

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title: Wednesday, March 8, 2006**

**8:00 p.m.**

Date: 06/03/08

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we'll call the committee to order.

**Mr. Taylor:** I wonder if we might revert to introductions, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a group of committed daycare owners and managers and parents who are here because they are concerned about the word that we're hearing that Prime Minister Harper is going to cancel the national daycare agreement. These people are here to be recognized, to tell us that we need to support them in doing probably one of the most important job there is. So if I could have them all stand to receive the warm traditional welcome, that would be wonderful.

**The Deputy Chair:** For the information of those people seated in the galleries, this is committee stage. It is a little more informal compared to the regular proceedings during Assembly. So you will see people taking off their jackets and moving around. It only happens during committee stage.

head: **Interim Supply Estimates 2006-07  
General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

### Health and Wellness

**The Deputy Chair:** Anybody else wish to speak on the Health estimates? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise with some interest to speak on the interim estimates for Health. I think that we all are aware of the high numbers that we're dealing with in terms of our health care budget, but I have to say that I find it difficult to talk about the detailing regarding these huge sums that we're expected to approve. I think the detail is insufficient, particularly in light of government's proposed third-way amendments to the health care act, and I would suggest to all members of this House and to all assembled here: how can we responsibly debate the spending of such huge sums in light of the lack of detailing regarding the actual allocation of these sums, their place in the overall budget, and how this third-way legislation will play into all of the spending?

The government has their Healthy U program, and they boast of children's health as being a top priority. How can that be the case when there is, I and my own party and others as well would say, a consistent disregard for the care of children in this province? The issue of child care is not resolved. Our weak labour laws target children rather than protect them. What good are the healthy eating

programs when children are at risk in other areas of their lives? So I find it difficult, Mr. Chairman, to look at these interim budget numbers without having some specific information as to where the direction of our public health care system is going here in the province of Alberta.

It seems clear to me that there is some nefarious activity going on in regard to the future of health care, and my feeling and many others' across the province is that we're out to sell health care to the highest bidder in this province, Mr. Chairman. I find that difficult to stomach, quite frankly, and I think that most Albertans will come to believe the same thing. So I am rising to speak in protest of speaking on the detail of this budget given the otherwise devious activities that seem to be undermining it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Chairman, I want to just simply remind the hon. member that we are in interim supply. What we are asking for in a number of these departments are dollars to carry these departments for two months, 60 days, maybe 61 days, until the main budget is passed. This is normal procedure. In fact, even if we had hoped that the budget would be passed by March 31, we would probably ask for supply in the event that it was delayed.

Now, the health budget has been in the neighbourhood of \$9 billion, and we are asking for \$2.2917 billion, which is a fraction of that budget. I know the hon. member, and I know that he wants the people who are working in this field to be paid. I think he understands that many of our payments to the regional health authorities are made at the beginning of the month so that they can ensure that they can carry out their expenditures at the end of the month. I will also remind the hon. member, because I believe he was here when I made mention yesterday, that the budget will be introduced in the House on March 22. That is the time when we will have the opportunity to get into the detail on all of the questions that he might have.

So I just wanted to remind members again that this is interim supply. It is a short period of supply. Sometimes we have found it necessary to ask for 90 days of supply. We are confident with our timing that 60 days will manage this and that we can carry on the important business of health, of educating children, of looking after children through our Children's Services budgets, and caring for the environment, making sure that our infrastructure projects that are so important, many of them in the health area, can proceed. Therefore, we ask the House to pass an interim supply budget to make sure that the business of this province isn't interrupted.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to rise to speak on the interim supply estimates as we look forward to again speaking on supply estimates that are needed to kind of supply what I think is almost a paycheque-to-paycheque style of government. It is not normal in many other provinces, in many other jurisdictions, in many other countries to not have a budget that we deal with on a year-to-year basis. Most of the budget is in fact put in the budget so that we're not actually looking at bringing things forward from time to time that weren't debated. We would be looking at what we would be doing over a year. Many families work that way. Many businesses work that way, and it is a good way. Why do we have a budget if we're not going to stick with it and we're not going to be dealing with these matters?

I think that some of the things that were brought up by the Member for Edmonton-Calder were very well put on the need to have in the health care budget. I look at one line here and I look at billions, and it doesn't tell us much. How do we debate this? How do we speak to this? I would ask the minister who is standing in for the Health and Wellness minister to tell us how much is actually being put forward in this particular supplementary estimate for the social determinants of health.

The social determinants of health were raised by the health minister last year and were very clearly brought forward as something that would bring down the costs of our health care system and make it more efficient and make it something that would better deal with the health of our people here in Alberta and essentially and especially the health of our children. If we're not looking to providing the best sort of pay and to attract the best people by keeping them well paid and giving them the best of benefits, many of them that have worked for many years dealing with our greatest resource, our children – I think that that is so important to look for: how we develop and move forward in our society.

A few specific questions, I suppose, on Health and Wellness. I'm just asking if we can have some sense of what new major equipment in terms of MRIs and other similar equipment have been put in the Fort McMurray area and what type of equipment we might expect in some of the burgeoning communities that are so busy from our very, very strong energy sector right now. We see, of course, that the community of Stettler is very busy. We see that Edson and Hinton are just going crazy. We see Grande Prairie. Many, many of our communities right now have incredible problems in attracting proper health care personnel.

**8:10**

What are we doing to put in place training for new health care personnel that will be dealing with the problems of the greying population, the baby boomers, moving quickly through our population. Health care personnel have been a problem for many, many years, ever since the cuts of the 1990s scared off so many people in the health care sector from Alberta.

Those are just a few of the things that I think are important to look at in this global figure. I hope that when we look at the budget that the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned is coming very soon, on March 22, we will see a budget that will deal with matters that will cover us and give us a sense of how the government is going to be moving forward for the entire year.

Just a point on the Minister of Finance's riding. The city of Drumheller would be a fine site for the police academy, second only, of course, to the fine riding of Edmonton-Manning. Both of them have correctional facilities, which would provide a good mix and match for the police academy.

In any case, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Dr. Oberg:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just to respond very briefly to the hon. member, unfortunately a lot of these questions were actually answered this afternoon. However, I will reiterate what was stated this afternoon. First of all, there is an interim supply for \$2.2917 billion, which will account for the two months of April and May, when it comes to the department of health. Quite simply, what these dollars do is ensure that physicians get paid, that nurses get paid, that all the health care practitioners get paid, that the RHAs get paid, that the department of health gets paid.

Mr. Chairman, to vote against this bill would in essence shut down the department of health. It would be shutting down the health care industry as we know it for those two months, and everyone in this Assembly fully recognizes and realizes that if those dollars were not there, if the health care system was shut down for one day, it would be quite a travesty to the people of Alberta.

I recognize that there are issues when it comes to health care in general. Those issues will be debated on the floor of the Legislature during question period. They will be debated on the floor of the Legislature during the upcoming budget. Quite simply, interim supply is a way to continue the running of government past the April 1 deadline, which is the end of the fiscal year. A question that I was asked earlier today as well was: "Well, why didn't you plan for it? Why didn't you plan for the upcoming budget?" I reiterated to the people that in my particular department – and I'm sure it's the same in the department of health – we actually start planning for the budget in June and July of the previous year in order to make sure that the business plan and the budget are in place.

I'm quite confident that the Minister of Health and Wellness is going to be bringing forward a budget that will do all of the things that are needed for health care in Alberta. Unfortunately, this is not that budget. This is a budget that, quite simply, bridges the gap between April 1, when we run out of legislated money in the government of Alberta, and the end of May. Hopefully, the budget will be passed before that time. I reiterate what I said this afternoon: if the opposition is concerned about that, the budget is being introduced on March 22, and they can quite simply say that we will vote on the whole budget, on the whole estimates before April 1. Fortunately, this side of the House does not agree with that and feels that it should be debated, so that is what is going to be occurring. This is, quite simply, a way that we can continue to fund the Department of Health and Wellness for the next two months.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just two months but, I mean, if we estimated that over the course of a year, that would be up to \$24 billion. So obviously this is just a shortfall of the funding that they didn't anticipate, if I could just use that in terms of the whole-year base. Maybe that's a stretch, so I'll give the minister a base that one.

We talk about \$2 billion – I believe it's \$2,291,700,000 – and the terms of reference here are expenses, equipment, and inventory purchases. I do believe that the minister has included in that expenses including "salaries, supplies, grants, amortization of capital assets" while also included under those are "appliances; display cases; furnishings; . . . office equipment; shelving; and storage containers." Would that be right to assume, that some of those purchases are being made under that as well?

Going down, consumable inventories for the departments of Transportation and Sustainable Resource Development are also under (ii) as well as vehicles. I'm not sure about that. It also includes part of the capital assets as part of its inventory that "consists of immovable capital assets, equipment required for their construction," equipment for installation. You know, these are all very needed, I'm assuming, with regard to being able to do the day-to-day operations for Capital Health and its region, the one it serves, but it just kind of begs the question: how much of this is actually necessary to operate over the next two months? I mean, we're talking about \$2 billion, almost \$3 billion. That's not chump change, as the Premier would say; that's a lot of money. We talk about being able to balance and project our spending from year to

year in a fiscal year, and we're just two months, 60 days, shy of that, but we're asking for \$2 billion.

You wonder why we're spiralling out of control with health care spending. We don't have a budget that we stick to with regard to the House here. I think that if we actually stuck to the budget, adhered to it, we wouldn't be out of control. When we talk about some of the terms of reference that I've mentioned, I mean, it begs the question: are absolutely all these necessary? We talk about the inventory or some of the purchases. I'm not regarding the salaries and the cost to keep the physicians and the front-line people there in line and doing their day-to-day operations. That there's no question about. But when we talk about the vehicles and the other things there, it does ask the question: is that absolutely necessary on top of the already erroneous amount that health care costs, which is upwards of \$9 billion? An additional \$2 billion to talk about furnishings and that: it does ask a question there. How much is health care out of spending because of some of these things, and are we actually able to rein in control, or are we just letting it get out of control further to allow for the debate for the third way?

I'll just sit down and perhaps the minister for infrastructure can enlighten me on some of this.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Dr. Oberg:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I must correct the hon. member. There are only 12 months in the year, and this is two months of the 12 months. The two months are worth \$2 billion, so one year is not \$24 billion.

The other comment that I'll make is that \$2.291 billion is not almost \$3 billion; \$2.291 billion is considerably closer to \$2 billion than it is to \$3 billion. I would suggest that the hon. member does not take poetic liberties with \$750 million as that is a lot of money, and it's a lot of taxpayers' money that is to be concerned about.

The other issue is that the hon. member has to recognize that at the front page of the estimates it deals with all of the departments. When they are talking about furniture, when they are talking about everything in the departments, it is all of the departments. Included in this estimate is \$5.4 million for capital investiture, which are things like computers. It's necessary equipment. It's also planning for new hospitals which is included in this. So \$5.4 million in capital funding is what is included in these two months' estimates. There is \$2.291 billion that is included for the two months' running of the health care system.

What the hon. member also has to realize is that many of these grants are actually front ended, so they are paid out in the first two months, which is the reason why it is not extrapolated: six times \$2.291 billion, Mr. Chair. The \$5.4 million, though, I will reiterate and I'll emphasize that that is very important money that is needed for such issues as planning for the hospitals that are going to treat the sick and injured in Alberta.

8:20

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to respond to something that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation brought up a couple of times ago in his response, I think, to the Member for Edmonton-Manning. His suggestion that there is some kind of will in this House or in any part of this House, I think most specifically on the opposition benches, to vote against this and deprive thousands of people of their livelihoods, their salaries, and tens of thousands of patients in this province of medical care is perhaps the most ridiculous thing that I have ever heard.

Talk about trying to play the sympathy card in this whole routine. This is not what the point is about. Of course we are going to vote, and even if we all on the opposition side of the Legislature voted against the interim supply bill, we are more than outnumbered by the government members. Of course this bill is going to pass, and of course people are going to be paid, and of course people who are in hospital who are sick are going to be looked after. Of course people are going to be able to continue their university and college education and their K to 12 education and everything else that goes on. That is not in question, Mr. Chairman.

The point of the matter and the point that we are arguing on this side of the House – and I refer to the minister's own comments about his own department that planning for the budget starts in June for next April – is simply this: if you can't deliver a budget in time to give it the full debate that the minister himself believes it should have and vote it, with or without amendments, in time for the start of a fiscal year, which happens April 1, year in and year out – it's not like this thing comes up and gets you by surprise – then maybe you should start the process at the end of May or mid-May or whatever it takes. We're talking here about nearly \$6 billion in interim supply to keep the government of the province of Alberta and all the people who depend in any way on that going for up to 60 days because you guys can't get your act together. Now, come on. You've been the government for 35 years. You ought to know how to do a budget by now.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Dr. Oberg:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for that provocation that was brought forward. If the hon. member would care to read the Blues, and I would quote: I would suggest that the opposition would not be voting against this bill as it would mean that physicians would not be paid, that nurses would not be paid. I would suggest that they would not be voting against this bill, I believe is the exact wording.

The other issue. I've sat in this House now for going on 13, 14 years, and in each case they question the ability that we have of budgeting. They question the amount of time that we take for budgeting. What we do is a very thorough budgeting process that does take time, Mr. Chair. It sounds like a commercial, but we are not going to put a budget in before its time. It's extremely important. This is taxpayers' money we are dealing with. We have to be sure this money is put to the best use, that it's put to the absolute best use for Albertans. Quite simply, I'm offended by what the hon. member just said.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, have to indicate that receiving the bill without first tabling the budget and the lack of details within the bill creates some difficulty for me in understanding what is happening.

I would like to ask some questions or point out some things with Children's Services. I can see an amount there, and it's huge, and it says expense and equipment/inventory purchases. What I'm wondering about: what is happening with the youth shelter review committee? We had that in place for the fall, I believe, and there are definitely needs indicated across this province for youth shelters. I'm talking specifically about Grande Prairie. There's a housing crunch there, and it's creating huge issues for youth looking for room and board and/or transitional housing. We talk about the need

to get more students to complete high school, and yet we've got these youth without a place to live, without a place to stay. They're not getting their basic needs met. I need to ask: what is happening with that youth shelter review committee? What are the plans for it? Are there any actions planned, and when are they going to start?

It's interesting how the children's advocate office annual reports and the CFSA annual reports echo each other in that they both say that they're not doing a good enough job of looking after kids in terms of advocacy and mentorship. That's another concern I have. What are we doing to help fund programs to give the advocacy and mentoring that youth need to help them make good decisions?

The funding crunch still exists with shelters. There's no sustainable, predictable core funding. A tremendous amount of energy has to go into fundraising rather than the programs to benefit the youth. We need to look at giving them core, predictable funding that they can count on year after year so that they're not worrying about not being able to pay their staff.

The other question, of course, on the minds of many these days related to Children's Services is daycare. It's a huge concern at this time. This government approved a five-point plan in the agreement with the federal government. It was a positive step, and it's now in jeopardy. There is a staffing crisis.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I just want to kind of interject here. We are dealing with the health estimates, so I presume that you are leading to some health summary.

**Mrs. Mather:** I'm getting there.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you. So it's a positive step, that plan. As we look at daycares, one of the most important things in terms of health is wellness and prevention, and daycares, the qualified staff, the accreditation process that's going to assure us that we have qualified staff, will help that.

Again, looking at the health situation, I'm saying that health is more than just hospitals. The best way to build an effective and affordable health system is to build a healthier society. One of the things that I'm talking about is that we need to look at youth. We need to provide the basic needs for those teenagers. We also need to look at our young children, the preschool kids and the after school kids, in terms of their health and their well-being, the social skills as well as the health.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to rise again. I was taken aback a little bit by the response of the minister on some of the health questions earlier in terms of budgeting and especially in his response to the Member for Calgary-Currie, you know, the question of the time of budgeting and the 13 years that he's been in here and the 13 years he's been with this government. Still this government hasn't got it right and hasn't been able to get it together to be able to have one budget for the year. Why is it that we should be in a position to have to vote money for paycheques right now, with two months left in the year? Why is it that we should be in a position to have to vote for keeping our hospitals going, for keeping our schools going, for having paycheques for people? I mean, it really gets to me to be hearing that from our government in this time.

What is it that we have one line – one line – here? The detail here is not amazing. I mean, we have one line with \$2,291,700,000, and

in the next line we have \$5,400,000 in Health and Wellness. That is the extent of the detail that's given to the people of Alberta to debate this. That is almost beyond reason and is almost beyond responsibility. In fact, it is, I believe, irresponsible to just give us this type of information and to be able to be dealing with this to try and to argue on this in any way that would be democratic, would be dealing with responsibility to the people of Alberta, the children of Alberta, and the future.

I thank you for that, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

8:30

**The Deputy Chair:** After considering the 2006-2007 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the Department of Health and Wellness for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, are you ready for the vote?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$2,291,700,000
Capital Investment	\$5,400,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Next we have the Department of Justice. [interjection]

**Mr. Stevens:** What would you like?

**Mr. Flaherty:** Go ahead with Education.

**Mr. Stevens:** You want Education? I can do that.

## Education

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the Minister of Education.

**Mr. Stevens:** Let it not be said that the opposition don't have influence. They asked for Education, and they're going to get it. Just so we're clear, I am rising on behalf of the Minister of Education to provide some comment with respect to that aspect of the interim estimate.

Alberta Education has requested interim supply vote funding of \$637.4 million and interim supply from lottery initiatives of \$21.5 million to ensure that education service providers continue to receive monthly grant payments to pay their teachers and other operating costs.

The interim funding equals approximately two months of operations for our schools and programs. The \$637.4 million can be broken down as follows: interim supply by vote of \$636,800,000 in operating expense, interim supply by vote of \$590,000 in equipment and inventory purchases. The \$21.5 million in the interim supply for lottery initiatives can be broken down as follows: learning television, \$384,000; transportation subsidy, \$10,134,000; high-speed network, \$1,334,000; school facilities, \$9,667,000.

Mr. Chairman, to ensure that our schools and programs remain

open, I request that the interim supply by vote for the Alberta Education ministry of \$637.4 million and interim supply for lottery initiatives of \$21.5 million be approved.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Member for St. Albert, did you want to speak?

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is it a problem if I ask the good minister if I could get a copy of the document he used? I wish I'd have had that this afternoon.

**The Deputy Chair:** You certainly can ask him if he wants to send one to you or to the House. He may do so, but he's not obliged.

**Mr. Flaherty:** It would be wonderful. Thank you. I appreciate that. It's a pleasure to do this, Mr. Chair, because when I was the regional director of Edmonton, we did a lot of training about how to do budgets. If Dr. Gerry Laing was watching tonight, he'd say that I'm breaking every rule that he taught me by talking about something that's not broken down and being able to defend and rationalize.

Anyway, let me try and go through this. I've taken a look at this particular amount of money that was suggested. I think the amount of money here is \$637,400,000 for expenses and equipment/inventory. I hope there are some salaries in there for daycare workers as well that work in schools, but I'm not sure about that. Maybe the minister could help me with that.

Let me just talk a little bit about dreaming about education and what I think should be in the budget. I know it's not here, but I'll dream a little bit and talk about that tonight. One of the things that I guess I've been highly critical of the Minister of Education about is that I think he seems to have trouble making decisions. I believe that we've got to start looking at education with what I call a ready, aim, fire approach. If I may look at the Alberta Commission on Learning as an example. We've reviewed it to death, and the minister has toured around the province, talked to parents, talked to school boards and teachers.

I noticed today that Mr. Ray Speaker is coming to talk to us here next week. He used to be my former boss. One thing about Ray Speaker that I admired was that he did tour, he did talk, but he acted. I guess that's the one problem I'm having with this whole business with the commission: it's taking so long to get things done. For example, we were talking about salaries. I can't believe – and I'm hoping the teachers of this province will rebel soon – that they aren't yelling and screaming, although I'm trying to get out to them with a package to talk to them about provincial bargaining. If I was a teacher teaching today, I would literally be trying to burn the doors down to get in to see the Minister of Education. He might tell them to shut up, but I don't think they'd listen to him.

The other thing that really, really bothers me a lot is the whole business of the role of the principal. My goodness, the role of the principal has been so important – we have an example of a fine principal sitting down to my left here – to making this school system work well. We still haven't got this document from this government, the Clarke report. We cannot get it to find out what they want to do with the role of the principal. Well, let me tell you this: you're playing with fire if you don't deal with that very, very soon because it's a critical issue.

Now, I had the honour of also mentioning – and I was criticized by some of my colleagues about this. They said: "You're too hard on the minister, you know. We want consultation. We want

consultation about health. We want consultation about education." Well, I hope I'm not being too hard on the minister because I've tried to say to the Minister of Education: why is he going out touring around and consulting when he's probably not going to act on what he hears? Why is he doing this when all he has to do is look at the report given to him by the school trustees, about eight criteria to stop and help kids that are dropping out of school? He doesn't have to tour around. He's got all the solutions right there. All he has to do is get busy and find out how we can take that and plant it through all schools in Alberta. Save the airline; it could be used for other purposes. So I think that's very significant. I hope you people tell him about that because he's going to hear a lot more about that in the coming weeks.

Anyway, let me just tell you about this dream of this budget that I hope we're going to have, Mr. Chair. First of all, I had the honour and pleasure of going to see about hungry kids in Alberta. I was invited by my MLA colleague Mr. Hugh MacDonald to visit this thing in Edmonton-Gold Bar and tour the city-centre schools, and I found out something that shocked me. I saw children that were sleeping on the floor. Their parents are lost. They don't know where they are. Some of them come home in the evening; some don't. They are suffering from a multitude of indicators of poor health. This is happening just down the street from the Legislature here.

I'd also like to talk about the excellent staff and volunteers that are working hard in this whole business of the hot lunch program. I think Alberta is one of the two provinces that provided no funding for the school lunch program. Now, I'm hoping that the new budget talks about that – and I'm sure it will – because there's no funding for school nutrition programs in this province. All provinces other than Manitoba and Alberta provide support to Breakfast for Learning to provide nutritional programs.

Once again, we have a government. I believe they're trying hard, but they're not innovative, and they don't see how this is important for children. I think it's very significant that the chairman of the Protestant school board was asked a question by I think it was Dr. Taft. He asked the chairman, who is, by the way, an expert in nutrition: "What about kids not having proper meals in schools? Can they learn?" She said: no; there's a great deal of difficulty. Not only the poor kids. There are a lot of well-to-do kids, even in St. Albert, going to school without eating properly. That's why I think we should look at this junk food thing more carefully.

Anyway, I'm suggesting to this government – and I hope it's brought out in the budget – that there are a hundred thousand hungry kids that go to school every day in this province, and we have to do something about it. To do absolutely nothing really, really bothered me. Do you know that it would cost \$2 a kid to go and put this program in place?

Now, let me just talk a little bit about – Dr. Oberg was up. Maybe he'll want to comment and take a slap at me on this one.

#### **Chair's Ruling Referring to a Member by Name**

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, we have an age-old tradition here to refer to our fellow colleagues by their constituency. This is I think the third time that I'm hearing a member's name. Now, once it may have been a physician whose name may just be the same as the Leader of the Official Opposition. I just want to caution you that that's a tradition. That's something we respect in this Assembly. So if you are referring to a fellow colleague, refer to them by name of constituency.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your help. If I've offended anybody, I apologize, but it's close to March 17, and I'm getting excited.

8:40

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Flaherty:** Now, we got away from my wonderful talk here, Mr. Chair, but I'll try and get back to it.

The next thing I want to talk about in this potentially good budget that's coming up is the whole business of infrastructure; for example, Calgary Catholic board. What a wonderful board that is. A wonderful board. I hope some of you will go down there and meet them. They're really terrific. They received 12 new portables this year, and they needed 108, Mike. The one thing that's very poorly planned is the fact that many of these portables don't fit. They don't work in the system they have. They believe in portables, but your new ones don't work. So God help us. We need help down there. Let's hope that they get some help from the new budget.

So the whole question here, Mr. Chair, is schools. Schools need funding for everything inside the school. While some districts have received funding for buildings and portables, they haven't received funding for all the materials inside the classroom such as class wares, labs, books, tables, chairs, pens, and pencils. Let me tell you, Mr. Chair and your colleagues, if I can, that one of the wonderful things that you should see at Vital Grandin in St. Albert is that a child, because of a Vanguard 2 computer, is able to speak to her aide because of the need for that. Now, the problem with the funding for special ed is that it wasn't there for her to get this machine. Thank goodness that a large grocery chain supplied that. I had the honour of meeting this girl about two weeks ago, and she's now speaking to us through the computer. I'd like to bring her in the House some day to let you people see it. It's marvellous.

**Mrs. McClellan:** I have one in Cessford school.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Wonderful. Well I think it's to be commended that you did. That child has opened up her whole personality because of that.

So we're talking about infrastructure. Let me just talk about transportation. Transportation, as you know, in the Calgary Catholic school board is a very difficult one. In fact, I think we had a statistic here that 20,000 students in the city of Calgary – I believe that's correct – travel by bus. The size of the population of Airdrie every day, so it's quite the thing. But funding is required in Calgary for community schools. They want community schools where kids can walk to and from school and feel safe. There's a massive transportation issue in the city of Calgary. While there have been some wonderful one-off arrangements with the department, the permanent source of funding for transportation has not been reviewed in 15 years. I think it's important that districts are now having to make up extra funds for transportation because there isn't such a concept as community schools.

Well, I've got a couple of little things here, Mr. Chair, and I'll sit down. Full-day kindergarten. You know, I just don't get it; I'm sorry. As an educator I don't get it. You know why? I'm talking about the situation out at Mayerthorpe with the man that carried out the particular thing that happened out there, which was tragic. Let me tell you that what I believe we need in our schools from K to 3 are good diagnostic tools to help us pick out kids that are going to have problems.

I want to thank you, hon. member from the Okotoks area, for the wonderful ability for my grandson to have screening because he had an eye/hand co-ordination problem. I'm happy to say that he's in

grade 1 at one of your wonderful schools there, and he has actually overcome his problem because they did his screening. They implemented a program to help him, and that kid is going to be successful in school. I can bring an expert – right at the U of A is one of the best educators in all of Canada; I can't tell you his name because I'll get fired here tonight – and he will tell you that we need to change what we're doing in the elementary schools because many of our kids are falling through the cracks. We need to start doing remedial programming and get a career education stream and revamp our system. That's what he's saying, and he's very knowledgeable. I wish I could bring him. If you'd let me bring him, I will. I constantly wonder why the government doesn't get that whole business on screening and diagnostic testing. I don't get it. I really don't get it. I hope to bring that up to the minister again.

Now, you have been good with your funding framework. I think it was excellent what you did five years ago, but you've got to relook at that whole thing, quite frankly, because many of the boards in this province, rural and urban, are saying that they don't have enough money to operate. So make no mistake: I am going to continue to talk about better funding for schools as long as I am still sitting in this seat. I intend to be here for a few years yet, so be ready because I think we're going to have to have some money for that. We need to have a look at the whole question of the framework of funding and make sure that we also look at the whole business of plant operation and maintenance to make sure it's keeping up with inflation. I was pleased that you did that with the busing last year in transportation, but I think that whole area needs to be looked at.

I'll stop, Mr. Chair. I want to thank you for your help tonight in getting through this. I want you also to know, all you Calgarians and southern Alberta people, that the Oilers got a new goalie today. He's not as old as me, but he's good. Calgary, beware because you're going to be in trouble when we play you next Thursday. I hope I'm not on duty.

God bless. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, you know, I thank the Member for Calgary-Glenmore for giving us some detail on the Education numbers.

**Some Hon. Members:** The Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Backs:** Thanks to the member to my right here for saying that it's the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Thank you.

It's good to see that some of this is broken down. But I wonder, in seeing that it is broken down, why we see \$10,400,000 coming out of the lottery fund for transportation and why that could not be coming out of the general budget.

I ask, you know, for maybe a little bit more detail on a matter that came up in the House here just some days ago. It must be an ongoing cost, and that's the trucking of water to the Ellerslie school, which has not had water put into it for 20 years and is a matter of great concern to my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Some of these areas in terms of, you know, \$636 million for operating expenses: again, that's a lot of money with not a lot of detail.

To build on some of the things that my colleague for St. Albert spoke to on education streaming and how that is being funded, I would hope that there is something of that in this, but I doubt it very much. The reality of much of our education system and how we are streaming many of our kids is clear in how we are ending up with so,

so many high school dropouts. As I said in my response to the Speech from the Throne just yesterday, why is it that the government is just now thinking about asking kids why so many are dropping out? Why is it that we have so high a rate of high school dropouts? Why is there not some sense of dealing with relevance, some sense of dealing with providing things that are providing interest to the kids, and indeed providing them with meaningful employment in terms of things that they can get into?

We don't have a vocational high school in Edmonton any more. We have taken away the name composite from many of our high schools because they don't really have the equipment to justify realistic levels of vocational training, yet we hear demands and demands and demands to bring in temporary foreign workers because we're not training vocational labour; we're not training trades; we're not training technicians; we're not training people to do the jobs that are so necessary in a modern economy.

8:50

The problems in our education system are clear that way. Even coming out of our high schools with all the dropouts, even with the graduates the average age of entry for an apprentice is 25 years old. Why is that? Why is it that when they even get into their apprenticeships in the first two years most of them are gone? There are 45,000 people in apprenticeships right now in our province, and that's a good thing. It's a good thing that more are being encouraged, and we're seeing some movement in that area. But, on the other hand, why are most of them dropping out in the first two years and most of them finding that they're being used as cheap labour and not getting the proper supervision from a journeyman, not getting the proper training, not even getting the proper training that they'd had before in school to get into doing this? A lot of them are just being used as labourers, laid off shortly thereafter because they were cheap labour, and then they're gone.

We've seen some moves to establish new trades, which is good: establishing things for the traditional oil patch, the traditional oil industry. New trades of things we used to call toolpush and such are now out there. That has even jumped those numbers up somewhat in terms of the graduates, which skews the figure, really, because those people are being given that because they have experience. It skews the numbers of graduates, which are actually smaller.

Why do we have no sense of trying to bring some training forward for so many children in our system? They are, indeed, our future. Why are we bringing in, you know, potentially thousands and thousands of temporary foreign workers when we have still one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the country, when even in Canada we have, I think, 1,800,000 kids in the 18 to 25 year age group that are out of work? There's something wrong there. There's something very wrong there.

We need to somehow stream better in our high school system, need to make things relevant, to make things important for those that want to get into a trade. An emphasis on academics is good. The Fraser Institute has really pushed this idea that we should have, you know, these high marks in academics and focus just on these few areas. They rate the schools this way, and we have ratings of the schools in that way in order to do that. But I think it's worked against the realistic sense of how we will educate our children properly in terms of what they can do to have a successful career.

I'd recommend to any parent that they ask their child to take a career in a trade first and then move into a university degree. Anyone that I know that has done that has been very successful, and they will do well. Indeed, many of the leaders of business in our province started as tradespeople, and they became very successful through the work patterns that they learned, through the things that

they learned. Many of them went on to get a degree later on. Some of them didn't. Some of them just were very successful in being a tradesperson and going into business.

Many of our aboriginal business leaders have actually been very successful in their endeavours. I could name a couple. Golosky Trucking: the person that started that was actually an ironworker, and he got his trade, and he's built up a business which has hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of employees and does very well in training aboriginals and bringing them through the system.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

Another in Fort McMurray is Neegan Developments. Dave Tuccaro is a crane operator, an operating engineer, and very successful and has been the recipient of many Canada-wide awards and done that through learning, initially, his trade. Yet we have very little, almost nothing, in our education system.

One question is: is there anything in these monies to try and change that emphasis? Is there any change in the emphasis on trying to get some monies for teachers who also have a trades ticket in order to train kids in these areas? You know, they may be more costly. We may need to bring something in. I've talked to award winning schools that would like to get more things, but there doesn't seem to be enough money for equipment or not enough money for expenses to actually train people in the many areas.

We hear that the registered apprenticeship system is just not working in almost all the trades because of the fact that there's not enough equipment. It just works in a few, some mechanical, a few of the others, but in most of them there is not anything that we can actually bring people through for most of the trades. Many of the businesses that I've talked to will not use that system because they get castoffs from the teachers who don't want those kids in their system, in their school because they bring down their marks and make it look bad for them when they're trying to get higher in their ratings, so to speak.

I think there are major issues in spending here that really aren't shown in these numbers, but I sure would like to have a few answers on some of the questions that I've asked.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to talk to education funding also. I have a few concerns, some that I share with my colleagues that have spoken before me.

One, though, that I haven't heard mentioned is joint use agreements. This is a great concern in my constituency, and I think it is across the province. There are community teams, groups, and clubs that need space, and often the schools have the space, but the schools can't afford the extra custodial time or maintenance that would be required for the extra hours of use, and neither can the clubs or the teams or the groups. I know that there is some effort apparently going on to resolve this, but I really feel strongly that schools can be the heart of the community, and they need to be supported. They help involve students in positive activities and help them make healthy, wise decisions in terms of their lifestyles. So this is an area where I certainly would like to see an injection of funds. Of course, there's no detail here, so I don't know if that's included, but I would like it to be considered.

When I'm talking about schools being the heart of the community, I think that one of the things that we can do that would solidify the support for many of our young people is to bring in social workers

and other services into the school so that there's a seamless integrating of services between school and outside agencies. I think that should be a primary focus. We need to be working together. We need to know what each agency is capable of. There are wonderful programs out there, but often schools aren't aware of what the resources are. If we could have someone in the school to kind of coordinate and solidify and create that seamless movement, that would be a real plus.

The other thing that is a huge problem is that we do not have trained counsellors the way we had at one time. At this point most schools do not have counselling. If they do, they might have .1. That is just not adequate. We need to have counselling at all levels. This is something that can contribute to diagnosis, to screening, as my colleague from St. Albert mentioned, but it's also a vehicle to help keep students from falling through the cracks. So I really would like to see more money put into counselling services for schools of all levels.

**9:00**

As my colleague from Edmonton-Manning indicated, we have a real concern about the fact that the vocational aspects of schools have disappeared. We know that technology means we're moving towards fewer workers in the area of manual labour. What we need for the information age are well-trained people. We have a drastic shortage of skilled blue-collar workers: mechanics who work with computer chips in vehicles, electricians, plumbers, chefs, beauty culture workers. The list goes on and on. We seem to be catering to the top 10 per cent of the schools' population, believing that academics is the way to go, but we need to be looking at the differences that students bring. We have the whole continuum. We need to be helping students at every point on that continuum be successful.

Our workforce in the next 10 years will need to be skilled in all areas, particularly technology, and I think that this is another area where we need to be injecting money. The RAP program is a wonderful program. I certainly support it. I saw students who were successful with that in the high school where I was.

Another concern that I have is that we still do have class sizes of 34. There are a number of them here in Edmonton. We need to look at why that is happening.

Another thing is that teachers are frustrated because there are curriculum changes. New textbooks are required – for example, in social and French now in the elementary schools – but the province is not providing the money for those changes. The 30 minutes of phys ed daily is a good idea, but schools don't have the resources to do this. Then, of course, mandating second language learning: there isn't the staff to do that. We have to have trained teachers in order to implement this.

As we look at our high school completion rates, there are so many factors involved. As I say, we need to go back to early childhood education. We need to invest dollars there, into child care, to help support these children in getting the very best and getting their basic needs at that level, where they will learn many things, including social skills.

I think that's all I need to say tonight. Thank you.

**The Chair:** After considering the 2006-07 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the Department of Education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, are you ready for the vote?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases      \$637,400,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Justice and Attorney General**

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise this evening to make a few brief remarks regarding the interim supply requirements for Alberta Justice for 2006-2007. I think it's fair to say that, as in other ministries, what we're looking for is two months' expenditures to carry on business as has been approved as a result of debate in this House on the budget of 2005-2006.

I'd ask members to refer to the section beginning on page 7 of the interim supply schedule, where some information with respect to this matter is found. The requirements for Alberta Justice total approximately \$81.5 million. That is, of course, required to support the ongoing commitments of Alberta Justice until the budget 2006-2007 is tabled and passed in this Legislature. Of that, \$77.1 million is for Alberta Justice operating expenditures and \$4.4 million is for equipment/inventory and expenditures. The interim supply, of course, will allow Alberta Justice to continue to meet its mission to protect the rights of citizens and advance the goals of society.

Alberta Justice is a core ministry. It provides essential services to ensure safe communities, access to justice, respect for law, understanding of and confidence in the justice system, and of course it also provides a legal foundation for social cohesion and economic prosperity. I know, Mr. Chairman, that the members opposite are very supportive of a well-running and a good-functioning justice system and will be more than supportive of what we are asking for this evening.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few brief comments and questions in regard to the interim financing for Justice. I'm just curious to know if these interim expenditures are indicative of an overall increase in Justice spending for the upcoming budget year. Given the recent discharge of a firearm by a provincial protection officer, how urgent does this Peace Officer Act become? Given the need to establish consistent training for peace officers, can we expect to see the recommendations that came out of the special constable review come into force, such as those calling for co-ordination of services and training between peace and police officers? Is there interim funding that's being allocated for this specific initiative?

If the estimates that we're hearing here today are indicative of increased spending in Justice, we're certainly supportive as the New Democrat caucus of such an increase for police and peace officer supports in conjunction with the Solicitor General, for more Crown attorneys and other Justice personnel. However, I was wondering if we can expect more funding to be made available to address the root causes of the activities that go on involving the Justice department – for example, domestic violence – and to work in more close association in providing adequate child care, equal access to education, and things like that. I suppose we address violence in the courts, which is very much necessary, but we would like to see



specific funding perhaps targeting how we can reduce the visits to the courts by individuals in our society.

We certainly are supportive of the Justice estimates, and we look forward to some clarification and some interesting initiatives in the new budget year. Thank you.

**Mr. Stevens:** Just a brief reply to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, I appreciate the support from the hon. member and from the ND opposition party. The throne speech obviously indicated that there will be in this upcoming budget some new initiatives with respect to Justice in terms of more prosecutors, more judges, more staff in the justice system to address the challenges that we have there, and that's all going to be good news. The throne speech also referenced an initiative which we have jointly with the Solicitor General, called ARTAMI, which will be addressing a problem that we have in Alberta and which is throughout Canada, but certainly we have it here in the province; that is, domestic violence and stalking. So we have some very, very exciting initiatives.

9:10

However, the matter that is before us tonight is an interim supply matter. The interim supply matter deals with business as usual, if you will. In other words, we have an approved budget for the Ministry of Justice. We will be carrying on, expending money over the course of the months of April and May based on this interim supply, as we are today. There will be no new expenditures associated with this approval this evening, hon. member. What it will be is business as usual, as previously approved and debated on in this Assembly.

**The Chair:** After considering the 2006-07 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the Department of Justice for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, are you ready for the vote?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

Agreed to:  
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases           \$81,600,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

### Gaming

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Gaming.

**Mr. Graydon:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My request this evening comes in two parts. The first part is \$38,400,000 for the Gaming budget itself, primarily required to continue to support the community-based programs of CFEP, the community facility enhancement program, and CIP, the community initiatives program. That amount will allow us to continue providing grants under those two programs to eligible not-for-profits, who make application throughout the province, and the programs will continue uninterrupted into the next year.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

The other amount, which is a larger amount, is \$328,200,000, and that is for disbursement of funds from the Alberta lottery fund. The lottery fund provides money to other departments and other programs. For example, one that you'd be familiar with is AADAC. We want to make sure that we have the money in that budget so that they can continue to do their good work on treatment and education, helping people with problems with alcohol, drugs, and gambling. So we certainly want to continue the funding to AADAC. Other funding that we want to continue would be funding which is provided from the lottery fund to Community Development for such good programs as the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation, the Wild Rose Foundation, the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the Human Rights and Citizenship Commission.

We in this Assembly are all familiar with the good programs that are funded through the Alberta lottery fund, and this interim supply estimate is to allow us to continue funding those programs so that they continue uninterrupted until our budget is approved. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have some very brief comments in regards to the interim budget for Gaming. Regarding the AGLC's recent announcement that new resources will be made available for problem gamblers in regard to their treatment and focusing on their problem, I'd like to note that we applaud the government's initiative to provide easier access to information on responsible gambling. However, we do also want to note that we question the sincerity of such efforts given that these information centres will be placed inside the casinos and in the very casinos that fund basic programming for our province. The argument may be made that problem gamblers are to be found in casinos; therefore, it makes the most sense to have the information there. But I guess it would not be indicative of a greater concern; for example, perhaps if video lottery machines were banned as well, if regulations banned bank machines within a certain distance of VLTs, or if casinos were issued severely restricted liquor licences. These are all things that we would like to see considered in the next budget year, Mr. Chairman.

The dependence of our budget in so many areas on gambling is of grave concern to many people in our province and to myself personally very much so. The dependence, as well, of many charities and groups on the profits made from gambling, which hurts so many people here in this province, I find difficult to balance in my mind. If we were to stop underestimating other sources of revenues and budget accordingly, I believe that we would not have to be so dependent on various gambling institutions and machines like VLTs in particular. I think that we would serve the public interest better to look to restrict our dependence on such earnings in the future.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Graydon:** I never want to miss the opportunity to give the member some good news. He mentioned a couple of things in here. I want to use every opportunity I have to spread good news. He talked about the distance between an ATM, a cash machine if you will, and VLTs and slot machines. We have recently implemented a distance requirement in there. No longer can you be sitting at your VLT and reach over and take some cash out of the ATM machine. There is now a distance requirement, and outlets are complying with

that requirement. So it will take a concentrated effort to get up from your machine and go and access funds. It will break your pattern of thought, hopefully, and not make it quite so easy to get cash to continue gambling.

The second initiative that was recently announced, which I think is another good-news initiative that should be mentioned, is that we have a program called the Alberta server intervention program. It's mandatory training for people who are involved in the alcohol business as a waiter, waitress, management, or even working in a retail liquor store. It's mandatory training that staff must take for the responsible handling of liquor products. It is a requirement also that volunteers and members of not-for-profit groups take that training over the next few years. We've recently waived the fee so that not-for-profit groups, your neighbourhood Legion or Kinsmen club, that want to get their members trained in the responsible serving and sale of alcoholic beverages can now take that training free of charge on the Internet. It's about a five-hour course. You can break it up over many, many days if you want, but the total time required is five hours, and it is free of charge to nonprofits.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** After considering the 2006-2007 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the Department of Gaming, are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

Agreed to:	
Expense	\$38,400,000
Lottery Fund Payments	\$328,200,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

Which department would you want to take next?

A general question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't have any specific questions on anything specific that is left in the interim supply, but I'm going to try one more time with a general question directed at the Finance minister.

**Mrs. McClellan:** I'm ready.

9:20

**Mr. Taylor:** She says she's ready, Mr. Chair.

**An Hon. Member:** She was born that way.

**Mr. Taylor:** She was born that way.

It covers the process. It's a question about process, quite simply. It refers back to some comments that I made earlier this evening and some comments that I made this afternoon about the fact that budget day is two weeks from today, March 22. We do need and want and treasure a set amount of time to debate the budget. In fact, I'm sure that everybody on the opposition benches would like it if we could debate the budget longer than we do. So we're certainly not talking about shortening the period of debate on the budget. But this is an annual process, and as the minister of infrastructure said earlier on, people in his department start working on next year's budget in about June of this year.

If the budget can be brought in on March 22, when the fiscal year starts April 1 every year, as complex as the process may be, as much care as your fellow ministers and their most excellent public servants in each one of their departments take to craft good budgets, in fact they do, why can't the process, then, be started two weeks, four weeks earlier every year so that the budget is ready to be presented to this House in a timely fashion so that we can debate it in a full and proper manner, vote on it, and have it in place ready to take effect by or before April 1? It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that that's a reasonable request to make of the Finance minister and the government. So I wonder if I could get a response to that, please.

Thank you.

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Chairman, I'd be pleased to respond. It is about timing. I can tell you that nothing would make me happier than to be able to bring in the budget in a time frame that would have it concluded well before the end of the year. It really is about process, and it's a little bit, I think, about tradition as well: you bring in the throne speech, you have a reasonable time to debate that, and the budget follows. There is no advantage to me as Finance minister or to any minister here in delaying the budget. It doesn't change the numbers. It doesn't change the amount of money you have to spend. It doesn't really even shorten up the time you have to debate it.

So I take this as advice rather than calling it an admonition. We've talked about it before. I had certainly hoped that we would have this budget in somewhat earlier than we did this year. I'm not going to make excuses. I will remind everyone that we have a very complex system of reporting because at the time we bring our budget, we bring a fiscal update, an economic update, a complete set of government business plans, and all of the good accompanying information. I have a wonderful staff at Finance that prepare this. I think that we can safely say that we've not had an error in our budget, and that's diligence and so on. I think that with our House leaders we can talk about earlier. [interjection] Yeah, as the Government House Leader was saying, really it's the development of the policy that takes the time.

Even with that, the minister of infrastructure is entirely right. We will begin the next budget process in June, as we did this year. Can we tighten up the timeline? Should the House go in earlier? Those are things that we all have to have a discussion on. Frankly, I don't find January an exciting month, and I've never been able to take a holiday since I joined this group, so I haven't found any advantage there.

I just want you to know that from a Finance minister's perspective the ideal would be exactly that. The other ideal would be that you never had any in-year spending. It's a Treasurer's dream.

I heard somebody say that their families, you know, wouldn't operate this way. Well, good on you because I can tell that I've never been able to plan for 12 months that my washing machine wasn't going to break down or that the transmission wasn't going to go out of the car or that one of my kids wouldn't need some equipment for something I didn't know they were going to get into that wasn't in my budget. I've always tried to have some money that I didn't have allocated that would cover some of those things, so I admire the person who said that their family would never operate needing unanticipated in-year spending.

As I say, I don't take issue with the member's question. It would be the ideal. Can we work towards that? I'll make a commitment to the House that we try. We've got a lot of work to do, a lot of policy to make sure that we have right. As I say, we take a great deal of pride in this province in putting forward budget documents that are accurate, that don't have errors, and that give a complete picture, sometimes I think so complete that they're so big that

nobody will read them, a very complete picture of what our intention is for the year.

So I thank you for your comments. I understand entirely where you're coming from. You know, Mr. Chairman, it would be refreshing to have a debate that didn't centre around: I don't have any detail for these numbers.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** After considering the 2006-2007 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for support to the Legislative Assembly, are you ready for the vote?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

#### Offices of the Legislative Assembly

Agreed to:	
Support to the Legislative Assembly	
Expense	\$12,000,000
Office of the Auditor General	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$4,500,000
Office of the Ombudsman	
Expense	\$600,000
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer	
Expense	\$700,000
Office of the Ethics Commissioner	
Expense	\$100,000
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner	
Expense	\$1,100,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the votes be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$9,200,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$177,100,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Children's Services

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$224,500,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Community Development

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$93,600,000
Capital Investment	\$2,800,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the votes be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Economic Development

Agreed to:	
Expense	\$17,200,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Energy

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$74,600,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Environment

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$23,700,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

9:30

#### Executive Council

Agreed to:	
Expense	\$4,300,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

#### Finance

Agreed to:	
Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$21,600,000
Nonbudgetary Disbursements	\$11,000,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the votes be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Opposed? Carried.

**Government Services**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$18,300,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**Human Resources and Employment**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$137,100,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**Innovation and Science**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$36,100,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**International and Intergovernmental Relations**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$2,800,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**Municipal Affairs**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$34,300,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**Restructuring and Government Efficiency**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$63,900,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**Seniors and Community Supports**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$488,300,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**Solicitor General and Public Security**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$110,100,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.**Sustainable Resource Development**

Agreed to:

Expense and Equipment/Inventory Purchases \$43,800,000

Capital Investment \$5,600,000

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the votes be reported? Are you agreed?**Hon. Members:** Agreed.**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. That was indeed a fine performance. You're to be congratulated. I move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the interim supply votes.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**Mr. Marz:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2006-07 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, have been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, expense, \$12,000,000; office of the Auditor General, expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$4,500,000; office of the Ombudsman, expense, \$600,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, expense, \$700,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, expense, \$100,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, expense, \$1,100,000.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$9,200,000.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$177,100,000.

Children's Services: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$224,500,000.

Community Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$93,600,000; capital investment, \$2,800,000.

Economic Development: expense, \$17,200,000.

Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$637,400,000.

Energy: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$74,600,000.

Environment: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$23,700,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$4,300,000.

Finance: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$21,600,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$11,000,000.

Gaming: expense, \$38,400,000; lottery fund payments, \$328,200,000.

Government Services: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$18,300,000.

Health and Wellness: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$2,291,700,000; capital investment, \$5,400,000.

Human Resources and Employment: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$137,100,000.

Innovation and Science: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$36,100,000.

International and Intergovernmental Relations: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$2,800,000.

Justice and Attorney General: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$1,600,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$34,300,000.

Restructuring and Government Efficiency: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$63,900,000.

Seniors and Community Supports: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$488,300,000.

Solicitor General and Public Security: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$110,100,000.

Sustainable Resource Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$43,800,000; capital investment, \$5,600,000.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Third Reading**

**Bill 19**  
**Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2006**

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Speaker, I would move Bill 19 for third reading.

I would just say that I appreciated hearing many of the thoughtful comments, and insightful comments in many cases, in the discussion of this bill. I certainly felt that the comments that were made were meant to be helpful and constructive, and I've made notes. I hope that the members who have made those comments see their thoughts reflected in the future.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance to close debate?

**Mrs. McClellan:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure we'll get support for the motion that I'm about to make, and that is that we adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 9:40 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

