of Coquitlam First should ring alarm bells. I'd like to know: if this is not raised by submissions from elsewhere, is the minister taking any personal initiative to see the problems caused by this particular loophole and any personal initiative to push to have it changed?

Hon. I. Chong: I appreciate the member's persistence in this area. There certainly are a variety of opinions that occur around municipal elections, how they're held and even the question of whether or not there should be slates of people and things like that. At the end of the day, we do listen, post-election, to what's occurred and how we might make changes to ensure that it includes as many people as possible to be involved in a democratic process of voting and being involved in elections.

I will make this commitment to the member. I will wait till the end of this week to at least have the results of the survey, with the 200 submissions we've received to date, and then have a look at the general overview of how the election experience occurred around the province, to ensure that I have a balanced viewpoint of what's taken place.

You know, if there are matters that are raised that are consistently problematic all around the province, those would be fairly easily able to be implemented. Those that are more rare or more unusual — and the difference and the disparities that occur may be happening in more urban versus more rural areas — I think need to be reviewed in the context of that, so that we also consult with UBCM on any changes we may wish to make in time for 2008.

[1630]

The matters that may occur in urban areas.... While we think it would be a solution that should be

provincewide, we may find that we have to have more distinct rules or guidelines than there are for the rural areas. I think it would be fair and reasonable to expect that we receive all the submissions we can at the end of the survey period and take a look at the context of how we're going to bring about changes. I imagine there will be some changes — if that gives the member any glimmer of hope — even if it means having best practices and guidelines out there to assure that more transparency is involved. But again, I think it's appropriate to wait for the survey results to be in completely so I can make whatever changes that must be made that reflect the wishes of the people in the province.

M. Farnworth: Well, I accept the fact that the minister wants to wait for the surveys to come back. I'll just make the following points.

First, I hope she doesn't just rely on the surveys but recognizes that she is the minister and has the ability to push forward policy and that when there are problems, she has the opportunity, on the basis of her position, to address those changes and push forward on them. I hope that she wouldn't just wait to see if the problem is identified on the surveys as something that needs her attention — and that her ministry is seen to act — because I think it's a serious problem.

Second, I agree around the issue of urban areas, but urban areas are not just the lower mainland, they're in other communities in the province — Prince George, Kamloops, Kelowna.

In this particular case, what you had was an organized group that campaigned as a political party, that advertised as a political party, that conducted itself as a political party and, yet, did not have to abide by the same rules and regulations as every other registered civic party in this province. There's a gaping loophole.

The issue the minister needs to understand is that if it's not addressed by 2008, what is an isolated incident today can become practice tomorrow. That will have a significant impact on the way that elections can be run and on the public confidence in them. That's why I'm being persistent with the minister. I feel very strongly on this, so I'm asking her to make sure.... Don't just rely on surveys, but rely on what is good public policy. I ask the minister to do that.

My final question to the minister is that she can raise this with UBCM. She does not have to wait for UBCM to raise it. It's not the type of thing that has to go to a convention. It's an important issue. If she commits the time in her ministry to look at it, she will see that it's something that needs to be addressed.

Finally, I'll leave her with this thought. In this province we have an independent officer overseeing provincial elections. We don't have that at the municipal, local government level. Returning officers report to councils, the very people that hire them. They do a wonderful job, but there is an inherent conflict there.

Minister, I hope you will take my remarks as they're intended, which is to be constructive. There is a loophole there, a significant loophole, and it needs to be plugged.

Hon. I. Chong: I thank the member for his participation in these debates.

I just want to also say for the record that I was not just intending to rely on the survey results. I had indicated that I would want that to come in so I have the general overview of the election experience as a whole that took place. In addition, I would consult with UBCM and ensure they would participate and be engaged in this particular discussion — not just on this matter but on all matters that the survey may reveal as areas that we may wish to change.

[1635]

I would agree with the member that it's a two-way street. Sometimes it's important for the minister to raise matters with UBCM; other times it's important for UBCM to raise matters with the minister. Were this that significant or important with UBCM executives, then I would expect that they would have raised the matter with me by now, and they have not. I expect that they also must be waiting for, to some extent, the results of the survey, so that we can have the whole-some discussion on all matters that pertain to the election and maybe even, as the member suggests, the election officers and the roles that they play.

I think the survey will prove very helpful to us, and even if it does not address every aspect that we thought it might, then the comments the member has made today, which are recorded in *Hansard*, will provide a basis for us to continue further with the discussion.

H. Lali: I guess, first of all, that I want to thank you, hon. Chair, and I'd also like to recognize the staff with the minister. We're moving on to the Public Service Agency side, so I'll give you a chance to switch over.

Hon. I. Chong: Before we move on to the other part of the Ministry of Community Services — as you know, the minister responsible for the Public Service Agency, which is the area that we'll now be canvassing — I want to take the opportunity to introduce staff who are with me at this particular time. To my right I have Deputy Minister James Gorman. I have also, to my left, Lynda Tarras, the assistant deputy minister; Barry Turner, behind me, also assistant deputy minister; and Cheryl Wenezenki-Yolland. She's the financial officer for the Public Service Agency.

With that, I'll entertain questions from the member.

H. Lali: Let's try this again. I recognize that we have a changeover in staff, and I want to actually just give a vote of thanks to the staff. I know staff do a wonderful job in the ministries. They have, obviously, in terms of the Community Services Ministry. It's a fairly significant ministry you manage, so I want to tip my hat to the staff before I start.

Having said that — because we're only going to be canvassing this for a short while, as we don't have the same amount of time as last year — I want to start off by just stating that there are a number of questions that I posed to the minister in October, which is actually, I

think, a little over seven months ago, to which I am still awaiting answers. I've got four of them listed here, so I'm going to start at the top.

During last year's estimates I had asked the minister the amount of severance that was paid to Mr. Dave Basi, whether it was paid by the Public Service Agency and whether the full amount had been paid out.

[1640]

Hon. I. Chong: I apologize to the member if he had questions last year for which he has not received responses. We certainly will look into that. We'll endeavour to have all that once we review the *Hansard*. Any questions left that a member requested and wanted a full response to, we have provided that. Again, we apologize for that.

The severance that was paid to Mr. Dave Basi was \$54,647 in salary and benefits. That total amount represents eight and a half months.

H. Lali: Was it paid by the Public Service Agency, and has it been paid out in full?

Hon. I. Chong: I am advised that it has been paid out in full. The way it works with the Public Service Agency... We are the administrators of the benefits package and various other administrative duties, such as calculating severance and things of that nature — vacation pay, sick-time entitlement and that sort of thing.

The agency itself does not make the payment out. Well, we make the payment, and then it is covered by the respective ministry. Depending on whatever ministry the individual comes from, that is where the recovery would be made, but not from the Public Service Agency, as a ministry would have made the payment, so we would have recovered it.

H. Lali: Another one of the questions that I had last October. I had requested the general labour force numbers for B.C. for four categories of equity groups. Those would be women, aboriginal people, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. I stressed that I wanted the provincial labour force numbers as opposed to the federal ones. I was wondering if the minister could provide me with the figures for those four groups in terms of what they were in 2005, in the year that just passed.

Hon. I. Chong: The information I have, in terms of the statistics that we have, is from January 2005. The percentage of the B.C. workforce that is classified as women: 61.5 percent of the B.C. workforce is women, and the percentage in the public service is 57.5. With visible minorities, the percentage in the B.C. workforce — again, as statistics have been provided to us — is 15 percent, and the percentage in the public service is 8.2.

[1645]

For aboriginal peoples, the percentage in the B.C. workforce is 3.7 percent, and in the public service, 2.2 percent. Persons with disabilities: in the B.C. workforce, 4.3 percent; in the public service, 4.7 percent.

H. Lali: I'll come back to these figures in a minute, but I'm going to go to my third question. I also wanted to know how the government has performed in the last four years — that would be from 2000 to 2004, because I asked this question last year in October — in terms of numbers of employees from those equity groups — the change from 2000 to 2004. Or you can use the figure 2005, because we've now moved on another seven months.

Hon. I. Chong: The statistics we have don't go back to 2001. We have July 2001. So the comparators I'll provide to the member are July 2001 to the ones I just gave him, January 2005. In the area of women in the workforce, we actually have trended up. It was 33 percent in July 2001 — or in the public service, the women in the public service. Sorry, the percentage of the public service — 56.1 percent was what it was in July 2001, and in January 2005 it was 57.5 percent, the figure I provided to the member originally.

In the area of visible minorities, again we have trended up. In July of 2001 it was 7.1, and as I indicated to him, it's 8.2 now. Aboriginal peoples — a slight trending up as well. In July 2001 it was 2.1. In January 2005 it was 2.2. With persons with disabilities there has been a slight decline. In July 2001 it was 5.6; we're at 4.7. But again, it is higher than the percentage of the B.C. workforce, which is at 4.3. Again, those are the figures that I provided to the member.

H. Lali: The last question that I needed an answer for was.... I wanted to know the percentages of people from the four equity groups in executive and middle management positions in the public service for those same years — say, from July 2001 to the present.

Hon. I. Chong: Unfortunately, information hasn't been maintained in all of the category groups that the member is requesting. The one that we do have is for women. For the positions of executive director through to the ADM level, in July 2001 it was 33 percent, and in January 2005 it was 37 percent. So it's trended up slightly.

[1650]

H. Lali: In terms of looking at these numbers — and I haven't had too much of a chance to try to get any kind of an in-depth analysis out of this — just a cursory look at them basically shows that with the exception, perhaps, of the category of women.... Even then, I guess, prior to the Liberal government taking over in 2001, it already had reached the equity goals in that particular position in terms of the general participation in the public service.

If I look at all of the other numbers, there has been a minor shift upward. It's almost negligible, with the exception of persons with disabilities, where numbers have actually gone backwards in the general participation within the public service. Even for women on the executive and middle management positions that I'd asked for, it's gone from 33 percent to 37 percent. So

again, women are underrepresented even still in that area.

I just wanted to ask the minister: what kind of commitment does this government really have towards bringing equity — or merit, as it is called — in terms of people from these four groups, these four disadvantaged groups, actually getting access to public service positions, to begin with, in all ministries? I mean, what kinds of action does this government actually take to make sure that they are represented in terms of what the general percentages of these four categories are in relation to the general population?

Hon. I. Chong: I appreciate the member's raising of this issue. I want to say that each of these distinct population groups has its own, I guess, story to tell.

When it comes to women, while there has been a trending up for women who are in the public service — perhaps not as large as the member would like to see — I think we have to acknowledge that women want to make choices to balance family, home life with work-life. What I've noticed amongst even my own friends is that some leave the public service so that they can work at home, so that they can spend more time with family. So while you are attracting some new, independent women into the public service workforce, you have some of the mature women with families who may choose, because of their situation changing at home — family life — to also leave.

Again, while we have to ensure that we are encouraging that the public service is a wonderful place to work, where you can get some training and career development and then leave again, some do take that option. They leave again.

In the area of the other population groups, we certainly know that there are some challenges to increasing the participation rate. Certainly, that's what we want to do. To do so is not to target or to focus on goals or objectives but, more so, to acknowledge that for business reasons, it just makes sense to deliver citizen-centred services that our population requests when they're dealing with government — that we do, in fact employ people from all these population groups. As we see our province becoming more diverse, with more background, people who are looking to the public service for information and to dialogue certainly want to see someone behind the counter that they would recognize as representative of British Columbians.

We are still working in this area. We still know that there is room to improve and change that, and we are doing so, so that we can focus on citizen-centred service delivery to all British Columbians.

[1655]

H. Lali: The minister makes the statement that women have many more things to balance in their lives in terms of their careers versus raising families. I don't dispute that. It is true that that happens.

When you look at these numbers, if women are 52 percent of the population in British Columbia and their

participation in the public service is at about 57.5 per cent, as the minister says, that number would tell you that, yes, women have choices to make but not every woman chooses to raise a family. There are significant numbers of women to make sure that their participation rate is actually really good in the public service.

When you turn to the management positions — the executive and the upper-management positions.... We're not talking about thousands and thousands of positions here. You know, those positions, from the ADM up, that the minister just outlined a few minutes ago.... It's a fairly exclusive club. We're not looking at huge numbers. Yet when you look at the rate of participation for women, it's only 37 percent. It's fully 20 percent below their participation within the public service. But when it gets on to higher levels and positions.... It's not because women are not as qualified. Perhaps they might even be more qualified than men are.

I just want to state to the minister that there is a truism, in that, yes, women have to make choices that men often do not necessarily have to, but the numbers don't state that in terms of the participation within the ordinary jobs within the public service. So why is it that women are not brought into the upper echelons of management by this government to the same level as their participation in the public service?

Hon. I. Chong: I want, first of all, to clarify, because I don't want it left as an assumption that I said that women aren't qualified. I merely stated in my remarks that women are making choices and that women are making choices sometimes with family life and work life and are balancing that. There's a variety of reasons for that. We absolutely do want to ensure that women entering the public service have opportunities to rise to their potential. If they do so and then make choices to discontinue and leave, sometimes they don't aspire to those levels.

But if the member is indicating that there's a barrier to that, I would suggest not. I mean, if I go back to the statistics in January of 1994, these comparators, the percentage was at 25.5. It did jump up by 2001, to 33 percent; then in July of '04 to 34; and now in January to 37. We have progressively improved, and that's a good sign. I hope the member would agree.

I also want to say.... When the member is asking about the opportunities, I can say that the two most senior positions in the public service, or many would view them as the two most senior positions, are held by women. That's the deputy minister to the Premier and the deputy minister to the Minister of Finance. My own deputy minister, not to the Public Service Agency but to the Community Services Ministry, is also a woman. I think we have more women who are now at the deputy minister's level, as a percentage of deputy ministers, than has been the case before.

The opportunities are there. We are, as I have indicated, also encouraging more people to enter the public service as a great opportunity for a place to work. But we acknowledge, with globalization and with the way the economy is changing around us, that there are

many who take advantage of the private sector. That's also going to be a challenge. With the aging demographics, that's yet another challenge. But that's not to say that we're not prepared to meet these challenges head on, not prepared to go out and encourage all persons to come into the public service.

Personally, I'd love to see more women in the public service and even more women elected to public office.

[1700]

H. Lali: I agree with the minister. It is a good thing that the numbers have gone up — from the NDP, from 24 percent to, I think it was, 33 percent, and then under the Liberals from 33 percent to 37 percent. It's a good thing, but it's not good enough when we talk about these executive and upper-level positions. It's not good enough. The minister has stated once again that women have to make choices. I agree: yes, women do.

There was a time when, in terms of the average number of children, Canadian women were having 2.5 — about 20 years ago. It's been decreasing steadily since then. I think it's about 1.2. We have one of the lowest birth rates in the modern world, and that's because Canadian women, and British Columbia women along with them, are making choices. They're making choices in favour of careers, or they're holding off and having their children a little later. Some of them are actually having their children earlier so they can have their children and move on from that part so they can actually participate, as their children grow up, in the choices that they make for their careers.

I would argue that there are more women who are now going back into employment. They would have had careers before their child-rearing years, and once their children are grown up and have gone off to high school or college, they're going back into the labour force, whether it's public or private, to resume their careers. A lot of these women are going back to school, back to university, to upgrade their education so they can resume their careers. Some of those careers have moved on.

That's not to say that there aren't enough qualified women. I guess this is what it comes down to — to the root of this: does this government believe that women should be participating in those upper-echelon positions in government at the same level as their population or their participation in general jobs within the public service? That's the question that I need the minister to answer.

As the minister responsible for equity hire — or merit hire, as it is called now — what is the minister willing to do in her tenure as minister of the Public Service Agency to make sure that we meet those numbers of, if not 52 percent, then at least 50-50 — as, in my opinion, it should be — or perhaps even better than 50-50? There are so many qualified women out there. What's the minister's plan to make sure that happens in the Public Service Agency?

Hon. I. Chong: I think we both acknowledge that we would like to see increased participation of women

in the workforce, but this, again, is a choice that women will make — as to how they participate in the workforce, whether it's in the public service or the private sector. Certainly, we're doing what we can to encourage women to enter the public service. We encourage all British Columbians who are looking for a career in the public service to look at our jurisdiction as opposed to others.

I think it's important to note that, as can be seen, the trending certainly is in the right direction, as the member has acknowledged. We will continue to make improvements in that area by removing barriers, if there are barriers that have been put in place. Of course, we welcome any ideas or thoughts that members have if they believe that there are such barriers. We know there are women who are qualified. We know there are women who are talented. Are they coming to the public service? Again, that's their choice, as opposed to being in the private sector. I think it's fair to say that the Ministry of Community Services as a whole wants to see women reach their economic potential.

[1705]

I was being canvassed earlier today. What we're doing to encourage women to re-enter the workforce after a long absence, or new graduates who have never been in the workforce — those who have graduated even from high school, university or college — that if they are required to enter into even a mentoring program.... This is a new program that we've initiated in the Ministry of Community Services, once again, to encourage more women to participate in the workforce.

At the same time, we've also said that we would mentor women. If they wanted to be in a category of employment such as self-employment, we would also find ways to do that.

While we are mentoring women to participate more in the British Columbia workforce, as much as we would like many to enter the public service — because we know that we are going to have, just by sheer numbers of age, some shortage in that area — we acknowledge that women will make choices as to whether it's the private sector or public service. But the trends are still upwards, and we will continue to move in that direction to ensure that we continue to have strong growth in that area.

H. Lali: As I stated earlier, it's not good enough. I'll state it again. It isn't good enough.

For the third time in a row now the minister has talked about choices — women making choices. It's not about choices anymore because women have made their choice, and 57.5 percent of the public service is women. That tells you women have already made the choice. Women are making choices and wanting to participate in the upper-echelon positions of this government and all of the Crown agencies and in the Public Service Agency.

The minister is a woman. There are two women, who are well-educated, strong women, sitting beside and behind the hon. minister. I see women in the senior

staff, also, waiting over to my left as well. There are so many other women as well.

It's not about choices anymore because women have made the choice already. Now the choice lies with this government. What is this government's choice in terms of making those targets go up? That's where the choice lies. It's not with women. It's not good enough for the minister to keep harping on the fact that women have to make choices.

Women are making choices. They've made their choice. The choice now lies with this minister and this government to make sure that women are getting their just reward, which is equity, which is to be on par with men, if not even a little bit above because the percentage of the population of women in this province is higher than that of men.

Again, I want to ask the minister: what is the minister specifically going to do to make sure those numbers are met? I'm not asking for any kind of a quota system, but I am asking the minister what kind of targets she has in mind to make sure that women are given their just reward in terms of the hard work they put in and the education they have derived to get to this point. What kind of a plan does this minister have to take to cabinet for approval to make sure that equity hire takes place in the upper echelons of this government?

[1710]

Hon. I. Chong: With respect to the member, he says he's not looking for targets or quotas, but that's what I'm hearing from him.

When I say women have made choices.... He's suggesting that women have already made their choices. Yes, they have made their choices to enter the public service, but they have also made choices on whether or not they wish to move around in the positions that they have. Those who wish to do so can through.... We have a leadership tracking where if people are interested to move into senior levels, regardless of whether they're men or women, we certainly are going to move in that direction. If an individual is not interested and is satisfied with the level that they're at because of the workload, because of their personal situation, then we can't necessarily move them on if they're not interested in doing so.

There has not been that barrier, unless the member is aware of a barrier, which has prevented a woman moving into a senior level of management in government. If he is aware of that, then I would ask him to bring that to my attention so I can take a look at those cases individually. As we can see from the trends, I think it's fair to say that more women are entering into the senior levels of management. More will continue to do so if they make the choice to do so.

H. Lali: Again, I don't think the minister understands. I don't think the minister actually gets what it is that is the problem here. The minister continues to talk about choices and continues to put the blame on women — that the reason there are not enough women in those upper-echelon positions is because women are

not coming forward. I'm paraphrasing here, but that's what the minister just said. It's the women's fault that they're not coming forward in those quantities.

The minister wants to know if there are any barriers because she's not aware of any barriers. Well, standing here as a man, I can tell the minister that there is a barrier. Men are the barriers to women not getting these higher, upper-level positions. The minister should be aware of that. It's always been men who have been the barrier in terms of women not getting their just due or their just reward in terms of getting those upper-echelon positions.

If the minister who is responsible for making sure that there is equity in the Public Service Agency, in the men and women that work in this service.... This is the minister that is responsible. If the minister doesn't understand what the barriers are, if the minister doesn't understand that, then I question the will of this minister to make sure that equity takes place in the Public Service Agency. I asked the minister several times now if she has any specific plan to make sure that that takes place.

I can give the minister one more example, if the minister would actually answer a question, and that is that there are hiring panels that this government has. All governments have hiring panels in terms of the upper-level positions that take place. On those hiring panels, how many of those are women? That's the first question I'd like to ask the minister. If you want to remove barriers, you have to empower women in those positions where the decisions are made. That's my question to the minister. How many people on those hiring panels are women, as a percentage?

Hon. I. Chong: I know that this member likes to bring up rhetoric and try to appear to be more passionate than what clearly is the case here. Trying to mislead those who would follow *Hansard* subsequent to the conclusion of these debates....

H. Lali: Point of order. The hon. minister is disparaging my reputation. I wish the minister would withdraw her remarks saying that I was misleading this House.

The Chair: Minister, was it your intention to characterize the member?

[1715]

Hon. I. Chong: Hon. Chair, it was not. I was just referring to the comments that the member was making and paraphrasing the comments I made. So if he feels that I have done so, then I would withdraw those comments, but I will say that his characterization of my comments that I was blaming women was, in fact, inappropriate, which is why I made the comments that I did.

I have not in any way insinuated that I blame women for the situation that is at hand. In fact, I have indicated that women have the right to make choices as to where their career development takes them, that women have not been faced with barriers, and if so,

that the member please provide me with specifics as to what those may be and I would be more than willing to take a look at that.

I would hope that he is able to withdraw his assumptions that he's made on my comments, where he has suggested I have blamed women for their situations, because that is certainly not the case. What I have said and what I continue to say is that we want to make the public service a place that is attractive to all British Columbians. Because I personally acknowledge that 52 percent of the population are women, absolutely I would like to see more women in the public service. In fact, I think we're doing quite well there.

At the same time, I also would like to see women achieve their fullest potential. If that means aspiring to the highest level that is possible, then certainly we would want to do that, which is one of the reasons we do have a leadership program in the Public Service Agency that provides for, for lack of a better word, some mentoring into that pathway.

Prior to us forming government, even the appointment of people to a number of boards, commissions and agencies was primarily male dominated. We have made very focused efforts to ensure that that has changed. I think if you were to compare the statistics, although I don't have them ready at hand, there are more women now who serve on a number of government boards, agencies and commissions.

Are there still improvements we can make? Absolutely. But there are more now than there were in 2001. I know that for a fact.

The member raises questions specifically about hiring panels, and he wants a percentage as to how the hiring panels look. What I can tell the member is that hiring panels are specific to a particular job requirement. The hiring panels aren't established. Throughout the year they will change from time to time, and the people on the hiring panels are chosen there who are best suited to make a determination as to who the best applicant is to fill a particular vacancy. I hope that is helpful to the member.

H. Lali: I appreciate the fact that the people on the hiring panels change, because that happens. Perhaps the minister can commit to looking at the last four years or five years since the Liberals have come into office, making a note of all the hiring panels for these upper-echelon positions and come back and.... Just a nod will probably be good enough from the minister to see if the minister would be able to provide me with that information to see what the breakdown of men and women is in terms of those hiring panels that have existed in the last five years.

Hon. I. Chong: I will ask staff to make every effort to see if that data can be collected. I don't know whether that is possible. If it is, and can be done with relative ease, we will do that. I've stated so in *Hansard*. I'll make sure that the commitment whether we can or cannot provide it will be made clear to him in short order.

[1720]

H. Lali: In terms of the percentages the hon. minister has provided, 57.5 percent of the public service is women; 37 percent is ADM and above. Could the minister give me a breakdown of both those figures as to how many of those women in both of those categories, as a percentage, are of visible minority background, aboriginal background and persons with a disability?

Hon. I. Chong: I just wanted to ensure that I have the appropriate data that I can provide to the member. Firstly, he asked for specific information. Unfortunately, I'm not able to provide that information, and it's simply because of this: it is not possible to correlate the data that he's asking for.

People are asked to self-identify so that it can be used on the basis that the data will not be used to identify specific persons. For that protection-of-privacy right, it's very difficult to get that information. If persons do not wish to self-identify, we will not have complete or conclusive data. For that reason, the policy has never been, specifically, to have that information — unless people are prepared to provide that to us.

H. Lali: If it's self-identification, then, I would ask the minister respectfully: when you derive a figure that 57.5 percent of the general public labour force is women, how did the minister derive that figure? Was it through self-identification? If we're able to determine, through self-identification, that 57.5 percent of the public service are women and that 37 percent at the upper echelons are women, and if it's a little onerous to get that number from 300,000 public servants, what about ADM and above?

Obviously, somebody can do the homework to find out how many of those, then, are aboriginals, visible minorities and people with disabilities. I mean, it's a smaller figure. Obviously, the government needs to do this in order to determine what kind of a job it has ahead of it in terms of meeting targets — if, indeed, the government is interested in targets.

Hon. I. Chong: I think what I need to make clear to the member is that, in terms of women, the numbers for women are less about self-identification. They are accurate, in that you are generally able to determine the gender, whether male or female.

[1725]

When it comes to the other population groups that the member is interested in — the visible minorities, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities — these do require self-identification. Unless the individuals provide that, we don't have statistically as accurate a number as.... We do not have any reliance on any accuracy of the numbers. In fact, the numbers I have given to the members are numbers that we've received from Statistics Canada and B.C. Stats. They, too, could be understated simply because they may not have self-identified.

When I indicated the data cannot be correlated, we do have those numbers who are women. If the member

is suggesting we look further into those numbers of women and find out how many of them are in these other population groups — visible minorities, aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities — that is not possible.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

H. Lali: I understand. When you're talking about the public service, you're talking about hundreds of thousands of people, so it would be a little bit difficult. Perhaps even if it is self-identification, it would be a little bit difficult to drive at accurate numbers.

Before I ask my follow-up question, I would first ask the minister.... The 37 percent for the upper positions I asked for — ADM and above, I think, is what the minister answered.... What's the absolute number we're looking at here in terms of how many people in total there are of executive directors and above in government? Then I guess 37 percent of that would be women. First, I'd like to know what the absolute number is.

Hon. I. Chong: I think he refers to the public service as being 300,000. I should clarify: in terms of the Public Service Agency and the public service, which the public service applies to, the actual number is 31,000. The 300,000 is the broader public sector, so I first of all need to make that clarification.

Again, I want to point out that the 37 percent of women in the executive level — the executive director through ADM levels and the senior management he's referring to, which I had given him as January 2005 — is at a specific point in time and can change. Absolute numbers will change from time to time.

At this particular point in time — and this is really an estimation more than anything — we would venture that it could range from 250 to 400 people, if that's what the member is referring to. Again, we'll see if we can collate that data with some ease if it's possible, because he is looking at women, who are more easily identifiable. We can see what we can do to provide that information to the member subsequent to the estimates debate.

[1730]

H. Lali: I thank the minister for that. Just a follow-up to see.... If we're looking at 250 to 400 people, that's not a huge figure. It's not like we're looking at tens of thousands of people, which would be much more difficult to try to pinpoint. I was wondering — the minister used the term, and I think it's probably more appropriate — of the senior management positions, the 250 to 400, if the minister would commit to doing a survey of those people to see how many are men, how many are women, how many of those are of visible minority background, how many are aboriginal and how many are persons with disabilities. Basically, we're talking about the four equity groups, because I think that's easier to determine.

It'll actually help the minister, not just this member here. It would really help the minister to determine a

direction and a plan for the future to see how we can actually meet targets in terms of equity hire or merit-based hire in this province. I'm wondering if the minister would commit to doing that and bringing that information forward in a timely fashion and providing that to this member opposite as well.

Hon. I. Chong: I suspect that the member is, by virtue of his request, asking that we go and survey existing personnel and therefore try to suggest that all employees will participate and provide information such as he's requested. When you send out a survey, it is voluntary, and you respectfully request people to provide the information. If they don't, the accuracy of that is therefore flawed from that perspective.

As I say, it is important to note that the numbers that we have, as opposed to male and female people in the workforce.... It's much easier, it's more readily available to us, and those numbers are more accurate. Again, if they were 100 percent accurate.... There always could be some mistakes, but generally speaking, they're more accurate than any other figures.

What we have done is, at a hiring level.... When an individual is first hired, they certainly do fill out the application, and information is there. If the individual chooses to mark off boxes that allow them to self-identify, that's where we can gather data from. But if they don't choose to do it at that point and they've been hired on and we're now requesting that they provide that information, I believe that we would certainly not serve them well in so doing.

We will move forward in terms of data collection, as best we can, to do that. If there is information that is readily available for the specific areas that the member has requested in the senior level of management, that may be easier to attain. If we can do that, we will do that and provide it to the member. But if he's suggesting a complete survey of the public service, going backwards, I have to question the accuracy of the information we're going to be able to receive and whether or not we're going to be able to use that data in any real concrete way.

I understand his motivation. I understand his reasons for this — that is, to increase participation. There's no question, as I've indicated to him earlier in our debates, that I, too, would like to see an increased participation. We are doing that certainly on a going-forward basis, as we are encouraging more people into the public service and also taking a look at those who are hired to represent and reflect British Columbians as a whole. That is how we can best deliver, as I say, citizen-centred, client-focused government services. We will continue to do that.

There certainly is a challenge ahead of us, but we are looking at the talent that is out there in various population groups, encouraging them to join the public service.

[1735]

H. Lali: I'll take that to mean no, the minister is not committing to actually doing that survey.

Just to move a little forward, the minister gave some figures obviously, which are on the record, for all four groups: women, aboriginal people, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. I just want to point out to the minister that in terms of reporting these stats or how they are compiled.... I just want to share with the hon. minister, as I did the last time, that under the federal Employment Equity Act, the federal government, I understand, has legislation that actually requires compliance by the ministries and also by their Crown corporations. They report progress under the federal Employment Equity Act. It's for all government departments and the Crowns and also its regulated sectors, such as banks, telecommunications, etc. It's regarding hiring. It's compiling stats, and it's also doing reporting.

Since this government took office in 2001, it's stopped reporting all of this type of information. There's some compilation that is going on. It's done on a voluntary basis. I was wondering if the minister would actually commit not only to compiling the information — I know the minister has talked briefly about how some of the information is compiled — but also to making this information public and to start reporting it in terms of the progress that is being made by this government on employment equity.

The last time, in October, I wondered if the government was trying to hide something. When the information was not made available, the explanation was that it was in another office and not with the staff that were here. I'll take that for the minister's word; I did at the time. The information has been provided this time. Really, in the last five years since this government has taken office, there has been very little progress made.

When we brought in our equity legislation — I think it was 1992 or '93; one of my colleagues to my left might remember that — at that time the opposition, the Liberals, voted against it and said that it was not based on merit — that it was setting quotas, which it wasn't. When they formed government, they said they were going to bring in merit-based hiring. When they looked at it in more detail in terms of the act and the regulations that the NDP government had in place, they realized that in reality what we had brought forward in the '90s was based on merit. That equity legislation was based on merit.

What the Liberal government did was basically change its name, call it "merit hire" and hire a Merit Commissioner to oversee all of that. When you look at all of these numbers, what these numbers really tell me is that this Liberal government doesn't think that people of aboriginal descent, visible minorities, persons with disabilities and women have the merit.

They built a whole hoopla around how they were going to bring in merit-based hiring, how the face of this government was going to change. It was going to reflect what is out there in terms of the four groups that I mentioned. Yet when you look at the results, in some instances — when you look at persons with disabilities — it's gone backwards. If it's 5.6 percent in the general labour force; it's 4.7 percent now. It's gone backwards;

it hasn't gone forward. Really, if you look at visible minorities, it's 15 percent in the general labour force. It's 8-point-something percent....

Sorry. I think I may have misread some of the figures. I think persons with disabilities went from.... I'm missing one group here. I'm sorry. I'm just trying to read my chicken scratch that I've written up here.

For aboriginal people, it's 3.7 percent of the general labour force; it's 2.2 percent in the public service. What's really happened is that if you compare July 2001 with the present, yes, for women it's gone up. For visible minorities it's gone up negligibly, from 7.1 percent to 8.2 percent. For aboriginal people it's gone up from 2.1 percent to 2.2 percent. Persons with disabilities have gone down, from 5.6 percent to 4.7 percent.

[1740]

Overall, it hasn't improved. This government really hasn't done much to make sure that the four most disadvantaged groups in our society get a fair share of not only government jobs but upper-echelon jobs — the senior management positions. What it tells me is that the commitment is not there by this government.

So I will ask the minister — who, like me, is also of a visible minority background — if the minister is committed to equity hire; if the minister is committed to actually putting forward a detailed plan with targets to reach on a year-to-year or a month-to-month basis for the remainder of this term — there's three years left; if the minister would actually commit to setting up targets, commit to actually setting up a plan with targets, commit to taking that to Treasury Board and to cabinet to make sure that the four most disadvantaged groups in this society are going to get their fair shake at government positions and senior management level positions.

That's the commitment I'm seeking from this minister. I'm hoping that as a member of a visible minority group, like me, the minister would see the problem that is there and be able to recognize the barriers that are there.

The minister said earlier that she doesn't see the barriers. Now, she was talking in relation to the access for women to the senior management positions. There are a lot of barriers. Men are the biggest barrier. Government is another barrier. The way the government bureaucracy is set up is a barrier. The lack of promotion by senior management within government, by ministers in cabinet, by the Premier is a barrier. The lack of making equity hire a priority by this government is a barrier.

If the minister wants, I could go on and list the numbers of barriers that exist in government. Those barriers don't exist in the private sector. In the private sector, industry and business realize that it is fundamental for them to have people from these disadvantaged groups, because it means it's good business.

If this government wants to run like a business — like this government is proud of stating publicly; that it's a business-oriented government — maybe the government would like to take a business approach to equity hire and look at all of those barriers, start bringing down those barriers, so the people of those four disad-

vantaged groups — people with disabilities, aboriginal people, women in this province and people of visible minority background — are going to get their just due and just reward commensurate with their education and experience, so they can have equal participation in this government and the fruits of labour of this government. That's the commitment that this government needs to make, and I'm asking if the minister will make that commitment.

Hon. I. Chong: I don't know what part of the estimates debate the member has not heard. I have said on more than one occasion this afternoon that it does make good business sense to ensure that we have a public service that represents the population of British Columbia, the diversity of British Columbians. I have said that we are going to, through our efforts, make the public service a great place for people to come and work, and that includes women, aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities and visible minorities. I have already said that in order to deliver citizen-centred government services or services in general, that's good to have.

So I don't know what part of the debate the member hasn't heard, because he's going on about: "Business and industry do that." Well, that's exactly what I said earlier. With respect, I would hope the member acknowledges that this government is moving ahead and is ensuring that that is a priority with our public service.

I want, as well, to say that in the area of aboriginal peoples, we have to stay focused on a number of things. Two objectives in particular are certainly to increase the representation in the public service, but also there can be an even broader objective, and that is to train aboriginal people as public servants such that they can come in, do a term for however long they wish and possibly return to serve their own communities. That's not a bad thing either.

[1745]

We want to increase participation. But if they feel, after they've had a time in public service — a career development — that it is time to go back to their communities and use the skills they've learned in the public service, that's not a bad thing.

In terms of visible minorities, again, we have said that to reflect the diversity of British Columbians, it's important to increase participation there. There's still work being done to determine how to generate more interest within the visible minority population to serve in the public service and to have the public service as an employer. The member may think that everybody views the public service as their first choice. Certainly it is a good choice, but it may not be their first choice, and if we can change that, we certainly are trying to do that.

In the other category, persons with disabilities, I acknowledge that there was a decline in the public service. But generally speaking, as a percentage of the B.C. workforce, we are still doing better. The B.C. workforce is at 4.3 percent, and in the public service it's

4.7 percent. Again, these numbers can still be understated, because the self-identification policy or rules that apply make that so.

The Chair: Noting the time, the member for Malahat-Juan de Fuca.

J. Horgan: It's a very brief question.

The comments by the member for Yale-Lillooet put me in mind of the Merit Commissioner being removed with severance some months ago. I'm wondering if the minister could just briefly update the committee on the status of the Merit Commissioner. Has that position been filled permanently?

Hon. I. Chong: As he is aware, the Merit Commissioner is now an independent officer of the Legislature, and he'll have to refer that through to the Speaker. It's not an appointment that I would make as the minister responsible for the Public Service Agency.

If that concludes the questions from the members opposite, I'd like to take this opportunity, first of all, to thank the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke, who has gone to great lengths to organize what I think were well-coordinated, although multi-participant estimates. I want to thank him on the record for his efforts to do that.

The members who have participated in the estimates debate have also engaged. For those to whom we made commitments to provide information, we will review *Hansard* to ensure that they have that information made readily available.

Lastly, I want to again take this opportunity to thank all my staff who have been here throughout. No minister could ever do his or her job without the dedication, the commitment and certainly the long hours that our public service puts in. I want to personally take this opportunity to thank them.

Vote 21: ministry operations, \$236,621,000 — approved.

Vote 22: B.C. Public Service Agency, \$25,518,000 — approved.

The Chair: Committee A will stand recessed until 6:45 p.m.

The committee recessed from 5:49 p.m. to 6:48 p.m.

[A. Horning in the chair.]

ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF
TOURISM, SPORT AND THE ARTS
(continued)

On Vote 40: ministry operations, \$200,695,000 (continued).

N. Simons: To the minister: maybe.... Well, you'll introduce people you have with you.

I'm going to start asking questions this evening around heritage, and museums in particular. The last time we had an opportunity to do this, I did canvass a few questions, and I thought we were running out of time. Little did I know that we would have plenty more time. It's good to be here, and a thank-you to the minister for being available to answer questions.

We spoke last time about three new museums, or feasibility studies on museums, that were planned for British Columbia. One of these was the Asia-Pacific museum of trade, which was promised in the 2005 platform, and that one is tied to the Vancouver Convention Centre expansion. Can the minister elaborate on how the process of the development of that particular institution is going?

Hon. O. Ilich: The Asia-Pacific museum of trade has actually been.... We've had discussions with the city of Vancouver, and we've decided that it will go in the cultural precinct in Vancouver. The city of Vancouver owns a site there called the Larwill parksite, and we have entered into a cooperative planning process to create a cultural precinct there. We've provided a \$5 million contribution through the ministry, and the city has matched that \$5 million to start the planning function.

[1850]

That process is going to be led by the city in consultation with us. We're also taking a look at the same place at the national museum of aboriginal art.

N. Simons: There was a mention of a world women's history museum, and there was a possibility that the name of that would change to the women's history exhibition and treasury. Can the minister clarify the current status of that project?

The Chair: Before answering that question, minister, I wonder if, for the record, you could introduce your staff.

Hon. O. Ilich: Oh, I'm sorry about that. I have with me the current acting deputy minister, Jim Yardley, and the ADM for corporate services, Shauna Brouwer. Behind me I have Richard Brownsey, who's our cultural services director, and we have Faye Zinck, who's with the museum. Sorry about that.

The women's history museum is still in the planning stages. We've been talking with the museum about how we're going to do that. At the moment what we're thinking about doing is giving a grant to the museum to do an exhibit that will travel, but we are working with the Royal British Columbia Museum on that. It might not be a separate building; it will be part of the regular building.

N. Simons: Can the minister describe to us the process with which that whole idea came about? Where did the idea come from? What stakeholders were consulted in the process of developing this particular museum? Are there any supporting documents

or research that has contributed to the development of the plan for this particular project?

Hon. O. Ilich: We're just starting the process, really, on the women's history museum. We have a suggested advisory board, and we are working with the collection that the RBCM has at the moment. They are a major centre of research and the custodian of an ever-growing collection of artifacts and archival material. What we want to do is celebrate the milestones and contributions of great B.C. women achievers and show how these women have impacted social, cultural, economic and political life in B.C. and around the world. We're still talking about that. We haven't chosen a location, and actually, we haven't even established a budget yet.

N. Simons: For the sake of clarity, could the minister detail each of these proposed new institutions? Are they planned to be freestanding in their own buildings? What's the proposed ownership or governance structure that we should expect to see? Will they be Crown corporations? Will they be not-for-profit museums? What kind of governance structure, in general, will they have?

[1855]

Hon. O. Ilich: The Asia-Pacific museum of trade, as I indicated earlier, is a museum we're working on with the city of Vancouver. There's \$10 million, half ours and half theirs, and a piece of land has been identified. The national aboriginal museum, we are hoping, will be in the same place. That actually is an initiative that came from the Bill Reid Foundation. Those people there are further ahead, and there's been an extensive study done on that.

What we're looking at, at the moment, is combining those two on that site and, as I said, making that a cultural precinct, which will be a very distinctive building. Other than that, we have not really outlined that, because we're still in the planning process. That's what the funds have been allocated towards.

N. Simons: So in fact, there hasn't been any sort of plan in terms of what kind of money we're looking at in operating or actually building, but the land has been identified. Is that public information?

Hon. O. Ilich: Yes, it is, actually. It went through the city of Vancouver about a month ago in open council, and they allocated the money and the land at the time.

N. Simons: There was an article, as I mentioned the last time we met, talking about the state of Canadian museums, comparing.... I'll quote because this is not my quote and I'm not sure about the appropriateness of it: "Too often," it says, "some people in the museum community say that the approach that we take to museums is like fathers who sire children all over town but neglect to support them."

K. Krueger: Hey, that's terrible.

N. Simons: Absolutely.

K. Krueger: What a terrible analogy.

N. Simons: I'm glad it's not my analogy, but I think it's understood what is meant by that quote, in that some of the smaller museums and maybe some of the rural museums and the already established museums that may not have infrastructure or funding to even pay for climate control to protect archival material will suffer, because this new sort of large-scale approach to museums might overshadow the importance of the smaller rural or the smaller already-established museums. Can the minister comment on whether those fears are unfounded or not?

Hon. O. Ilich: I think we appreciate that museums are important parts of our community, as well as the RBCM, which we support significantly and have just have been working with on their business plan and rejuvenation of the museum next door, which is very important to us. We also distribute, through the B.C. Arts Council, more than \$3 million annually, and an additional \$2.7 million was provided through public gaming money to smaller museums in 2004-2005.

[1900]

As to the building of the new museums, they're still in the planning stage. What we will be doing is talking to the federal government as to how they can get involved, especially in the national aboriginal museum. I also think that the opportunity of B.C. 2008, which is going to be a big initiative for us, gives us another opportunity to take a look at some of the smaller community museums and at what we could be doing there.

N. Simons: I'm sure that's going to be seen as a relief to some of the operators of smaller museums. I'm wondering if there are any provisions in the funding that's provided to the smaller museums through the Arts Council or through the gaming fund to provide for multi-year funding or if most of it is still allocated on a yearly basis. I'm just not familiar with this structure.

Hon. O. Ilich: At the moment, the Arts Council funding is operational money. It is on an annual basis, but it's being looked at right now that it go to multi-year funding.

N. Simons: Pleased to hear that. I'm wondering, also, if there's talk about some of the gaming moneys being redirected through the Arts Council, where the expertise might already exist in terms of knowing what the communities need and what type of funding they require.

Hon. O. Ilich: As a matter of fact, that is one of the things we're trying to do. It's my belief that we have too many different programs. It would be good that we

bring them together, take a special look at them to see what still makes sense and what doesn't make sense and try to coordinate the funding a little bit.

N. Simons: I'm sure the minister hears the same kind of things from arts communities as I do. I think it's something, really, that's almost always at the top of the agenda, and I'm pleased to hear that.

I suppose, when I'm talking about funding for museums, that the same kinds of questions apply to galleries in smaller communities. The question, specifically, is: does the minister know of any specific formula for the allocation of funds to the Arts Council for public art galleries throughout the province? The general question is: what is the formula for the allocation of funding to small art galleries?

Hon. O. Ilich: Actually, the program right now is an annual program that apportions about \$1.5 million to the art galleries. There's no set rationalization. It takes a look at the programs and the clients and tries to divide that money as equitably and as fairly as possible among the clients.

[1905]

N. Simons: So in fact, it's not really based specifically on geography or population per se; it's a case-by-case basis.

Hon. O. Ilich: The program that is for public galleries is based on need and performance, and it looks at the quality of the exhibits and the programs. The money is looked at and the criteria are set by professionals and other artists. They look at it, and they make a decision as to how the money should be allocated based on those criteria.

N. Simons: Some operators of small artistic or cultural.... Well, whether it be theatres or museums or galleries, in smaller communities they talk about the challenges they face in raising funding, raising money for programs that require half the funding to come from the provincial government, or from local fundraising in order to receive the other half from government sources. Can the minister describe whether that's on the agenda for the ministry to be having another look at, to see if somehow the burden of this kind of fundraising, with the economy of scale that exists in small communities, might be alleviated in some way in the future?

Hon. O. Ilich: I think the process we have now is thought to be a good one, where community support is sought first. We're not a 100-percent funder in any case, so there's always money that is required from other sources.

I just want to note, though, to the member, that last year there was a \$3 million lift to the Arts Council, and this year there's a further \$1.9 million lift for culture generally. So that is good news for the arts and culture community.

[1910]

We are continually looking at ways to strengthen that sector. As the member opposite knows, we recently had a summit where we talked to the community about things that could be done other than more money, which is always what's being asked of government. There were other suggestions made. We will be having a report from that summit, and we will be publishing it. Hopefully, that will also result in some other things that we can be doing to make the life of people in our arts and culture community a little bit better.

N. Simons: I just had one last question about museums, and it's back to the three larger museums in the planning. Can the minister let the House know how much is budgeted for the feasibility studies for these museums and when they're expected to be complete? Will these feasibility studies referred to in the service plan be publicly available?

Hon. O. Ilich: We gave \$5 million to the city of Vancouver — and they matched it, so it's \$10 million — to start the planning process. We've just recently done that, about a month ago, and that's to get things started. We don't have a document yet.

We do have a document on hand from the national aboriginal museum, which is a big, fat document that was already done. It was done originally by the Bill Reid Foundation. We paid \$150,000 for that. We're looking at the RBCM's women's history exhibit funding, approximately \$200,000 initially. We can make available the information we have, but we're not far along on some of these.

N. Simons: All right. Thank you very much. If I may move on to some heritage. They're somewhat related. I don't know if you need a line change. We're okay with this shift? All right.

In this year's throne speech and service plan there's discussion of plans for celebrating B.C.'s 150th anniversary. Is the minister able to explain to me and to the group here how much money is budgeted for 2008 activities?

Hon. O. Ilich: First of all, I would like to introduce Patrick Frey, who is the director of heritage for the province.

In answer to the question, we have \$1 million a year in each of the next three years for planning for the B.C. 2008 program. Again, we're not in the implementation stage yet. We're still taking a look at what it is we're going to be doing. That's the amount of money that's in the budget right now.

N. Simons: Can the minister give any indication of what types of projects or initiatives, and even participants, might be part of the 2008 celebration?

[1915]

Hon. O. Ilich: B.C. 2008, I think, is going to be a great time for us to celebrate the sesquicentennial, the

150th birthday of the founding of the colony. We're going to be dealing with local governments and with the private sector. We're going to be dealing with the aboriginal community. We're going to be dealing with communities, UBCM — all of the normal stakeholders that you would expect to tell our story.

We see this as a great opportunity to tell the story of British Columbia from all of the people who have participated in our history, and that would be our Chinese community, our aboriginal community, our first nations community. I think it's a great opportunity that we're going to have. We believe that we can look at existing festivals in some of our communities and deal with them and have some of our traveling exhibits from RBCM going to places.

We're excited about B.C. 2008. We haven't completely finalized all of the planning for that, but again, just as usual with our ministry, there's so much planning going on with different things, and we're still finalizing some of those things now. That's the idea: that we'll be dealing with a lot of communities.

N. Simons: Is there any anticipation that some of the funding might be more than just project-based? Does the minister believe there will be any funding available for ongoing projects — any capital investment, perhaps, or funding for things like that?

Hon. O. Ilich: We are going to be looking at a variety of projects and looking at some of our historical sites, for instance, to see what can be done there. I think there are many opportunities for us.

We have been working with the federal government and doing an inventory of museums and galleries and historic sites. We're going to be talking to them about what we can do together. Hopefully, we will be able to look at some of the historic sites and make their lives a little bit better as well.

As I said, we're still in the planning process. I know that a lot of the things we do will require some infrastructure money, and we are talking to the federal government about that.

C. Wyse: Firstly, minister, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of both yourself and your staff with a number of issues that I have raised with you over the last year in this area. It has been most appreciated, and the participants around those particular projects were very favourably impressed with your efforts around these items.

[1920]

However, one item that you and I have talked about previously is the Ashcroft Manor and Teahouse. That particular establishment is privately owned, as you're aware. Sitting on it are buildings that actually date back to the Cariboo gold rush. The maintenance of those buildings is quite a cost when you consider the amount of profit margin that is available for an operation of this nature. There is concern about these buildings simply being lost, historically.

My question to you, minister, is whether you or your staff have come up with any wise and wonderful

ways in which some assistance may be found to preserve this history of British Columbia before we lose it.

Hon. O. Ilich: I am aware. Obviously, we have talked about that particular situation there. We don't have a problem, actually, with private ownership. We don't have any money or program at the moment, but the model is something that we don't have a problem with. I have asked staff to take a look at that and to see whether there's something we can do to help out with that. We actually like that model a lot, but we don't have anything at the moment. We are going to be looking at that.

N. Simons: On behalf of my friend the member for Cariboo South I'd like to express gratitude to the minister for being available to answer that question and being aware of the problem or the issue that his constituents face.

There's one other question about a particular heritage issue, and that is Point Ellice House. I'm wondering if the minister can enlighten us as to the status of the collection of that particular historic site and the contents of that same place.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

Hon. O. Ilich: We are currently working with the Point Ellice House people and the lawyers and are trying to make sure that we secure the collection there.

[1925]

N. Simons: I appreciate that. I know that it's a concern to some people who are concerned about Canadian heritage and preservation of artifacts, so I'm sure the minister and I will have an opportunity to talk about that at a future date.

If I may move to archaeology now — some questions around the service plans. In last year's service plan, there was a stated objective that B.C.'s archaeological resources are protected and preserved while also accommodating economic development. There doesn't seem to be an explicit, enumerated objective protecting and preserving archaeological resources in this year's service plan, but it was quite explicitly included in last year's on page 34. Could the minister please explain the reason for this difference?

Hon. O. Ilich: That's one of the performance measures that we talked about the other day, which has not been included in the current service plan. We've made some significant changes, obviously, to the ministry's goals and objectives to link us more closely to the government's strategic plan. We have some new measures. Now, that doesn't mean that we're not continuing on that same path and that we don't think it's important anymore. It remains a measure for the branch itself, as the issuance of permits is a core part of the function. But it's not something that's in the service plan at the moment.

N. Simons: That reminds me of the whole issue around performance measures. I'm wondering: was

this a ministry directive, to limit the performance measures to 12, and does that apply to the entire ministry, including all the Crowns, or does it simply apply to the core service areas? Where did that directive come from, and do we expect to see these same 12 performance measures carried through to next year's service plan?

Hon. O. Ilich: The direction came that all ministries should be limited to 12 measurements per service plan.

N. Simons: If I may, I'm just going to pass the questioning over to my friend the member for Esquimalt-Metchosin, who has a question about a specific archaeological site.

M. Karagianis: Minister, you may be aware of a situation with a midden in one of my municipalities, View Royal. It was recently uncovered by storm waters, but it is actually in the centre of a new development that's being built along the shoreline in View Royal. There are a couple of hazards there that could threaten this midden. It is very important to the first nations members. In my riding I have both the Esquimalt and Songhees nations. The Songhees Nation in particular has a very keen interest in their archaeological history in the area.

[1930]

My question, in conjunction with this section of the estimates on archaeological programs, is whether or not the ministry has some kind of program that could be accessed for the community to help both the municipality and the first nations community protect this archaeological area.

Hon. O. Ilich: We are aware of it. The archaeology branch is working closely with the town of View Royal and the Songhees and Esquimalt first nations to develop options around protecting the site. The town has obtained a permit from the branch, authorizing them to collect the exposed remains for curation in the RBCM, and the Songhees First Nation has been involved in that decision.

The beach has been closed. The development is adjacent to it. It is a property that is owned by the town, and what we are doing is trying to work with them — or the archaeology branch is trying to work with them — on coming up with some cheaper alternatives to curate the material.

N. Simons: To continue with the smorgasbord of subjects, I'm wondering if I could turn to forest recreation sites. My question specifically relates to concerns among some sectors of our environmental and conservation groups about encouraging the public to take part in what is super and natural British Columbia.

In 2006 the ministry became responsible for forest recreation sites. In previous estimates debate the minister said she would be looking for additional ways to enhance these sites because of their importance to British Columbians. Now, can the minister provide us with

any indication as to whether the ministry is meeting its targets regarding the regular maintenance of forest recreation sites?

Hon. O. Ilich: The short answer to that is, as a matter of fact, yes, we are, and we've allocated an extra million dollars for that purpose in this year's budget.

N. Simons: I appreciate that. Can the minister give a brief description of specifically how that \$1 million will be allocated through the ministry?

Hon. O. Ilich: Actually, the key activities that were engaged in there.... The additional resources will provide funding to advertise, award, manage and monitor service contracts for maintaining sites and trails. We're going to monitor use levels at sites and trails, and we're going to continue to seek new partners for managing sites and trails.

[1935]

N. Simons: I'm just going to quote from a document submitted to the Finance Committee, so I'm sure that the minister is aware of some of the concerns around previous management. I'll quote from the brief presented at the select standing committee. "When the Ministry of Forests was stripped of responsibility, there was a declared hope that contractors would submit bids to take over the operation of these sites. Other than a few sites located around populated areas, for the most part, no one came forward to offer to manage the other sites." The contracting scheme, from their perspective — this was the B.C. Wildlife Federation — was a failure. Does the minister believe that the \$1 million allocation will serve to address this perceived failure?

Hon. O. Ilich: We actually don't agree that the partnership model has been a failure. We now have 180 partnership agreements on recreation sites and trails with local community organizations, first nations, local government and the forest industry. There's \$3.8 million in capital improvements to 39 recreation sites over the next three years and management of over 1,200 recreation sites and 700 trails. We're also continuing to liaise with the Ministry of Forests and Range on a \$3 million road maintenance program to recreation sites and trails.

We did get a \$1 million operating lift this year, but our total budget on an annual basis is now \$6 million for the sites and trails. We know it's important, we believe it's important, and we're going to continue to work diligently to make sure that the sites and trails are well utilized.

N. Simons: Can the minister describe what measures are being used to assess the success or failure of the forest recreation program and if those will be public?

Hon. O. Ilich: At the moment, we are doing site monitoring to make sure that the contracts are being

properly administered and that they're up to the standards we've set. We're going to continue to do that. We can certainly make that public, subject to the normal privacy concerns.

N. Simons: I think that at this point I'll turn to asking some questions about the relationship between the ministry and the Olympics. I don't know if I can just continue. The service plan for the ministry notes that it intends to use the 2010 games as a catalyst to significantly accelerate growth in the tourism industry in general and in specific sectors of the industry such as cultural and sport tourism.

[1940]

I recognize that that's a laudable goal and one that will benefit our society, but can the minister explain how she coordinates her mandate with that of the Minister of Economic Development, who's responsible for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games?

Hon. O. Ilich: The Ministry of Economic Development is responsible for the Olympics. They're looking after everything to do with that two-week event. Our opportunity is that we look at that two-week event and say: "What can we do around that to make sure that we get the maximum benefit from hosting that many people?" For instance, we know that there will be two billion television viewers. We want every opportunity to showcase the province. We also want to make sure that when people come, we give them the best experience possible.

How we work together. We work through the Olympic secretariat to make sure that we're in tune with the plans that both VANOC and the Olympic secretariat have. For instance, one of the things that we did during the recent Torino Olympics was attend at the B.C.-Canada Place house. We hosted several events, one of which was a sport hosting opportunity where we gave out DVDs and showed people what kinds of things British Columbia had to offer for training facilities. We also did a tourism event where we invited people from the rest of the world to come, and we showcased our province.

We're obviously working closely together. We are also doing things like.... We've got the SportsFunder program for the athletes, and we've got the ActNow initiative, where we're saying: "Look, we've got the Olympics coming, and we want to make sure that we have as many kids as possible participating." We've got a challenge out to make sure that we increase fitness levels all over British Columbia. We're also doing funding to the 2010 Legacies Now Society to make sure that there are programs in place that will benefit the rest of province.

We're working a lot with the Olympics people, whether it's VANOC or the ministry, to make sure, as I said a few minutes ago, that we are not missing any opportunity that having that event in our province will bring to us.

N. Simons: On that note, can the minister tell us how much funding is allocated to the Legacies Now

program from the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts?

[1945]

Hon. O. Ilich: I would like to take the opportunity to introduce Linda Beltrano and also John Mills from the ministry.

Just in answer to the question, core funding for this past year was \$10.182 million, plus \$750,000 to the Spirit Committees. This year it's going to be \$6.2 million, because what we're doing is transferring some of the responsibilities that they previously had back into the ministry.

N. Simons: Can the minister explain why that funding is being transferred back to the ministry?

Hon. O. Ilich: As the member opposite knows, it is a new ministry. When it was set up, it was set up to do some of the very same things that we're now doing. We have more capacity within the ministry now to take this on, on an ongoing basis, so that's why some of the things are going to be dealt with within the ministry.

N. Simons: Could the minister give us an update as to the progress of the Olympic arts fund strategy?

Hon. O. Ilich: The Olympic arts fund is a \$20-million special account established in 2001. The fund operates as the Spirit of B.C. arts fund and supports two programs: (1) the Spirit of B.C. commissioning program and (2) the Spirit of B.C. opportunities program.

The expenditure budget equals the forecasted investment income, and the budget for 2006-2007 is \$700,000. So that money will go out. I can provide the member opposite with the details on those two programs at some future time, if he so wishes.

N. Simons: If I may now turn to some questions on film and the Film Commission.

The ministry has stated that film and TV production in 2005 increased by more than 50 percent above the 2004 levels. There's not a lot of indication as to how the economic benefits have been shared across the province. Press releases from the Okanagan Film Commission and the Northern B.C. Film Commission say they had strong years. Could the minister explain how much of this year's increased film production, and the economic benefits that flow from it, took place in the lower mainland and the capital region versus other regions of the province?

[1950]

Hon. O. Ilich: We do have that information, but at the moment I don't have that information with me. We can provide that to you shortly.

The film commissioner is not here, and so we don't have a complete breakdown. What I can tell you is that we did take a look at this not too long ago, and we tried to reallocate the funding for the regional film

commissions. We boosted that funding from \$200,000 to \$275,000 last time, of the \$1.3 million that we give to the Film Commission. We tried to reallocate that a little bit more on where the activity was actually happening, for instance Greater Victoria went from \$20,000 to \$40,000, as you know. The Sunshine Coast didn't have anything, but got a little bit of money — not very much.

There were some new areas added. Some stay the same, and some change. We will provide where films are being made and what the level of activity is at some future time, if that's okay.

N. Simons: There was some indication that the advertising budget for the Film Commission was being cut in half. Was that before the announcement was made for the increased funding, or does that still stand?

Hon. O. Ilich: There was no cut to the Film Commission and no intended cut to the Film Commission.

N. Simons: My information, which I remember gleaned from the service plan, is that in the *Supplement to the Estimates* on page 58, this year, it says that the advertising budget is being cut by half from the \$25 million received last year to \$12 million this year. That comes from page 60 of last year's estimates supplement.

Now, I understand the film commissioner is not here, and I'm sure we could also canvass this at a future date, but my indication is that the advertising budget has been reduced, and I was just wondering if there was a specific reason for that.

[B. Lekstrom in the chair.]

Hon. O. Ilich: I think that the best thing for us to do in this particular case is to arrange a meeting for you with the staff of the Film Commission, because as far as we know, the funding has stayed the same. I really can't answer that question for you at this time. If you don't mind, we'll take that on advisement and make sure you get that answer when we can get it for you.

N. Simons: I appreciate that, and I know that I've been told that whenever I have questions, I can approach the minister. It's not an issue. I'm just hoping to sort of get to some other issues as well.

[1955]

In last year's service plan — this isn't specific to any numbers — it was mentioned that a measure of the degree of client satisfaction with the office of the film commissioner would be developed. Does the minister know if that particular system of measurement has been established at this point?

Hon. O. Ilich: Actually, the measure has not yet been developed, and we have an explanation for that — and even a solution too. We have an explanation. It says: given limited resources, increasing production

activity and demonstrated client satisfaction, this measure has not been developed as resources were redirected to meet increased client demand.

What we have done is added a little bit of money to their budget to fund one extra person, though, for this year.

N. Simons: I'm wondering if the ministry is considering any program wherein the companies that receive the tax credits for filming in B.C. could eventually, when they go into distribution, have on their websites an indication that the films were filmed in B.C. — with perhaps a link to Tourism B.C. — in order to capitalize on the market of selling the beauty of the province and to combine two areas that are actually both housed in the minister's jurisdiction.

Hon. O. Ilich: That's actually a very good idea, and we'll follow that up. Thank you.

N. Simons: I believe that I have colleagues who are interested in asking questions on specific issues related to either their critic portfolio or their constituency. Before I turn the floor over to them, I'm wondering if I could just ask a general question about some of the land conflicts that exist in the province — I don't want to say conflict, but there's constant conflict between resource development and tourism development — and how that's managed within the ministry.

In particular, could the minister comment on the role her ministry plays, and what voice her ministry has, in contributing to that discussion in areas where there's a high tourism value — or high-tourism-value potential — and where conflict might exist with the resource extraction industry? How is that addressed by the Ministry of Tourism? Is there a seat at the table when these issues are being discussed? That's essentially my question.

Hon. O. Ilich: Actually, yes, we do have a seat at the table. Obviously, I'm at the table when these things are discussed at cabinet, and I make sure, when there is an issue affecting tourism, that I bring that up. In addition, at the staff level, we do participate in interagency tables regionally, and they're very useful in resolving tourism conflicts. One of the things that we have to be cognizant of is that we are always looking out for the tourism values, and people are always coming in to us and talking about their issues, which we are going to be championing with other ministries.

[2000]

It is an issue that there are conflicting land uses, but I have had resort owners, for instance, saying, "There's a licence to cut down all the trees around my resort. People are not going to want to come and see this," and so we should deal with that.

I have gone personally and talked to the minister and said, "What's going on?" and asked questions. Not only am I doing that, but the staff is doing that in a more formal way. I think it's one of the good things that we now have a Tourism Ministry that's actually

focused on tourism, and much of it is based on land use activities.

N. Simons: I wonder if the Ministry of Environment has mechanisms in place to ensure that the values they represent are considered in development of certain industrial activities or if the Ministry of Forests has the same. I'm wondering if there is a structural mechanism for the involvement of the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts when there are land use conflicts of significance that could have, or potentially could have, a detrimental effect on the tourism industry — and whether or not the minister believes that could actually be a beneficial approach to some of the conflicts?

Hon. O. Ilich: The interagency management committees are very active and very busy at the regional level in trying to resolve those. All of the ministries are represented. That's exactly the purpose they were set up for — so they can talk about these things and try to reach some resolution and consensus on some of these difficult land use issues.

In addition, I know that what we're trying to do is resolve many of these things in advance by having some planning processes going on so that we don't get into those conflicts in the first place.

D. Chudnovsky: He's ready when he starts saying funny stuff.

N. Simons: I've been remarkably restrained, I might add. So has the member for somewhere over Kamloops there. Okay.

At this point....

Interjections.

N. Simons: He's heckling me. It's estimates, and I'm being heckled.

I think at this point I'll pass the floor over to my friend from Victoria-Hillside who has questions about the Provincial Capital Commission.

R. Fleming: I wanted to ask a couple of questions related to the service plan for the Provincial Capital Commission. I think we've dealt with issues around Point Ellice House for the time being, in terms of some of the items that belong to the PCC that have, I understand, been returned, as the critic was assured.

I wanted to talk a little bit about a couple of the items in the service plan that relate to the goals, etc. and the core business activities. Just to start with, I was very curious about one of them in the core business area. One of the activities references stewardship of our heritage, Inner Harbour and open space properties, yet in the entire service plan there is not a single reference to Belleville terminal, which is surely one of the most valuable properties. It was consolidated five years ago in the province's hands. I'm just wondering why that's the case. Could the minister let us know why that omission is in the documents?

[2005]

Hon. O. Ilich: Actually, last year it was in the service plan that we were going to be looking at it, and I think your question is: why is it not in this year's plan? In this year's plan we are actually looking at it.

If you get a copy of the shareholder's letter of expectation, which I will be signing and dealing with the chair of the commission on, it will say in it that we are going to review the business case materials provided by the corporation and determine a plan for the proposed development of developable street properties, and that's what we're going to be doing this year.

R. Fleming: In the service plan, dealing with the heritage buildings that the PCC owns, the target for this year is that three of the buildings will be fully utilized, undergoing some kind of renovation — sometimes seismic upgrades, I presume — four for the following year and five for the third year. I'm wondering if you could itemize the three buildings that will be operational and on stream this year.

Hon. O. Ilich: In answer to the question, this year the Crystal Garden is going to be completely redone and will be opened June 26, and 812 Wharf Street is completely being redone. The CPR building is still being worked on right now.

R. Fleming: I guess, then, for the following years, where there is a fourth and fifth building that will be remediated.... I want to go to the service plan, because there's a comment there that talks about capital risks, which are "driven by limited funding availability within Provincial Capital Commission reserves to address structural remediation and maintenance of its heritage assets." There is definitely a word of caution on page 6 of the service plan in terms of the ability of the PCC to achieve the objectives of making its heritage buildings function.

I do note that reserves are now at an all-time low for the commission. Certainly, in the last ten or 15 years I think something like \$3 million has been spent out of that reserve fund. I'm just wondering how the minister plans to reconcile dwindling reserves with the statement in her plan about remediation and maintenance of heritage assets.

[2010]

Hon. O. Ilich: Last year some of the rents and revenues were increased, resulting in a 12-percent increase; '06-07 is supposed to.... If there's an increase in rent projected, there will be a 31-percent increase, which should bring the reserves back up.

I think the answer to the question is what we did with the Crystal Garden roof, where we actually went to contingency funds, and that's what we'll be doing with Belleville as well. Once there's a business plan and we know what it is we want to do, we'll take a look at the amount of money that is required, and we'll ask for an access to contingency.

R. Fleming: I'm glad the minister ended there. I mean, I think the problem here is that we have a fairly

cash-poor organization, whose reserves have been depleted in recent years, responsible for heritage assets which are important to the city and very difficult and slow to come into useful life in the capital. The minister undoubtedly knows that the PCC doesn't have any borrowing authority, so when it comes to redevelopment of the Belleville terminal....

I think the quote from one of the newspaper articles was that the minister is being asked, I suppose, to consider the PCC's main contribution to that project as being the donation of the land that was consolidated. I'm just wondering if that is the case or if the minister envisions what the former CEO of the harbour authority envisioned — that the redevelopment on the site can and must only be made possible with contributions made by both the provincial and federal governments.

Hon. O. Ilich: That I agree with, and I think I've been quoted in the paper saying that I agree that something should be done with the terminal. We're working on that. We're in the process right now of getting the business plan going. We've had meetings with the harbour commission, the city of Victoria, the Vancouver Island tourism sector, first nations and the local community to talk about what it is they want. We're identifying the process.

It could be a P3, for instance, where we ask for proposals from the private sector and we say that we'll contribute the land and see what the development community comes up with. As the member probably knows, I used to be in that business, and I think that's an entirely feasible thing to do, where we actually get developers coming forward and suggesting what they think can be done.

[2015]

We do understand that the process is something we're going to have to talk about with the whole community, but it's something we are actively working on. I'd like to see this up and going and ready for 2010 so that Victoria can welcome the world. We do understand it's a very important part of the harbour, but it's got to be done sensitively.

R. Fleming: I do appreciate the minister's sense of urgency and the optimism, particularly in light of, maybe, her government's predisposition towards P3s, because often those can take a couple of years to negotiate. As she knows, the clock is ticking down. I wonder if the minister could comment in terms of how — and I think this is the question the mayor of the city of Victoria had — the capital region might get that considered to be a gateway project.

We are on an island, and it certainly is an important port of entry. It matches with your ministry's goals to double tourism revenues within the decade. I wonder if the minister could comment if she's had discussions with her cabinet colleagues on including it in a capital program such as the Gateway project.

Hon. O. Ilich: We do recognize that it is a gateway. We haven't had any discussions yet with my col-

leagues, because we simply haven't got a plan yet, but that is one of the things we will be looking at. I think the suggestion that it be a gateway.... We recognize that it is already and that it should be treated that way. We have talked to Tourism Victoria about it. It is something that greets visitors, so we should be looking at it and making the most of that opportunity when those visitors come.

M. Karagianis: The minister is aware that I have stood in the House and made statements with regard to hopes for a convention centre here in the capital region. There's a great deal of concern here with tourism numbers dwindling as a result of changes with the American passport situation, and other concerns around our tourism numbers in the future. Our current conference facilities are really inadequate for the kind of growth that we need to have here in that market, in tourism. It would certainly bolster any losses we may suffer from the passport issue.

My question is as to whether or not the minister would entertain such a concept here in the capital region. It is supported by Tourism Victoria and by the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce. I'm wondering what steps might be required to begin to pursue a real conference centre, convention centre, here — a full convention centre.

Secondly, is it possible to meet with the minister to explore that and some other issues around small business concerns in the East Asian sector in Greater Vancouver? First and foremost, my question would be about a Victoria conference centre — whether the minister would give that serious consideration — and secondly, the possibility of a meeting.

Hon. O. Ilich: We're always interested in looking at all opportunities that come our way to increase tourism, so we certainly will look at it. There needs to be a business case for it. I am aware of a number of other convention centre proposals in the province. For instance, I think Surrey was just talking about one. Nanaimo has been talking about one.

[2020]

We are willing to look at them, and when they make sense, I think we can take a look at them and see whether or not we can do something with it. But there has to be a business case for it, as many of the centres require a lot of public money, and there's actually quite an oversupply of convention centres in the United States and worldwide right now — and a lot of competition. We need to make sure that what we're building makes sense. As I said, I'm willing to listen anytime somebody has any idea as to what we can do to increase tourism in this area or any other area of the province.

N. Simons: At this time I'm going to ask my friend, the member for Delta South, if he has some questions about....

M. Karagianis: Delta North.

N. Simons: Delta North. Yeah, it's close.

If he has questions.... Well, he'll let you know what his questions are. He'll do that.

G. Gentner: Sometimes it gets confused, as I sometimes represent the area of Powell River.

Relative to, of course, the PavCo service plan — which is a Crown, and many Crowns come under the minister's jurisdiction — and relative to the expansion of the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre and the other convention centre, my question to the minister is.... We haven't seen it in the service plan. What are the total costs of the retrofit after the completion of the convention centre?

Hon. O. Ilich: First, let me introduce the two people that are here with me from the convention centre expansion project: Colin Smith, who's the chief financial officer and the corporate secretary; and John Harding, who is the CFO of the B.C. Pavilion Corp.

There's \$20 million budgeted for the retrofit of the existing building.

G. Gentner: The Vancouver Exhibition Centre. According to you, there's going to be an aggressive marketing campaign over the next couple of years. Can we get a per-annum expenditure, what that means, and which consulting firm is conducting that?

Hon. O. Ilich: At the moment there's \$2 million budgeted to do marketing. That's direct marketing. It's not done through any consultants; it's done by the convention centre. In addition, they work with Tourism Vancouver and hotels in the area to market the conventions.

G. Gentner: The public relations price tag for the convention centre is \$2 million per annum?

[2025]

Hon. O. Ilich: The short answer to that is yes. That's what the budget is at the moment.

G. Gentner: Ramping up to the Olympics, how is that going to change? Is it static? Is it going to remain \$2 million per annum, or are we going to see an increase in the next five years?

Hon. O. Ilich: As a matter of fact, we know that we are going to be ramping up advertising in anticipation of the Olympics and beyond, and in anticipation of having a much bigger building. At the moment it's \$2 million. We are working right now with a consultant and with PavCo staff to make sure that we are coming up with a plan, actually, that we will be funding in the future.

G. Gentner: Part of PavCo's jurisdiction oversees B.C. Place Stadium, and there's going to be some activity at B.C. Place Stadium relative to improvements. Could the minister please tell us what those improve-

ments are going to be, including the needed improvements on acoustics for the Olympics?

Hon. O. Ilich: We are currently identifying what needs to be done. We're working with VANOC on that, and we expect that VANOC will pay for any changes that need to be done to the building.

G. Gentner: I'm quite relieved by that assurance from the minister, because B.C. Place Stadium is close to its end. The roof is ready to fall down, according to the service plan. Its anticipated life span is coming to an end. Could the minister tell us when the life cycle replacement is due on the roof at B.C. Place Stadium.

Hon. O. Ilich: Apparently, the roof is expected to last another 15 to 20 years if it's maintained properly in its current state.

G. Gentner: Is that the anticipated life of the roof, or is that...? My understanding is that there's a study being conducted of its life span at this time. Is that study completed?

Hon. O. Ilich: I think the member is talking about the guaranteed life. The guaranteed life was 25 years, but that doesn't mean that it's going to fall apart in the 25th year. That means that, in fact, if you maintain it properly, it could last a lot longer. But the guarantee was for 25 years.

G. Gentner: So we have assurances from the minister that the roof at B.C. Place Stadium is safe up to and beyond the Olympics.

Hon. O. Ilich: I'm informed that as long as we continue to maintain the roof, it should last up to the Olympics and beyond.

[2030]

G. Gentner: Just for the record, power washing the roof in Dallas last year was \$646,000. My question to the minister: what are the anticipated maintenance costs of maintaining the roof at B.C. Place between now and the Olympics?

Hon. O. Ilich: About \$300,000 a year is spent on the roof, maintaining it. In order to make sure that it lasts, it is not power washed.

G. Gentner: I just want to make sure I got it. It's costing the taxpayers \$300,000 per annum to maintain the roof at B.C. Place Stadium — is that correct?

Hon. O. Ilich: That would be correct.

G. Gentner: I just needed that for the record. Expensive roof.

Relative to the service plan of PavCo, the performance measure comparable to economic benefits that are generated, for example, at the convention and exhibi-

tion centre.... It suggests that the forecast for '06-07 is \$175 million. Can the minister explain what the multiplier is to get that amount?

Hon. O. Ilich: The number that is used is a very conservative 1.5-times-the-multiplier.

G. Gentner: Times the multiplier. What is the multiplier? I'm sorry.

Hon. O. Ilich: It's 1.5.

G. Gentner: It's 1.5 — the multiplier.

Now, further to needed improvements for the Olympics at B.C. Place Stadium: could the minister give us a ballpark or any idea of what the study has been...? A cost-benefit analysis regarding new video boards and everything else that's going to be needed between now and 2010?

Hon. O. Ilich: At the moment about \$1.4 million is spent annually to maintain and do capital improvements to the building. The understanding is that the video facilities will be brought by the people coming to the venue and that we're not going to have to spend any money on that.

G. Gentner: We are not going to see any improvements to concession areas, kitchens, seating, etc.?

Hon. O. Ilich: At the moment we're working with VANOC on the requirements for the building.

G. Gentner: If I have it correct, therefore, from comments made earlier, VANOC will be responsible for all the improvements at B.C. Place Stadium.

Hon. O. Ilich: That's certainly our expectation.

[2035]

G. Gentner: Thus, there's nothing in the budget from the ministry relative to these improvements — as demanded by VANOC.

Just a little sidebar, because this is more of a local issue. We're well aware of the Gateway program with South Fraser perimeter road along River Road in North Delta. It's going to have a major impact, of course, to archaeological sites — middens, in particular — on the second-oldest known wet site in North America, called Glenrose, and on that of St. Mungo.

Glenrose has been mothballed. What is the ministry's anticipation on how to excavate or protect this site between now and 2012, when we're anticipating the completion of that road?

Hon. O. Ilich: First of all, I'd like to introduce Justine Batten, the director of archaeology, who was with me earlier and whom I failed to introduce.

I've just been informed that that particular site is probably the most studied site in B.C. history. We are aware that there's going to be, probably, some activity

in the area. We are not yet sure of what is going to happen with that site, but we can get back to the member when we do have more information.

G. Gentner: Yes, it is one of the most exciting and most studied archaeological finds of British Columbia. My question, therefore, is: what type of contingency plan or strategy has the ministry developed in preserving this — when or if the South Fraser perimeter road is coming through?

Hon. O. Ilich: I think that we would need to get back to you in the future on what exactly we're doing with that particular site. It is a site, as I said earlier, that has been studied more than any other site. The highway is going to be running beside it, not through it. We would expect that the normal kinds of things we would do when there's activity of development of any sort around an archaeological site will apply and that the same rules will apply, but we will get that information to you at a later date when it's been more fully developed.

G. Gentner: Just for the record, way back when the Minister of Transportation and Highways was building the Alex Fraser Bridge, it changed the volume and the pattern of the river. We had great amounts of water being channelled through by the bridge and causing a lot of erosion. Therefore, the ministry had to mothball it by putting boulders on top of the site. We know that this road is coming, and it will make some impacts. I urge the ministry to seriously consider a contingency to save that site.

[2040]

I understand from the Clerk, hon. Chair, that time is of the essence, and I'll maybe squeeze in one more question — primarily that of the other responsibility the minister has, regarding PavCo. This is regarding the Bridge Studios contract and when it expires. Can the minister tell us when the contract with the production company expires and what the long-term vision is that the ministry has for Bridge Studios? Is it eventually going to be seen as site cleanup for eventual decommissioning?

Hon. O. Ilich: Could the member restate the question, please?

G. Gentner: I tried to slip in several questions here, hon. minister, because the time was ticking away.

There's a contract with the provider, is there not — the production company? I was wondering when that expires. What is the long-term vision the ministry has for when it's going to decommission that site? I know it's been talked about before. Is there a current strategy to do so?

Hon. O. Ilich: There are leases in place right now that are from three months to five years. The long-term lease is currently leased out to *Stargate*, and that's a five-year lease.

N. Simons: At this time I just want to thank the minister and her staff for being here and for being available to answer questions. It's pretty difficult to know at the beginning of this whole process what areas we'll canvass more than others, but your presence here is certainly appreciated by us and, I guess, by the people we're asking questions for. So thank you, and thank you to the minister. We've obviously canvassed many issues, and we've had some good answers and some answers that will lead to further questions as the weeks and months go by.

With that, I cede the floor.

Vote 40: ministry operations, \$200,695,000 — approved.

Hon. O. Ilich: I also want to say thank-you to the members for their questions and make sure they know I'll be happy to answer questions at any time, but we will provide answers to the questions that we have not been able to answer tonight.

With that, I move that the committee rise, report resolutions and completion of the Ministry of Community Services and resolution and completion of the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, and ask leave to sit again.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 8:45 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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