



TRANSCRIPT OF THE OPEN CABINET MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 2002

Province of British Columbia

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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Hon. Bill Barisoff
Hon. Rich Coleman
Hon. Graham P. Bruce
Hon. Stan Hagen
Hon. Judith Reid
Hon. Joyce Murray

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 2002

The cabinet met at 9:05 a.m.

Opening Remarks

Hon. G. Campbell: We have a number of items on the agenda today, including a decision with regard to Wakes Cove Provincial Park, a decision with regard to the Yale treaty-related measures, a decision on a safe drinking water strategy and an update on the Olympics.

We'll start with Joyce on Wakes Cove Provincial Park.

For Decision: Wakes Cove Provincial Park

Hon. J. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

At our first open cabinet meeting in June last year we approved \$25 million for our Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy program. That was part of the province's agreement with the federal government to work towards creating parklands in the southern Gulf Islands. Of that, \$5 million was slated to go towards acquiring lands as part of the national park and \$20 million towards buying private lands to enhance the provincial park and protected area system on islands such as Saltspring, Valdes, Galiano and Savary.

In our New Era document we promised that cabinet decisions on any new parks would be made in public, so today I'm seeking cabinet's approval to add a 132-hectare property at Wakes Cove to the province's protected area system. The property is at the north end of Valdes Island, which is between Galiano and Gabriola Islands. As you can see from the map, Wakes Cove is located between Nanaimo and Vancouver. Together with 73 hectares of associated Crown foreshore, this land forms the proposed provincial park. I would like to thank the members of the B.C. Marine Parks Forever Society for having raised and contributed \$100,000 towards the purchase of this special property.

I just want to take a moment to tell you why I think this is a very worthwhile project. I think most people in B.C. agree that we have a province of exceptional natural beauty - something that makes us proud to be British Columbians and something that attracts people from around the world to visit. We also have the privilege of having a huge variety of different kinds of spectacular landscapes in the province, from rainforest to desert to dry belt and coastal fir forest. I think it's important to protect samples of the different kinds of landscapes and ecosystems so that our future generations can also value and enjoy this wide variety of B.C.'s natural beauty.

B.C.'s coastal Douglas fir type of ecosystem is not one that is very extensive. My understanding is it's found in a small part of southern B.C. and northern Washington State on the coast. It's been quite impacted by development because it's in highly populated areas. We have less than 0.03 percent of B.C.'s coastal Douglas fir ecosystem in protected status right now. That's one of the reasons that creating this park in the southern Gulf Islands has been a high priority for all levels of government over the past years.

We have a photo of the Wakes Cove property. You can see that it still has much of its forest cover. I believe it was a working farm as well, and you can see the patch in the middle there. The Wakes Cove property has a unique mix of huge old-growth Douglas fir trees, some rare Garry oak areas still and arbutus trees on the rocky foreshore. It's also home to several threatened or endangered plant species and lots of rocky shoreline that's rich in sea life.

As a park this property will add valuable recreation activities and tourism that is growing each year in this part of the southern Gulf Islands. It's a location that I think will add value for lots of visitors each year. It offers shelter for kayakers and boaters, and it's going to be a spectacular day trip or wilderness camping experience with good hiking, picnicking and wildlife viewing. It'll be a special place to visit.

[9:10]

Water, Land and Air Protection, my ministry, is committed to maintaining and enhancing our park recreation system. It's also a priority for me, and I know it's a priority for people in British Columbia, that services in our parks remain affordable and accessible. In May I announced a recreation stewardship review panel to consult with the public and investigate a range of options as to how we can improve how we deliver services in park and wildlife recreation. I expect that this panel will be looking at innovative models and some of the best practices across the continent as well as talking to the B.C. public to find those improvements that will create benefits for British Columbians.

Our B.C. parks system is one of the best in the world - I would say the best in the world. It's admired the world over. Our parks are a natural asset that will only become more and more valuable to us in the future. It's important that we continue to protect unique natural areas for future generations. Today we have a chance to preserve a very beautiful island property in the middle of an increasingly populated and internationally popular region. If cabinet agrees to designate Wakes Cove Provincial Park, we'll be moving forward with our federal-provincial commitment to develop our parks system in the Gulf Islands.

Thank you, Premier.

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Hon. G. Campbell: Thanks, Joyce.

Questions? Mike and then Greg.

Hon. M. de Jong: Two things, Joyce. The first question I had related to the reference to integration with the federal government and a national parks system, which I have read about previously and you have talked about previously. Is this provincial park, then, ultimately expected to become part of a federal parks network in the area?

Hon. J. Murray: No, it's not. The Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy agreement that was signed in the mid-nineties called for both the federal government and the provincial government to each invest \$30 million in both a national parks system and a provincial parks system in the southern Gulf Islands. If you'll recall, when we were elected, the province hadn't come forward with their full funding. In fact, about \$5.6 million of the \$30 million had been committed by the previous government. We made the decision that we would live up to British Columbia's part of that agreement. There are two separate aspects. One is the national parks system, and the other is the B.C. parks system. This will be part of the B.C. parks system.

Hon. M. de Jong: Good.

The second and last question related to something I read in one of the reports, whereby the ministry will ultimately be presenting a comprehensive description of the types of services and recreational opportunities that will be available on the site as they go through that planning network. I'm not sure if it's a question or a submission to you. I have increasingly heard from people who are concerned that in some quarters our provincial parks - and national parks, for that matter - are being looked upon by some as areas that we exclude people from. They are nature preservations as opposed to public parks. The fact that you are turning your mind to developing a detailed description of what the services and opportunities will be for people tells me that Wakes Cove is contemplated as being a user-friendly area that will actually invite people to come. I presume and hope that is the case.

Hon. J. Murray: The current concept is that it would be accessible to people - not that it would be developed with buildings and sort of a big park development but that it would be accessible. I think what you're pointing to is that our B.C. parks system has a dual function. In some cases the function is to protect vulnerable ecosystems which, if there is too much traffic in them, will no longer have what makes them special in the first place. That might be threatened species of wildlife whose numbers are at risk. There is that conservation aspect to parks. But recreation and the value of the parks as somewhere that people visit and enjoy is a very high priority. I see parks as for both people and conservation.

What park management planning processes are designed to do is identify the zones that are appropriate. I think we have a tremendous opportunity to open parts of our parks system for visitors and recreation and create benefits and, at the same time, protect the areas that need to be protected.

[9:15]

I just want to say one more thing about that. The opportunity to visit these special places actually deepens people's appreciation of nature. I think that's an important benefit of having people visit parks and these spectacular areas. They appreciate them. That's part of our culture in B.C., where we do have an attachment to the land, to nature. I think that's true all across the province.

Hon. G. Campbell: Greg.

Hon. G. Halsey-Brandt: Thank you, Premier.

Joyce, my question somewhat relates to the one Mike just raised. I know this passage through here and through Gabriola Passage can be a bit choppy, with the tides. We have a number of marine parks fairly close - Montague, Pirates Cove, Conover Cove and Newcastle Island - and it does get very crowded. My question is: is there an opportunity for boaters and kayakers and everyone else to have some input into the type of park and the management plan that's going to be developed for this?

As you say, some are not accessible at all, some just to kayakers, some for wilderness camping and others for larger boats that have mooring buoys or wharfs and this sort of thing. Is there an opportunity, as the management plan is being developed, for the boating public and the wildlife viewing public and everyone else that uses them to get some input into how it should be developed?

Hon. J. Murray: The answer is yes. The boating public has been very involved in this. The Marine Parks Forever Society has been very proactive in helping make this happen. The park management planning process is the way B.C. Parks brings in the public from all different perspectives to think about a new park or protected area and to talk about how it should be used, how it should be zoned, how it can be accessible, what things need protection and what things should be opened up for access. I think for this park, boaters and kayakers will be one of the main groups interested in coming here.

Hon. G. Halsey-Brandt: If they wished, would there be a site somewhere - probably on the website of your ministry or something - that the different organizations could access to provide input or to find out how they get involved in the management process?

Hon. J. Murray: Well, I'll make sure there is a place on the website where people can get steered to that park management planning process when it starts.

Hon. G. Halsey-Brandt: Good. Thank you very much.

Hon. G. Campbell: Joyce, would you be willing to take Graham on a tour to make sure that he can actually use this park?

Hon. J. Murray: Absolutely.

Hon. G. Campbell: Graham.

Hon. G. Bruce: Mr. Premier, I wasn't going to say anything, but I will.

Joyce, I want you to know that I've never camped on this particular site, although I have camped on a lot of the Gulf Islands. From the perspective of the changing economy of Vancouver Island, certainly in this region - tourism, and ecotourism specifically - this is good news. I would hope that there will be, as others have mentioned, the incorporation of those that are in that type of business - their requests as to how we can improve the ecotourism industry on the marine side through the Gulf Islands.

There are some beautiful sites, as I've shared with you over time. I've been a naturalist myself. Is that right – a naturalist? I've got to be careful.

Hon. G. Campbell: You're also a natural.

Hon. J. Murray: Maybe it's a naturalist. Aren't those the nudist colonies?

Hon. G. Bruce: A naturalist too, yeah. I'll have to check on that one. It's good news, though.

Hon. J. Murray: I agree; it is good news. I think creating a strong platform for our tourism and ecotourism industry is an important part of what we can do, moving forward as a government, because we have the basis for that industry. I think it will be important when moving forward all across the province - certainly not just in the southern Gulf Island area.

Hon. G. Campbell: John.

Hon. J. van Dongen: Joyce, you talked about the contribution of, I think, \$100,000 by the marine parks society or a conservation group. What is the total acquisition cost of the park? I'm curious: what is the size of the park? How many hectares is it?

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Hon. J. Murray: The size is 132 hectares. The cost was just over \$4 million. I was advised that Parks sought appraisals and then stuck with the appraised price. We were very firm in the negotiations. I'm advised that we definitely got fair market value.

Hon. G. Campbell: Okay. So the request is for a decision to approve Wakes Cove

Provincial Park. Without any further discussion, congratulations, Joyce. We will move forward with that.

The next item on the agenda is the Yale first nation land protection treaty-related measures. Geoff is taking us through that.

Geoff.

For Decision: Yale Treaty-Related Measures

Hon. G. Plant: Thank you, Premier.

First, before I get underway, I should tell you all that we're joined today in the public gallery by some people who are a pretty important part of this project, including Chief Robert Hope, who's the chief negotiator for the Yale first nation; Robert Reiter, who's their legal counsel; Eric Denhoff, who's chief negotiator for the federal government, well known to most of us here, I think; and my negotiators, Katherine Gordon and Gordon Douglas, as well as the deputy minister for the treaty negotiations office, Philip Steenkamp.

They all have high hopes about what I'm going to ask you to do, which is this. I came to cabinet in December to seek approval for a mandate to negotiate a land protection measure in relation to the treaty negotiations with the Yale first nation. At that time, I was given a general mandate to pursue those negotiations, subject to, I think, 15 conditions. We have gone away and worked hard at meeting those conditions. I'm here today specifically to ask for approval of the memorandum of understanding with the Yale first nation that will implement the treaty-related measure and to do the additional business that is required to give effect to that, which includes an OIC establishing a part 13 Forest Act reserve.

In broad terms, a treaty-related measure, particularly a land protection measure, represents an attempt to mark and identify a treaty negotiation where we are making progress. On the part of the Yale first nation it represents their commitment to the identification of a parcel of land which is particularly important to their negotiations. I think it represents a recognition by all three parties to this negotiation that we have some hopes that we can conclude an agreement-in-principle within a reasonable period of time.

What we need to do in order to protect the outcome of that negotiation is protect the parcel of land so that it's there for the parties, particularly for the Yale first nation, at the

conclusion of negotiations. In other words, what we're trying to do now is set aside a potential parcel of land in the hope that it will actually become part of the land that the Yale first nation acquires in the eventual treaty settlement.

The Yale first nation, as you all know, occupies land just up the Fraser River from Hope. It's important to understand these treaty-related measures that.... Yale, of course, has a traditional territory that is quite significant in size. We have identified jointly a parcel of land which is across the river from the town of Yale and which is particularly important to the Yale first nation for at least two reasons, among others. One is that it has important heritage and archaeological values. Two, perhaps more importantly, is that it's almost the only relatively level parcel of land within reach of the community of the Yale first nation.

[9:25]

It may have, as you know from the discussion that we had back in December, significant deposits of gravel and placer gold on it. However, those deposits are unproven. One of the things we've worked hard to do in the negotiations of the memorandum of understanding is ensure that while we protect the land for the purpose of ensuring that it's available for the treaty settlement, we don't make commitments with respect to whether or not, for example, subsurface rights would become a part of the treaty settlement. At the same time, we also want to try to encourage a continuing discussion between the Yale first nation and some of the private parties that have existing mineral interests on the land we're talking about.

What I am able to tell you is that we have satisfied the requirements you gave me last December. In specific terms I'm asking for authority to ultimately create two or three different forms of government activity. One is the part 13 designation under the Forest Act, which I spoke about a minute ago. Two other ministerial orders are required, and that is a Land Act reserve under section 16 of the Land Act and a no-staking reserve under the Mineral Tenure Act. These really do no more and no less than protect the land from further dispositions. They also protect the rights of all those who currently have rights to this land. They essentially maintain the status quo. That is a good thing from the point of view of ensuring that this land is available prospectively for a future treaty. It also does mean, though, that we all have work to do to make sure we move forward as quickly as possible to a moment when the Yale first nation has an agreement in place so that we can continue to determine whether there is some economic value to this land that could be exploited for the benefit of all of us.

One of the points about land protection measures that I guess I've already made but

has different elements is that we are respecting the terms and conditions of existing tenures. We are ensuring that no new tenures will be issued. We have also worked in the communities that are affected to make sure that both the aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities around the Yale first nation understand what we're doing. I can tell you that the Yale first nation has agreed to a non-derogation clause to protect whatever interests other first nations may have. The Yale first nation has agreed that they will resolve any overlap issues that relate to this particular parcel of land prior to final agreement. There will be continuing consultation with the Fraser Valley treaty advisory committee and third parties. I have some hope that we're going to continue to make good progress towards the conclusion of an actual agreement-in-principle and maybe even a final agreement with the Yale first nation.

This is sort of the last general comment about a land protection measure. While we have agreed to set aside a parcel of land here of about 350 hectares, I think, for the benefit of a possible treaty with the Yale first nation, Yale has, as I said earlier, a large traditional territory, and the province gets the benefit of some certainty with respect to our ability to develop the lands and resources that exist within the larger traditional territory of the first nation.

Yale has agreed to participate in our provincial referral processes. I think that in a sense this can be seen as what I hope will be a constructive partnership between British Columbia, the Yale first nation and also Canada. I think this is a good step forward.

I ask cabinet approval to enter into the memorandum of understanding and various other documents that are required to make sure we do protect the land in the way I've outlined.

Hon. G. Campbell: Questions? Mike.

Hon. M. de Jong: I'm not sure, Attorney, how specific this is to this particular claim, but I think there is always interest in knowing what has triggered the Crown's ability and the government's ability to enter into this treaty-related measure, land protection. We're at a stage now where I think the government is comfortable and I, as one of the ministers responsible, am comfortable with endorsing the protection measures. But why now? Why are we confident that this is the right time to set this land aside in this negotiation?

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Hon. G. Plant: I think that in general terms what makes this possible includes the fact that Yale has very firmly identified this parcel of land as important to their treaty interests. It does not represent their entire land interest, but it represents an important part of it. We are making progress in treaty negotiations. That's our view, and I believe it is also the view of Yale and Canada that this is a table at which all three parties are making progress. This is a parcel of land that has existing interests on it, and if we don't protect the land, there is the risk that others will come along and take third-party rights or develop existing rights in a way that might undermine our ability to actually reach an agreement with Yale, given the importance they've attached to this land.

I don't know that there is anything that specifically says we should do it this week or last week. It's a good time in this negotiation for the province to show that it takes Yale's interests seriously and that it's committed to attempting to negotiate an agreement-in-principle. One way we can do that is by ensuring that we preserve this parcel of land for inclusion in the treaty.

Hon. M. de Jong: You should say, Premier, for the benefit of cabinet, that from the forestry perspective the amount of timber involved here is about 700 cubic metres of AAC.

Hon. G. Campbell: Okay. Dick.

Hon. R. Neufeld: To the Attorney: this in no way precludes the working agreement between the mineral title holders, on some of this portion of land set aside, to continue to work with the Yale first nation. I want you to say yes or no to that. The other part of it is, is there any involvement continuing with your ministry or mine in those workings between the Yale first nation and the mineral title holders?

Hon. G. Plant: Right. Two questions. First, thank you for both of them. Thank you, Dick, for those questions.

I did mention that there have been discussions between the Yale first nation and one particular private party that is interested in developing what they believe to be substantial gravel and gold resources. Those discussions, I'm told, are continuing. If they do result in something like a joint venture or some other agreement, then the memorandum of understanding that I am asking you to approve will be amended to reflect that partnership arrangement. The bigger goal is not to restrain economic development but, if it is to go ahead, to ensure that it goes ahead in a way that satisfies the interests of Yale as well as the larger public interest. That's the answer to the first question.

The second question is that we do know that discussions have taken place and are taking place between the first nation and the private company. From time to time we have offered our assistance. The treaty negotiations office has offered assistance to help expedite or bridge gaps in those discussions. We will continue to be available to assist in those discussions as required. I actually think that if that part of this exercise were to become fruitful – that is, if there was, in fact, an agreement between the first nation and the private company – we could create win-win-win all around for everybody. That's one thing we're working towards.

Hon. R. Neufeld: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Hon. G. Campbell: Okay. We have a memorandum of understanding. We're granting approval to that, and we will execute the orders-in-council to implement it. Any problems?

Okay. Thank you very much, Geoff.

Hon. G. Plant: Thank you, Premier.

Hon. G. Campbell: The next item on the agenda is the action plan for safe drinking water in British Columbia.

[9:35]

For Decision: Safe Drinking Water

Hon. G. Campbell: I'm sure you all are aware that drinking water has been an area of major concern in the province for the last decade. In fact, it seemed to be stalled for some time until just around last year at this time, when there was a sudden flurry of activity. There's activity taking place in a number of ministries of government: Health Services; Water, Land and Air Protection; Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services; Sustainable Resource Management; Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. All of those ministries have a particular interest and particular areas of expertise around a drinking water strategy. It's not just a strategy; it's an action plan.

We're going to hear today from Colin first, and then I'm going to ask Joyce if she has anything to add to that. Then we can engage in discussion with the other ministers who have been involved. If the other ministers want to add before the questions, that's fine – you can just raise your hands – but we're going to start with Colin with regard to this.

Colin.

Hon. C. Hansen: Thank you very much, Premier.

As we have all witnessed over the last number of months and years, there has been increased awareness of the need to ensure that we have a safe and secure drinking water supply in this province. To reflect this important goal, we have made a number of key commitments to protect drinking water, both before the election and in our new-era platform and subsequently in the recent throne speech.

In New Era we committed to introduce real, comprehensive groundwater legislation. As well, we committed to conduct a comprehensive review of the Drinking Water Protection Act. This is a piece of legislation that the last administration brought in just weeks prior to the calling of the election. In our view it was very hastily put onto the floor of the Legislature, and we made a commitment that we would undertake a thorough review of it before proclaiming those important sections of it.

This past fall we appointed an independent panel. It was chaired by David Marshall, who is with the Fraser Basin Council. That panel conducted a review of the Drinking Water Protection Act, thereby fulfilling one very specific commitment we had made in the new-era platform.

Their report was delivered to government earlier this year, and it further emphasized some common themes we found in the provincial health officer's report on drinking water that was made public last fall, in 2001, and the auditor general's report from 1999. The auditor general's report sent a clear signal at that time that there was more we could be doing to protect drinking water in British Columbia.

I should note that the vast majority of British Columbians already enjoy high-quality, excellent drinking water. In fact, more than half of the population of this province get their drinking water from two systems. One of those is the system that is run by the capital regional district here on the south part of Vancouver Island. It serves about 310,000 individuals. The largest system in the province is that run by the greater Vancouver regional district. It covers 18 different communities, and it serves two million British Columbians.

The drinking water protection plan I am proposing today takes the common themes from each of these recent reports. It further strengthens our water protection framework in a way that is workable and affordable, and it focuses efforts on both preventing and treating contamination as well as accurately and appropriately identifying risks for

communities. What we are proposing today is to protect British Columbia's drinking water with a public health focus and a coordinated approach that provides protection – from the source where the water comes from to the time that it actually comes out of the tap in your house.

To establish a meaningful context for our action plan, we have developed a set of eight key principles to guide us. I'll read through each of these eight principles and then come back and elaborate on them in a bit greater detail: (1) the safety of drinking water is a health issue; (2) source protection is a critical part of drinking water protection; (3) providing safe drinking water requires an integrated approach; (4) all water systems need to be thoroughly assessed to determine risks; (5) proper treatment and water distribution system integrity are important to protect human health; (6) tap water must meet acceptable safety standards and be monitored; (7) small systems require a flexible approach with appropriate safeguards; and (8) safe drinking water should be affordable, with users paying appropriate costs.

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The first principle emphasizes that the safety of drinking water is a health issue. British Columbians have benefited a great deal from the fact that our public health officials are an integral part of the drinking water protection regime in this province. In fact, the active role of our medical health officers throughout the province, the role that they play in preventing illness due to water contamination, has made us rather unique in Canada. We want to build on this very strength.

We believe that the safety of drinking water is a health issue, which is why the Ministry of Health Services will be the lead ministry for B.C.'s drinking water action plan. In this area the provincial health officer will report to the deputy minister and to the Minister of Health Services. He will oversee the drinking water protection regime, and he will play a key role in recommending when and where drinking water protection plans need to be developed.

Medical health officers in each of the health authorities will work with the provincial health officer. They will oversee two key groups. One of those groups is the public health inspectors and engineers. The second group is the new positions we'll be creating, known as drinking water protection officers, which will be in each of the regions. The drinking water officer positions will be created to play a new and unique role focusing solely on drinking water. They will have the ability under the Drinking

Water Protection Act to investigate complaints, require testing and assessment, perform inspections, coordinate source protection, issue orders and take many other steps to ensure water safety.

Another key principle is that protecting drinking water requires an integrated approach. Although Health Services will be the lead ministry on drinking water, we will continue to work closely with the other ministries to maintain quality drinking water from source to tap. To ensure this occurs, we are establishing an interministry committee to identify emerging issues and develop appropriate integrated policy.

This action plan I'm outlining today was based on the work of an ad hoc committee made up of assistant deputy ministers from the various ministries that are affected by drinking water or, in fact, whose scope of interest affects drinking water. It's through a lot of very good work by this ad hoc committee that these recommendations are coming forth. We want to continue this valuable work by establishing a permanent committee.

Resource ministries will continue to fulfil their obligations for source protection, with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection playing a primary role in protecting surface and groundwater quality. The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services will continue to play a key role in working with communities on their infrastructure needs. Certainly, George has made some very significant announcements that we'll touch on later. It is through this integrated approach that we will ensure British Columbia always has a comprehensive drinking water plan that is meeting current and future needs in this province.

In terms of an overview, this graphic on the screen shows that B.C. residents obtain 77 percent of their drinking water from surface water sources. The balance, 23 percent, of the population gets their drinking water from groundwater. The very high percentage we get from surface water is also a unique feature of British Columbia's drinking water system. Surface water sources represent some very unique challenges over groundwater sources in terms of protection. Any natural wildlife activity, such as deer, beaver habitation or any of these kinds of natural issues occurring around a water source, creates the potential for fecal contamination.

[9:45]

The provincial health officer states in his report: "Even the most remote and seemingly untouched water source can be carrying contaminants that may harm human health." He concludes that the best assurance of safe drinking water at the consumer's tap is what we refer to as a multibarrier approach. By that, we mean that first of all, we will

ensure that the source of our drinking water is protected in this province. Secondly, we will ensure that drinking water throughout this province is properly treated. Thirdly, we need to have integrity when it comes to our water storage systems and our water distribution systems in the province. Fourthly, even after you've done those first three steps and you've done them with proper diligence, you still have to ensure that there's proper monitoring at the tap. With that multibarrier approach, no one stage of it can be taken for granted if we're going to ensure safe drinking water. That is what this action plan does, by recognizing that source protection is a critical part of drinking water protection in any good multibarrier approach.

Working in partnership with other agencies and external stakeholder groups, the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection plays a key role in protecting surface and groundwater quality. It establishes, monitors and undertakes compliance and enforcement to protect surface and groundwater sources. I know that Joyce is going to elaborate a little bit more, after I'm finished, on the role her ministry plays in this.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries will provide leadership on environmental farm management. Committed with its partners, they have come up with \$4.4 million to increase manure storage capacity. The environmental farm management plans will result in better management of manure and, therefore, ensure that water quality is protected. I know that John may want to add to some of that later in the presentation.

Protecting drinking water factors strongly into provincial land use planning processes. Under this plan, powers will be increased to protect drinking water sources where necessary to protect human health. When other measures fail to address a health concern, the Minister of Health Services, on the recommendation of the provincial health officer, will recommend to cabinet that a site-specific drinking water plan be imposed, giving human health protection the very top priority. In the rare instances in which such a plan would be required, a socioeconomic analysis would be performed to assess and advise on the full impact of the plan to affected communities.

In terms of specific roles, the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management has a mandate to carry out land use planning in the province. These planning activities recognize the importance of protecting drinking water and are designed to work with communities to help make the best environmental, social and economic choices.

Locally developed solutions, including a better integration of local land use planners, health officials and other key groups, will reduce the need for these formalized drinking water protection plans. In addition, where additional protection of drinking water is required, Sustainable Resource Management will work with the Ministry of Health

Services and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection to evaluate the situation and determine if a formal drinking water protection plan is needed. In such cases, the planning expertise of the ministry will be an integral part of the development of such a drinking water protection plan.

The realistic goal is to avoid the need for unilaterally imposed drinking water protection plans. On the forestry side, the new results-based forest code must ensure that water quality is considered when conducting forest and range activities near water. Taken together, these source protection measures undertaken by the resource ministries add up to an important first line of defence in protecting our drinking water.

Once water leaves the source and starts moving through a water system, further protection of drinking water is provided through water treatment and proper maintenance of the water distribution system. Under this action plan, source-to-tap assessments of all drinking water systems will be completed, starting with those that may pose a higher risk to users. Even today the medical health officers have a good sense of which systems may have the potential for higher risk. Those will be the ones that will be targeted first for these assessments and testing, but we will ensure that all of these systems will be tested in a timely fashion.

The inspection and laboratory testing relating to drinking water systems will be increased. These activities will also identify potential contamination sources that need to be fixed. Government will establish a drinking water advisory committee to provide technical advice on further tap water standards in addition to the microbiological contaminants that are already tested for. Basic monitoring requirements will be established by regulation and supplemented by orders from the drinking water officers where necessary. These actions are designed to enhance our ability to identify the potential risks to our water suppliers and communities so that they know where they stand with regard to their water systems.

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Fortunately, we know that the great majority of British Columbians already enjoy good, safe water. The majority of British Columbians are served by the larger systems, as you can see on the slide that's on the screen. The 96 systems operating in larger municipalities serve close to 90 percent of the population. However, as you can see from this next slide, the large systems represent only 6 percent of all of our water systems in the province, and it is the small and medium water systems that make up the

vast majority. Approximately 2,000 of B.C.'s 3,300 water systems are small systems with fewer than 15 connections.

B.C. is very unique in that regard when you look at the rest of Canada. What that tells us is that a one-size-fits-all approach simply isn't going to work for our province. Other provinces have recognized the challenges of small water systems and the need for a flexible approach. There is at least one province in Canada that does not even regulate systems with fewer than 15 connections. We will look at providing flexibility to small systems in the way they meet the standards, but the bottom line is that they will be regulated to ensure that safe drinking water can be provided even through those very small systems.

Small systems may be subject to different monitoring and assessment requirements as determined by the drinking water protection officer on a case-by-case basis. Training and certification requirements for water system operators will take into account the circumstances, such as the size of the systems they will be overseeing. Government will create a plan that ensures the accountability and viability of existing and future small systems. Through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and key stakeholders the plan will include facilitating the affiliation of small systems with local or regional governments. This will also make some of these small systems eligible for infrastructure grants.

We also need to understand that currently many water users pay less than the full cost of operating a safe and effective drinking water system. I think most British Columbians would recognize that safe, quality drinking water is not a free commodity. The various reports I referred to earlier recommended that the costs associated with these initiatives should be done on a cost recovery basis. We estimate that the cost of this action plan, once fully annualized, will be about \$16 million per year. We will consult with key stakeholders, such as the Union of B.C. Municipalities and the B.C. Water and Waste Association, to seek their input and feedback with regard to the options we have available for cost recovery. These are the short-term costs.

We also recognize that there will be long-term costs of infrastructure investment that will be identified as we implement this action plan. What those costs will total is not entirely known, and we're not going to be able to get a good handle on what the total potential cost for infrastructure over the long term will be until we actually get into the assessments and the implementation of the action plan. However, we are beginning ongoing further assessment and evaluation of these potential long-term costs, and we will be developing, in consultation with stakeholders, cost recovery options and mechanisms for meeting future water infrastructure investment needs. At a later date,

once we have more data to provide us with a better picture of what those long-term infrastructure needs will be, we propose to bring information back to cabinet that will be coming through the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, and they'll be coming back with recommendations. We will provide options for cost recovery along with full evaluation, including socioeconomic analysis. In the meantime, we will continue to use available infrastructure funds to move ahead with projects that will improve water quality.

In terms of making the necessary investments in infrastructure, to date this province has already announced 42 projects, worth \$109 million, that will improve water quality in communities across this province. The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services is the lead ministry working with communities throughout the province and the federal government on infrastructure projects.

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Just to give you a breakdown of where some of these projects are coming from – and I know George may want to elaborate on this – in the Thompson, Okanagan and Kootenay there are 17 projects, valued at \$53 million; in northern B.C. there are eight projects, totalling \$9 million; on Vancouver Island and the coastal region of the province there are seven projects, totalling \$19 million; and in the lower mainland and southwestern corner of the province there are ten projects, for a total of \$27 million.

In terms of specific examples, it's worth mentioning that Erickson, a community of 2,000 people in the Kootenays, recently conducted a referendum in which 78 percent of the voters approved their new treatment plan. This is a community, you may recall, that was in the news many times over the last number of years. They've actually been on a boil-water advisory for over a decade and now are on the path to finding a solution that has broad support. Most importantly, it is a locally developed solution that meets the health concerns that have been raised by public health officials over these last many years but also meets the needs of that community. The city of Cranbrook is also worthy of mention as a community that developed a very comprehensive source protection plan at low cost. It has positive benefits in terms of both drinking water and economic development. It's an example of a successful land use planning process that has full cooperation and broad support and was developed at the local level. The point of these examples is that we need to have both infrastructure and source protection working together. This action plan provides for initiatives that meet both of these requirements.

What we have outlined today is a safe drinking water action plan that deals proactively with the issues of ensuring that British Columbians have safe and secure drinking water.

We have a clear set of principles. We have concrete actions to support these principles, new legislation forthcoming in the fall, ministry service plans that have protected and increased funding to support the plan and an ongoing commitment to ensure safe water throughout the province.

In the coming months and years I am confident that the implementation of this plan will provide improvements to our drinking water system and that British Columbians will see the benefits of an integrated, multi-agency and multibarrier approach.

Premier, at this point I will turn it back to you. As the development of this plan was very much a team approach involving many ministries, I'm sure some of my colleagues around this table may also wish to comment on it.

Thank you.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thanks, Colin.

We'll hear from Joyce first and then others. Joyce.

Hon. J. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

I'd like to elaborate a bit on my ministry's role here. Colin mentioned that this is an integrated approach. It actually has been an integrated approach in the past, and that's one of the reasons that B.C.'s system is effective in protecting drinking water. But there's a key shift at the high level in how we think about protecting drinking water that I want to mention.

Until now there have been two lead ministries responsible for safe drinking water. The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection was the lead ministry from the source to treatment, and the Ministry of Health was the lead ministry from treatment to the tap. We've had a two-headed system. We got feedback from a number of the panels and reports that when you have two ministries in charge, you have more risk of there being gaps or duplications. I fully agree. I think it makes a lot of sense that we have one lead ministry. Because our principle here is that safe drinking water is a public health issue, it makes imminent sense that in our province – other provinces have taken a different approach – we've assigned the Ministry of Health Services as the lead ministry.

What does that actually mean in terms of Water, Land and Air Protection's role? My ministry will still have functional responsibilities for that source-to-treatment stage, as other ministries will have responsibilities for different parts of the process, but we will

have one ministry – and that's Health Services – that will make sure that all of the pieces are working together as intended and that if there are any problems between different agencies, they will get resolved. So I think this is a very positive step, moving forward in our change to the structure of protecting drinking water. In terms of the responsibility for source protection, Water, Land and Air Protection will continue to set and enforce standards to ensure that both the surface and groundwater sources of drinking water are protected.

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I just want to put in a note here to remind people that in my ministry service plan and the budget speech, because drinking water is such a high-priority environmental issue, my ministry actually increased funding for drinking water quality monitoring for both surface and groundwater. That's an important commitment. We'll continue to uphold that commitment. As well, the ministry protected our field capacity for setting standards and for undertaking compliance and enforcement activities, so we've protected that for this three-year service plan.

Another thing my ministry will be responsible for is carrying out the new-era commitment Colin mentioned: we will put real, comprehensive groundwater legislation in place to improve drinking water quality. We will be coming forward with that legislation in the fall of this year. Among other things, what that will actually do is lead to higher standards for well construction and mandatory reporting of drilling activities and testing activities so that data is available to decision-makers and they know where wells are being drilled, where they're being capped and what's going on with things that do impact water under the ground. We'll have a groundwater advisory board that will be appointed this summer to give us expert technical advice and help us move forward with groundwater regulations. Lastly, we're more and more aware as a society, I think, that conserving water is important both for the safety of our drinking water and also to reduce costs of treatment and then disposal of waste, so we've recognized water conservation as a high priority. It's in the plan, and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection will work with other ministries and lead the development of a provincewide plan for water conservation.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you, Joyce.

George.

Hon. G. Abbott: Thank you, Premier.

The ministers, Colin and Joyce, certainly have laid out very well a number of the challenges that face communities and the province around safe drinking water. Not the least of the challenges we face, Premier, is the cost of those systems. They're very expensive, and certainly, it's well recognized that no single government can take care of all the challenges we face in that regard.

Fortunately, we do have, as Colin noted, a partnership with the federal, provincial and municipal governments in the Canada-British Columbia Infrastructure Works program, which is, I think, going to go a long way to face some of the most compelling challenges facing communities around the province. The program is not only a partnership between different levels of government, but it's also a partnership within our government as well. Minister Thorpe, who some of us occasionally know as Rick, is also working on this. What we have is an \$800 million, six-year program in British Columbia. At least \$600 million of that will go to water and sewer projects over the next few years. Another \$200 million, which Rick works with, is around community infrastructure.

The first announcements in the infrastructure program rolled out back in December of 2001. We made some further announcements in May, another one just a week or two ago in Kamloops, and in the very near future we'll be making some additional announcements as well. As Colin noted, we have, to this point, announced 42 water-related projects, worth \$109 million. I think it's also worth noting, from a water quality perspective, that we've also approved an additional 30 sewer-related projects, valued at about \$54 million. To date, the value of all these projects runs \$163 million in British Columbia. Obviously – and I think everyone appreciates this – there can be a very strong linkage in some cases between effective sewage treatment programs and effective water quality programs in the province. Certainly, the approvals we've made so far reflect that.

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The projects, as my colleagues have noted, make a big difference to communities around the province. As I mentioned, we just made an announcement in Kamloops, where they've been having a problem for some years now with cloudy drinking water, which sometimes they have boil-water advisories on. It's been a serious challenge for that community. Along with the federal government, we did announce a \$23.3 million contribution to a new water treatment plant in Kamloops. This grant will help to build a plant that has state-of-the-art technology that was actually pioneered here in British Columbia and Canada. That's certainly going to be something we can be very proud of

in that part of the world.

Another example: Port Edward, up in northern British Columbia, has a chlorination system that hasn't been able to adequately treat the water from Wolf Creek, where Port Edward gets its water. Again, thanks to the infrastructure program, the town will have a new \$3 million water filtration plant, and the residents will now be able to enjoy safe drinking water, as most other British Columbians can. The capital regional district is another example. Here in Victoria we'll build a \$13 million ultraviolet water treatment plant. In the lower mainland, the Fraser Valley regional district will have a new \$10 million water filtration plant to reduce or eliminate harmful bacteria and viruses in their water.

These are some of the examples of where the infrastructure program is making a big difference to British Columbians. We're in the very early stages of the infrastructure program. Obviously it's a multi-year program, and there will be many more announcements forthcoming in the months and years ahead. I think the infrastructure program is enjoying great success in finding practical solutions to water— and sewer-related problems that are facing communities in British Columbia. I think it's a great example of how partnerships between the federal, provincial and local levels of government can go a long way to addressing the very real life problems that face British Columbians every day.

Thank you for that.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thanks, George. Any comments from Stan or John? Stan.

Hon. S. Hagen: Thank you, Premier. I think Colin covered it extremely well. I just want to add this comment. With our existing land use planning processes, we know we can limit the necessity for ordering drinking water protection plans by ensuring that our current plans address water quality issues. The good news is that this is already happening, and it will continue to be the case. I know that my ministry staff are looking forward to working with communities, other agencies and health officers to make sure existing plans work more effectively and to ensure that new plans get it right from the start.

Thank you.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thanks, Stan. John.

Hon. J. van Dongen: Thank you, Premier.

I certainly think Colin gave a good, comprehensive presentation. Our ministry is involved, really, in the source protection area as our main area of priority. We work closely with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection and the farming industry. Our role in that is really to educate, to provide incentives and to try to achieve compliance.

We've had a lot of good initiatives by the agricultural industry. The beef industry, for example, has had a lot of work done on nutrient management issues and riparian zone issues and in developing watering systems that allow the fencing of streams so that cattle aren't in the streams. Some of the same issues that apply to wildlife would apply to the ranching industry. In the poultry industry in the Fraser Valley we've had a very active sustainable poultry farming group that I think has done some innovative stuff in terms of moving poultry litter out of the Fraser Valley and into areas such as Ashcroft, Merritt and Cache Creek, where they actually need the fertilizer value and the organic matter value. Through federal-provincial incentive programs such as the infrastructure programs that George talked about, there's been a heavy investment in manure storage facilities by the dairy and hog industry in the Fraser Valley. There's been about \$7 million invested in that kind of infrastructure in the last three years. That is very helpful in terms of ensuring that farmers are not spreading manure on land during the winter months.

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In terms of where we go from here, first of all, environmental sustainability is really one of our core business areas in our three-year service plan. That will be very well matched, I think, with the new federal-provincial agreement we are in the process of developing with the federal government and other provinces where, again, environmental sustainability, nutrient management and water source protection will be key priorities.

The final comment is that environmental farm plans are something that is being implemented across the country. It is part of the federal-provincial program. We're very committed to this program. We hope to be in a position to implement environmental farm plans before the end of this year. What this will allow us to do is get out in front of the environmental issues by ensuring that every farm has a plan ahead of time in terms of how they're going to manage their various types of farm wastes.

Thanks for the opportunity.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you very much.

I've got questions from Lynn, Mike and Bill. Lynn.

Hon. L. Stephens: Thank you, Premier.

First of all, I would just like to say that I think the plans that have been laid out by you, Colin and Joyce, are excellent. I want to say that I support your drinking water action plan and the legislation that is going to be flowing from that, particularly around the area of groundwater. That's something that has been a concern to me and, certainly, to the residents in my community for a very long time now.

John touched on it a little bit when he talked about the measures that agriculture is taking to reduce the contamination of aquifers. That's one of the areas that are a concern – and the adequate water systems, the training and certification of drillers, and the records management of wells that are operational and abandoned, as well. I think the accountability and coordination of the various ministries that have responsibility for the legislation and regulations are going to be extremely important. I'm pleased that there is one ministry that is going to be the lead ministry to deal with all of these issues.

The other thing I like particularly is the groundwater advisory board that is established to deal with the technical issues. A question I have is whether or not, or where, there would be the opportunity for individuals and communities to participate in some of the discussions around the development of those regulations and legislation over the coming months. I understand you're looking at fall to introduce some legislation. What kind of opportunities would there be for individuals and communities to participate?

Hon. C. Hansen: I'll comment first, and then Joyce may want to add to that.

When we bring in the amendments to the Drinking Water Protection Act in the fall, it's our goal to have the regulations developed by that point so that we can make those public at the same time. There is a fair amount of work that has to be done. It's one of the reasons why it's important that we get the action plan approved today and get it out: so that we can start that detailed consultation.

There's been lots of consultation up till now, but the real detailed consultation around the actual wording of the regulations is going to be an important stage in this process. We will be working closely with the Union of B.C. Municipalities. We'll be working closely with the B.C. Water and Waste Association, which has just made a huge and valuable contribution to developing these plans up till now.

I think there's going to be lots of opportunity for input, both in terms of the regulations around the Drinking Water Protection Act and also the regulations around the groundwater act. Joyce may want to add to that.

Hon. J. Murray: A similar comment to Colin's. That's that my ministry has been working on the groundwater legislation and regulations over the past year. They have been in discussions with various groups that have an interest and have expertise and knowledge. Part of the reason to have a groundwater advisory board will be to also have another channel for public input. Again, the ministry website is a good place to look for the initiatives that we have coming forward and how to give input.

Thank you.

Hon. G. Campbell: Mike.

[10:15]

Hon. M. de Jong: It has occurred to me that our colleague Lynn Stephens has been a bit modest. I've been around here for almost ten years, and each year she and others made intensive submissions around the need for a regulatory regime of the sort we are discussing here to address something that was important ten years ago. I think it is worth noting, as we pass by the first year anniversary of when Ministers Murray and Collins and van Dongen and others took their posts, that we are now discussing the details and talking about actual implementation. I think that in many quarters there is a chorus of hallelujahs that where there have been promises – hollow promises – over the past decade, there is now action.

The question I wanted to pose relates to the fact that I have heard about the larger water systems and descriptions of the medium-sized ones that service 15 to, I think, 300 consumers and then smaller ones that involve less than 15 hookups. Within the meaning of the action plan, does a water system include an individual – a single service or single household – system?

Hon. C. Hansen: The short answer is no. The Drinking Water Protection Act will provide a regulatory framework for a water system, and a water system is defined as two or more users on the system.

Hon. G. Campbell: Bill?

Hon. B. Barisoff: Thank you, Chair.

I have a couple of questions . Of course, we all support safe drinking water, but I guess the pressures that will come to bear on your ministry, George – you have \$600 million worth of infrastructure grants that you can put out there, and whether this will increase substantially once this comes into place.... The other one is whether, with the smaller water purveyors that don't have access to the one-third, one-third grants that are available to the public users, there's a means that small water purveyors will be able to access grants or whether they're going to have to pick up these entire costs on their own. I noticed, Colin, you mentioned that a substantial amount of water purveyors out there are small users. My concern is: what happens to those people and where are the moneys going to come from?

Hon. G. Campbell: George, then Colin.

Hon. G. Abbott: Thank you.

That's an excellent question, Bill.

I think one of the best examples of how the issue could be resolved for an improvement district in the province.... When we're talking about some of the smallest water districts or water purveyors in the province, typically we're talking about improvement districts or water districts, of which I think there's about 160 remaining in the province.

Erickson, right next door to Creston, had, as Colin noted earlier, a very serious issue with water quality. What we're doing there to make Erickson use the Infrastructure Works program and the two-thirds federal-provincial funding that goes along with that is the Erickson system will be taken over by Central Kootenay regional district. The regional district has agreed to it; the folks in Erickson have agreed to it. It's a situation that will, I think, work well for everyone. They get the system they need, and they get access to those funds that they wouldn't otherwise be able to get their hands on.

Hon. B. Barisoff: With this \$600 million, the pressures that will come to bear on that amount of money – and I'm sure they'll have to increase – will that be.... Say the feds don't go into a future infrastructure program. How will that be dispersed?

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Hon. G. Abbott: The current infrastructure program that we're working with is, I think, the third of its kind. We hope that in the current infrastructure program we will be able to address, certainly, the most serious water quality issues across the province. It probably won't be the last time that water quality continues to be a compelling challenge for some communities. This is an evolving situation. The infrastructure gets older in some cases and needs to be replaced. Hopefully, we will see other incarnations of the infrastructure program. Hopefully, the federal government's commitment in this area will continue. I certainly would expect that it would.

Hon. G. Campbell: I'd just say that one of the main purposes of the consultation process we're going to go through between now and the fall is to try and determine what's the fair way of doing this. I think the other thing we have to recognize is that a lot of communities, frankly, took their drinking water for granted for a long time, and while they had a deteriorating asset in terms of their water systems and their programs, they weren't providing for the resources for them. That's a challenge we're facing not just in British Columbia; it's being faced across the country.

Last year at the Western Premiers' Conference we did call for additional resources from the federal government, but, you know, we're also calling for additional resources from the federal government for health care, and we're also calling for additional resources from the federal government for transportation systems, and I've noticed so far that the federal government doesn't have a great deal of difficulty managing their dollars down. We do have, I think, some real financial challenges that we face in terms of how you execute all of the plans we want to do in as timely a manner as possible.

I think we also have to remember this: all water does not have to be drinking water. We have, for a long, long time, said that all water is drinking water. You know, you water your lawn, you water your crops almost.... Not crops, but we are very profligate with the use of our water, and we have been in the past. I think part of this process is to educate people about their use of water, about the systems that are in place, about how you can upgrade them to maximize their benefits and how, correctly, we can share the costs.

I know in Kamloops now they're talking with their voters about resources to upgrade their drinking water system. We've got a lot of work to do with regard to that to raise people's awareness about the challenges we face. For as long as I've been involved in provincial government, we've been told by the citizens of the Fraser Valley about the challenges they face with groundwater there and how we've managed it or not managed it. I think this is an opportunity to move forward with a positive program and a strong framework where everyone understands how they're contributing to it. That's part of the process we're planning to go through, or that's been recommended here, until the fall of

this year.

Dick, Gord, Greg and then Shirley.

Hon. R. Neufeld: Thank you, Premier. Mike asked part of my question in regards to what a water system is.

Colin, I appreciate your response. I believe it's a good plan. I don't have any problem with it. I just noticed that what you're saying is that the costs will be borne by the drinking water consumers, and then you have revenue streams, and one is general taxation. Do you mean general taxation on the system? I mean, general taxation to me means general taxation. That's on page 5. That's one question.

The second part of that was the response from Minister Murray in regard to well testing. Maybe I misunderstood Minister Murray's comments when she referred to mandatory info on well drilling and mandatory testing on wells. Remembering what the Premier just said – that a lot of people drill wells and only use that water for household purposes and don't drink it – how do we get around these issues?

Another part of that is water system users being two or more users. There are a lot of farms, I would assume, in the Fraser Valley – and there are in my area and, I assume, in other parts of the province – that have dugouts for providing water. They may serve two homes, one being a farmworker and the other one the principle owner. How do we deal with all those kinds of things? I know we have to deal with it – I'm certainly not trying to say we shouldn't – but some of this stuff gets pretty technical in nature. I hope that when you go through these things, you're thinking about the differences you may come against in different parts of the province.

[10:25]

Hon. C. Hansen: I think the first point you made, with regard to the cost recovery component.... We aren't going into this process with some preconceived idea as to how cost recovery should take place. One thing is that all of these various reports that have been done flag cost recovery as the appropriate vehicle to cover the costs to government and the costs to these various systems. We will be sitting down with purveyors and with UBCM to determine what the most appropriate approach is there. General taxation certainly may work for some particular municipalities or regional districts. Again, we want to work with them on that. The first stage is to get the action plan out so that we can actually have something in the public domain that we can set down as a point of discussion.

With regard to some of the small purveyors, I think that's exactly why we want to put in that kind of flexibility. We recognize that small purveyors have unique challenges. We can't put in place the same kind of regulatory system that applies to the GVRD, with two million users, in one that has two users on a system. There is that kind of flexibility being built into the system.

I guess the bottom line is that we want to be very realistic. We want to make sure we protect human health. That is the top priority throughout all of these initiatives. We're not going to be able to protect human health vis-à-vis drinking water in small systems if we make the regulatory environment and the cost so onerous that the purveyors are going to walk away from their systems. We actually faced that last year with some small purveyors that were facing significant increases in costs around their directors' liability insurance. They realized they could no longer afford to run that system with the small number of users on the system. They went to their regional district and facilitated a voluntary amalgamation. I think there are ways that we can ensure safety and, at the same time, not have those requirements so onerous that it becomes impractical.

Hon. J. Murray: I'll respond to the part about wells – a similar comment. I mean, we can't have the same kind of process for a well for an entire community imposed on a single homeowner's well. At the same time, some of the well problems that have come to my attention that create a risk for drinking water have been those individual home systems, where in a whole area there's a number of individual homeowners' wells that are problems. Capping wells is not necessarily done in a way that protects the groundwater. We have to address it, but we also have to be flexible.

One of the things the ministry has done over the past number of months is create a well toolkit for people who are drilling wells in their area, whether it's an individual or a small community group. That's the kind of low-cost alternative we want to include in our packages – these guidelines for how you do this. We're informing and educating people. That's part of what the groundwater advisory board will be grappling with: how we protect safe drinking water at the groundwater level and with respect to wells without imposing onerous bureaucratic solutions on small homeowners.

Hon. G. Campbell: I've got Gord, Greg, Shirley, Sandy and Sindi.

Hon. G. Hogg: Thank you.

The city of White Rock is one of the large purveyors of water which, Colin, you made reference to. It is the only municipality within the GVRD that does not partake in the water system. It is a privately owned utility and, as such, I assume, is not eligible for

infrastructure grants. I'm wondering whether or not, as a privately owned utility and, I understand, the only large, privately owned utility in the province as a purveyor of water.... The water is supplied through an aquifer, through a number of wells that exist in the aquifer. It comes out of Mount Baker and comes across the international border into lower Surrey, lower Langley and across to the White Rock area.

Are there other issues that a large, privately owned utility presents in terms of issues and problems with respect to the policy you're putting forward? Does it fall in consistently with publicly held utilities and publicly held models? Should there be issues of concern which I should be triggering with respect to our community regarding these issues?

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Hon. C. Hansen: Certainly, what we are putting forward is not going to differentiate between a publicly or privately owned water system. The enforceability of health safety issues would be equally applied. Off the top of my head I can't think of any specific issues. George may want to add to that. I think we will basically be looking at water safety through a consistent lens throughout the province regardless of whether it's privately or publicly owned.

Hon. G. Campbell: Greg.

Hon. G. Halsey-Brandt: Thank you.

Just two questions. I'll address them to Colin, but you may want to refer them to someone else.

The drinking water protection officers. Most of the larger systems have virtually daily inspections of the water quality. I'm just wondering: are those officers mainly to look at the small systems throughout British Columbia? If you could just maybe comment on what their role is.

My larger question is really around community watersheds. I guess 50 or 100 years ago, when most communities developed their sources, the land was Crown land, and they put in a piping system from streams and lakes and this sort of thing. It really wasn't that much of an issue, but as Crown land has developed – either for urbanization, forestry or public recreation – we've now got potential conflict and, in some areas,

conflict in terms of land use between the communities and the Crown land that their watershed is in.

Some examples – certainly in the GVRD. Although they have a 99-year lease, the public uses the watershed for hiking and mountain biking, and I know there is a conflict. There's the Sunshine Coast, and you mentioned Port Edward, usually around logging and resource-extraction industries. Because they are provincial Crown resources and controls and the local government doesn't have any control over that sort of activity, the local government reaction, as George just mentioned, is to put in ozonization, chlorination, filtration – you know, to go to prevention downstream in terms of water quality – which is very expensive as opposed to addressing the issues that go on in their watershed. Is there going to be, through this process, a dispute resolution mechanism or something to sort out those particular issues? When you have these two different levels of government and different activities and very big dollars involved, often the communities can't get together with users of the watershed, which are generally under the control of the province, to sort that business out.

Hon. C. Hansen: Actually, I'm glad you asked that question, especially the way you phrased it, because that is exactly the crux of what this drinking water protection plan is all about – this action plan. In the past we have had these conflicting pressures put on our water sources throughout the province. There are some that would say there should be no activity at all in a watershed area that is providing drinking water. I guess, given the nature of our province, that's simply unrealistic. We're not turning the clock back 100 years and trying to pretend there can't be any kind of activity.

What we are saying, for the first time, is that there is a penultimate agency that can intervene if there is a risk to human health as a result of activity taking place at a water source. That is the Ministry of Health Services. The provincial health officer working with the medical health officers and the drinking water officers at the regional level can actually intervene if there is activity taking place in a source that is going to affect human health. You know, we will always have to rely on treatment. As I mentioned, that is sort of the multibarrier approach that has served us very well in this province. We can't assume that just protecting a source is going to produce good drinking water at the tap. We've got to have all of the other stages in there as well.

This is a first: that there is, in fact, one clearly defined lead agency to intervene should it become necessary. It is our expectation that it won't become necessary very often, but should that become the case, it ultimately would come to cabinet, and cabinet would have to ensure that human health is put as the top priority.

The other issue you mentioned was around the drinking water officers. Clearly, they will have very different roles in the different health authorities throughout the province. You take an area such as the GVRD. They would be working closely with the GVRD water systems to make sure that human health is properly protected. The role for that drinking water officer there is going to be quite different from a drinking water officer working in the Kootenays or in the Fraser Valley, for example, where it's primarily groundwater.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thanks, Greg.

Shirley, Sandy, Sindi.

[10:35]

Hon. S. Bond: Thank you, Premier.

I just wanted to comment on principle 7, which is that small systems require a flexible system with safeguards. I know that one of the significant concerns prior to the election, particularly in our constituency, was the very impact that the proposed act would have on small systems in the province. It was a big and legitimate concern, in that they simply do not have the same resources at their fingertips that the large systems do. I just wanted to say I think it's a significant statement when you say that government recognizes the need to take a different approach.

I think it's important, obviously, that there be standards, but there does need to be flexibility. I think that principle recognizes it very appropriately and just want to encourage.... Joyce has made comment about the fact that there will be input and consultation and that, in particular, people who will be impacted in terms of the small systems in the province have the ability to participate in the process, as well, because the impact will still be significant for them.

I just want to say I think that a reaction earlier, prior to the election, was significant, and I'm really pleased to see that this is a significant statement about not having a one-size-fits-all solution to this, yet we recognize the importance of standards. I appreciate that principle but would hope that people impacted in that way would certainly have an opportunity to participate.

Hon. C. Hansen: If I can comment on that.

Actually, one of the biggest complaints that we heard at about the time of the election, a year ago, from small-system operators was the imposition of the Canadian guidelines.

What we have always tested for in this province is microbacterial contamination. The Canadian guidelines also had what they referred to as schedules B and C, which included chemical and also water quality issues around appearance of the water, which were being imposed on all the water systems. The previous government actually put that into regulation, stating that all water systems had to be tested for it, and it was really quite impractical.

First of all, a lot of that testing is extremely expensive, and secondly, it's not necessary, because the Canadian guidelines really became an accumulation of all of the different measures that could be put in place across Canada. You know, in parts of British Columbia, for example, there is no need to test for a whole range of some of the chemicals, because they don't exist. They're not in our groundwater structure.

We actually reversed that decision last year on the advice of the provincial health office. They were quite clear that it would not compromise the safety of our water. They also said that it would recognize the affordability factor for a lot of these small systems. So we've already taken action to make sure that small purveyors are protected. I think that as we move forward, clearly, we want to make sure these measures are affordable for the small purveyors as well.

Hon. G. Campbell: Sandy.

Hon. S. Santori: Just a couple of questions.

I guess the first one is to George. With respect to what Bill brought up and the pressure that would be put on the infrastructure programs, how are we going to deal with communities who will inevitably be treating their water and who haven't in past? I think the Erickson situation is a perfect example, where chlorination would have met the standards. I think you're going to find more and more communities, especially smaller ones, who will object to the use of chlorination being probably a standard that would meet, I would suspect, most of the standards that will be set. In terms of moving forward and funding, what's our position on communities that don't want chlorination versus ultraviolet or filtration or other means of testing their water? I see this as a big issue.

Secondly, is the whole issue of liability on small water systems...? I'm sure you're aware that the more standards and requirements you put in, the exposure of risk becomes that much higher to these municipalities. Having been in the business and knowing what was happening to liability premiums to small communities, I would suspect this is going to make it even.... As you become more prescriptive and demand more of water system providers, the exposure of risk becomes, obviously, significantly

higher.

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Hon. G. Abbott: Thanks. Lots of tough issues there, no question about it.

I think the issue of chlorination is not a new one. It has been a controversial issue in some quarters probably for at least 30 years, or perhaps more in British Columbia. Some folks in B.C. are reluctant to see their water chlorinated. The great majority of community water systems in British Columbia certainly base their preventative measures around chlorination, but some cases – and Erickson is probably the most high-profile example of that in British Columbia currently – have been reluctant to use that method.

The cost issue is certainly an important one, no question about that. What is being implemented for Erickson and Creston is expensive relative to chlorination, but it's a cost that's going to be borne locally. Obviously, they've made a decision through referendum that they're prepared to bear an extra cost locally in order to have alternatives available to them. It's not simple or easy, no question about that.

I guess if there's a principle we hang our hat on it's that we will work with each community to try to find alternatives that meet their needs. We will try to do it in the most effective, cost-effective and efficient way possible for each of those communities.

Hon. S. Santori: Do I take it that we would fund...? I don't want to get into the details. I won't, then. I won't get into the details. Do I take it that we, as our share, will fund based on the system that will meet the needs that are required based on the regulations?

Hon. G. Abbott: Yeah.

Hon. S. Santori: Over and above that, if they want to go to a... If we start funding it, everybody's going to want the Cadillac system, and I don't think we're going to have the resources available to provide Cadillacs to every community across this province.

Hon. G. Abbott: I think that's a good point. The Cadillac, whether it's the one you drive or the one you're drinking, comes with a cost. Again, there are always exceptions here, but I think most people want to work with the best science that's available to achieve their drinking water needs in the most effective, cost-effective way possible. In the case

of Erickson, we have made a decision that we're willing to work with alternatives where communities have resolved that that's the right approach for them.

I guess the short answer to your question is yes.

Hon. G. Campbell: Could you explain the short answer, please? [Laughter.]

Colin.

Hon. C. Hansen: Just to add to that, I want to underscore that chlorination of water is safe, cost-effective and proven. I think the science is there. I certainly wouldn't want to leave this discussion with any kind of a sense that somehow there's a problem with chlorination, because there isn't. I think we have to make sure that water is safe, and chlorination is a very effective way of doing that.

I also wanted to add, with regard to your issue around the cost of liability insurance, that I had a very good meeting with officials from the B.C. Water and Waste Association a few months back, and this issue came up. They do a very good program around training and certification of operators of water systems. The insurance industry is recognizing that training. Where we have systems that are properly put together, where there is proper monitoring in place and where we have well-trained and certified operators, the insurance industry is recognizing that with reduced premiums.

Hon. G. Campbell: Sindi.

Hon. S. Hawkins: Thanks, Premier. I just wanted to make a couple of comments.

First of all, I think I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the officials in the Ministry of Health Planning worked quite hard on this committee as well.

Following on the recommendations of the Marshall report, the panel that Joyce had appointed to look at the drinking water legislation, I think this action plan builds on and reflects the majority of the recommendations from that report. They recognized it was a public health issue, and we recognize it is. They recognized that there should be a lead ministry that takes the lead, and I support Health Services as being that lead ministry. They also looked at finding a way or a mechanism to make sure there was a vehicle for ensuring safe drinking water. I think this action plan basically reflects that we have a very strong existing framework of expertise and resources out there in the way of our provincial health officer, our medical health officer, and it builds on it with some of the other mechanisms and recommendations that this action plan provides.

Along with Mike – I know we've been talking about it for ten years – I support this. I say let's get on with it.

Hon. G. Campbell: I just want to sum this up. I think what we're saying is that our primary public policy objective is to protect human health. If we look at protecting human health, that is the provincial government's role, our job, our responsibility. We will set standards that make sure that public health is met.

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I'm going back to your question a little bit, Sandy. There is balance here. If there is a choice between protecting public health and having a local community spending another five or six years figuring out what they're going to do before they even start dealing with that, the answer is that we're going to protect public health, and we'll have some responsibilities to do that. You have to create a framework that local communities are working within, and the framework is obviously financial. It's obviously looking at the overall socioeconomic impact of a lot of the discussions that are taking place. That's one of the things that's here.

You know, if you think about it, water is critical. It's the web of life, the water system that we've got. The river systems, the watersheds and all of those things are critical for whatever activities are taking place on the land base. To focus on public health, to bring communities in so that they can help build towards a more productive, cost-effective, sensible and responsive water system is, I think, going to be important as we go through the next few months.

Obviously, finances are part of that. We should not kid ourselves that this is somehow free. It does cost, and communities are going to be included in those costs as we look forward to trying to create the kind of water that their citizens want. The other day I was reading a comment from someone who said: "I have no more money. Why doesn't the government pay for this?" The government only has money that citizens have, so if citizens are making choices for different kinds of approaches, different responses in different communities, I think we should encourage that, but we have to be clear about what the consequences of that are as well.

We have a recommendation here which takes us through both the summer to fall 2002 and post-fall 2002. The recommended option is that we approve the process for the

drinking water action plan, that we approve the further examination in coming months, in consultation with key stakeholders, of cost recovery options to fund the short-term costs associated with the implementation of the action plan and that we approve ongoing evaluation and assessment of the long-term infrastructure investment needs as the drinking water action plan is implemented.

Any concerns about that? Amendments? It's approved. Thank you very much.

The next item on the agenda is a quick Olympic update from Ted.

For Information: 2010 Olympics

Hon. T. Nebbeling: Thank you, Premier.

Today it is my great pleasure to give cabinet an update on our bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympics and Winter Paralympics in Vancouver and Whistler. I can, first of all, report that Treasury Board recently gave its approval to fund the games' infrastructure.

As you know, our government, along with the federal government, has announced a \$620 million commitment – \$310 million from the provincial government and \$310 million from the federal government. This is obviously a tremendous boost to the bid, as it not only shows the strong partnership that has been developed between the provincial and federal governments on this project, but it also showed that the bid is considered a solid investment of tax dollars in this province.

I recognize \$620 million is a big number by anyone's terms, and I'm sure British Columbians would want to know what we are getting for that investment. Our stated goal is to leave legacies in communities throughout the province, and our bid plan to date aims very much to achieve that goal. Our government, in the bid, has made clear commitments to use venues that already exist – and that is a cost saver – and build where there is a future requirement in the community. Estimates – everything from engineering to architecture – are still being developed for all the venues and infrastructure, but we will work within the \$620 million available.

There are three envelopes that will be covered during this infrastructure process. The first envelope is the upgrading and renovation of buildings and facilities. Some examples are the Pacific Coliseum and the Agrodome in Vancouver, which will be the venue for figure skating and training during the Olympics. The second envelope is the development of new venues required to host the games. These will also become legacies for the region, for the province and for the country towards the development of

sports and opportunities for communities to provide sports activities prior to and after the Olympics.

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One good example of new infrastructure required is the Nordic centre in the Callaghan Valley, which will be the site for the ski jumps and the Nordic events. This facility will continue after the Olympics as a training centre for athletes from all over Canada, and we would expect international athletes as well. One of the really exciting components of the infrastructure package is the regional Olympic life sites. These will be new facilities built in regions throughout British Columbia. They will be used during the games as sites where communities can come together to enjoy the Olympic spirit and, through visual participation, really feel that they're involved with the games. After the games these facilities will become sites for other community activities. That, again, is part of the legacy.

We do recognize that some of these facilities will require ongoing costs, so part of the \$620 million is a \$110 million fund that will become a legacy endowment. This fund will make available funding for the facilities that are in the legacy envelope so that the taxpayers will not have to pick up the cost after the games for maintenance and operation of these facilities. That's a very important part. We make a commitment that that will not become a burden down the road on the taxpayers of these communities where these buildings will be created.

The bid is also acting as a catalyst to advance future infrastructure projects such as the convention centre, the Sea to Sky Highway and the downtown to airport transit link. The Minister of Competition, Science and Enterprise will talk about the convention centre after I'm finished. I quickly mention the Sea to Sky Highway. The Minister of Transportation is still actively in dialogue with the communities throughout the Sea to Sky corridor and Vancouver in order to come up with a solution to the really badly needed upgrade of this road. She will, no doubt, make further presentations once conclusions have been reached on how this will happen.

As I said, Minister Rick Thorpe will make a presentation on the convention centre.

That leaves the Richmond-airport-Vancouver rapid transit project. In February 2002 the provincial government indicated its intent to seek funding for the line from the federal government as a 2010 Olympic legacy. This project is already financially supported by the province, by the Airport Authority, by TransLink and by the private sector. Bringing in the federal government would make it truly a project of all the partners that are involved

in the Olympic vision. The Richmond-airport-Vancouver rapid transit project is an opportunity to increase capacity in this extremely busy corridor in an environmentally sustainable way and without the need for an additional bridge that otherwise may have to be considered for that traffic corridor. It's an economically efficient option. It's very good for the whole region and supports the busy Vancouver airport, which I think is, again, another plus.

In the end it all comes down to economic sustainability. Jobs are what will support social infrastructure. Jobs are what make up a strong economy. The economic impact study, completed by the staff of the Competition, Science and Enterprise ministry and reviewed by the private sector consultants and the B.C. Business Council, showed that an expanded convention centre in Vancouver, combined with hosting the games and an all-out coordinated effort of the partners in the business and tourism sectors, could result in 228,000 additional jobs. It would create \$10 billion in economic growth, and this would lead to \$2.5 billion in additional tax income for all forms of governments. This study makes a compelling case that the bid is an excellent investment. It demonstrates that an investment in these games will lead to tangible benefits for decades to come.

We are still not there. There is still a long way to go before the decision is made on the host city for 2010. Let me quickly give you some dates to watch for. We've already introduced the bid questionnaire that was submitted to the IOC on May 31. The questionnaire had 22 questions that were asked of all the competing cities. From these answers the IOC will choose a number of cities that will be put on the shortlist. Up to this moment there are three to four cities. I believe we are okay as far as feeling very optimistic about our chance of being on the shortlist. We will know this by August 29. That is the next important date to remember.

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The bid book that will be prepared and is being prepared must be completed by October 1. The requirement of government's guarantees and commitments is a very important part for consideration by the IOC. The inclusion of the convention centre and the transportation links, again, are a big part of that bid book. That book will be delivered on January 10, 2003, to the IOC. Then we all have to wait until July 2, which is the big day for the announcement of which city will, indeed, be the host for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games.

As I said, we're in the running. We have high hopes. We still have a lot of work to do,

Mr. Premier, and the team, completely together, is working towards that goal.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you.

Rick.

Hon. R. Thorpe: Thank you, Premier, and thanks, Ted.

As Ted mentioned, an expanded convention centre is a key component of our bid to host the Olympics. I'm pleased to report today that we've reached a successful conclusion to the first phase of our request for expressions of interest in a public-private partnership for the development and operation of an expanded Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Today I'm going to announce the preferred proponent that the province and the federal government will invite to negotiate with and to complete a term sheet. Before I announce that proponent, I would first like to extend my personal thanks and, if I may, Premier, the thanks of the government to the six consortiums that put forward a great deal of thought and effort in their submissions and responses to our request for expressions of interest. I want to thank each of these groups for showing their confidence in British Columbia as a place to do business. Those groups were Aecon Group Inc., Bouygues Bâtiment Canada Inc., Bentall Capital Limited Partnership, Ledcor Construction Ltd., RG Properties Ltd. and SNC Lavalin Inc.

Evaluation of the submission was conducted by a committee composed of two senior officials appointed by the federal government, two senior provincial government officials and one industry representative from the tourism sector. That representative was Mr. Peter Armstrong. I would particularly like to thank Mr. Armstrong for his participation and contribution to the work of this committee. Peter represented the tourism industry in his capacity as chair of the industry task force on the convention centre expansion. Premier and colleagues, I would like to thank all of those in the provincial tourism industry who have worked so very, very hard and have contributed so very, very much in making us arrive at the place we are today. They remain committed to building British Columbia.

The evaluation committee was supported by three technical teams composed of private-public sector experts in finance, risk issues, design and construction issues and operation and management issues. In all, 22 individuals participated in the technical examination of these six submissions, so I can tell you that they were comprehensively analyzed before the evaluation committee ranked them and eventually brought forward their recommendation.

The results of the evaluation and ranking and the recommendation to proceed to the next stage with the preferred proponent was presented to Treasury Board on an anonymous basis. Treasury Board was not told the identity of the preferred proponent nor the ranking by name of the other proponents to ensure that the selection process was open, fair and transparent for all involved, so what I'm about to say will be news to my colleagues here in this room as well as the viewing public. We will invite the Bentall Capital team to enter negotiations for development and operation of expanded convention facilities. Of the six submissions, Bentall's submission ranked the highest for the province's objective of minimizing risks and maximizing the benefits to taxpayers and British Columbia's economy for this expansion project.

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Our objective now is to reach an agreement with Bentall, the federal government and the industry as quickly as possible on a term sheet or memorandum of understanding setting out how the project will be financed, developed, owned, managed and operated. This term sheet will then form the backbone of the public-private partner contract, subject to the satisfaction of this cabinet and the federal cabinet. We will see the project built and operational in time for the 2010 Olympic Games.

Mr. Premier, our ministry looks forward to completing the negotiations and getting on with bringing an expanded convention centre to British Columbia.

Thank you.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you, Rick. Any questions?

Okay, there's one other item on the agenda for decision, and that is with regard to restructuring of victims services programs for British Columbia.

Rich.

For Decision: Victims Services

Hon. R. Coleman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Just before I start, I would like to thank my colleague Lynn Stephens, the Minister of State for Women's Equality, for her insight and input as we move forward through the review of victims programs.

My ministry has undertaken a review of our victims services programs with the goals of maintaining funding and making services available to as many communities as possible across the province. This review was needed to deal with inconsistencies and overlap that resulted from the ad hoc funding and decisions of the past. We want to make sure that our victims services meet the needs of those who use them and that as many victims of crime as possible have access to help and support, no matter where they live in British Columbia. I think we have accomplished these goals. We have come up with a plan to increase the number of British Columbians who can easily access victims services in their communities, and we propose to establish a comprehensive funding formula for organizations providing victims services.

First, some background. We currently provide \$9.3 million to 148 programs that give practical help and emotional support to victims of crime, provide information about the justice system and victims' individual cases and give referrals to other services. Last year approximately 670 volunteers in 79 police-based programs helped 81,000 victims, and 260 volunteers in 69 community-based programs helped 49,000 victims.

The programs are operated by local non-profit agencies and police departments and detachments. Police-based programs are connected with local police departments and provide support to victims affected by all types of crime as well as to accident victims. Community-based programs are more specialized. Some serve populations like aboriginal communities or multicultural groups. Others focus on particular kinds of crime such as sexual assault or family violence.

These programs and their funding have developed on an ad hoc basis. There are no consistent criteria applied to communities that are seeking funding for victims services from this ministry. This has meant that communities have not been treated equally. Some have no victims programs, while others have multiple programs that provide overlapping services.

Our goal is to increase access, consistency and efficiency of victims programs in every community in British Columbia. We want to fund new and enhanced programs where they are most needed. We are committed to ensuring that communities currently served by a program will continue to have access to victims services.

We have maintained our overall budget of \$9.3 million for victims services. We have developed new formulas for funding police-based programs and community-based programs. The formulas will determine the appropriate amount of funding for individual communities and will make sure that funding is equitable across the province. They will also make funding decisions open, transparent and easy to understand.

There will be three categories of victims services offered:

1. Police-based programs. Funding will be based on the number of police officers assigned to a detachment or department. Because police strength is determined by various factors like population, crime rates and geography, we are confident that it is a sound basis for deciding the right level of victims services. The exception to this formula is urban areas with populations over 300,000. In these areas, victims services programs will be based on population.

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Services will be offered in all communities that have four or more police officers. The result is that 18 communities will get new victims services programs. These are Alexis Creek, Armstrong, Bella Bella, Enderby, Fraser Lake, Golden, Kaslo, Keremeos, Kimberley, Lake Country, Lumby, Midway, Nelson, outer Gulf Islands, Shawnigan Lake, Sicamous, the university endowment lands and Valemount-McBride

2. A new crisis line will be established to provide telephone crisis services to victims of family and sexual violence, 24 hours per day, seven days per week, across the province of British Columbia. Every British Columbian will have round-the-clock access to services in an integrated manner.

3. Community-based programs. Funding for community-based programs will be related to population. Communities over 20,000 will be eligible for funding. We will retain existing aboriginal and multicultural programs, using the same funding formula as all community-based programs. Some existing community-based programs will be consolidated. The comprehensive funding formulas will make victim services available to as many communities as possible. New programs will be established in Burnaby-New Westminister, the Fraser Valley, Langley, North Vancouver-West Vancouver, Richmond-Delta and Surrey.

Mr. Premier, we have made a commitment to maintain victims programs funding at \$9.3 million annually. We have enhanced the program to make services to victims much more accessible by allocating \$3.6 million for police-based programs, \$400,000 for a new crisis line and \$5.3 million for community-based programs. These changes will ensure that programs are distributed fairly across the province, and they will address both the inconsistencies and duplication that previously existed within programs and communities. We expect the new police-based programs to be operational later this

year. The new community-based programs should be up and running by February next year, and the new crisis line will be established by April of next year.

Premier, having seen the work of both the paid and volunteer sectors of victim services in this province and balancing the changes to victims programs at the court level, I believe we have done an exceptional job of striking a balance of service and access. It is my own wish that there would never be a victim of crime in this province. Unfortunately, there is, and that is not the case. Hence, this government's commitment to victims programs continues and is enhanced.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you, Rich.

Lynn, followed by Geoff.

Hon. L. Stephens: Thank you, Premier.

This is a very good morning for me. First of all, we're dealing with groundwater legislation and now victim services. I wanted just to say that I think that in terms of the reallocation of victim services, Rich has done an exceptional job here. I was happy to have an opportunity to review and provide some advice on some of the changes he was considering.

The expansion of the police-based programs is, I think, extremely important for a lot of communities around the province, certainly for women and children who are trying to deal with family violence. The new crisis line, I think, is going to be very worthwhile, particularly for the more rural and remote parts of the province, where a lot of these services aren't available. I really want to say that the accessibility of the services, which has been expanded, closing some of the gaps, and also the consolidation of services, where it's appropriate, dealing with the duplication and the overlaps and the more accurate distribution of the funding are going to serve women and children well in the province. The changes really should contribute significantly to the safety and security of women in all parts of our province.

I think the changes here certainly have been needed, and I think they're going to go a long way to addressing some of these significant problems we face in the communities around the province for women and children.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thanks, Lynn.

Geoff.

Hon. G. Plant: Thanks, Premier. I also want to speak in favour of this proposal and to express my appreciation to Rich for the work he's done here.

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As you know, one of the aspects of the service plan of the Ministry of the Attorney General required the elimination of the Crown victim witness service program. One of the things I like about this proposal, which I think we talked about working towards, was to expand the community-based program mandate to require the provision of court support services, which I hope will mean that some of the gap that has been left by the elimination of the Crown victim service program will be filled by community-based programs.

Are you able to say any more about what you think might happen there, Rich?

Hon. R. Coleman: Well, actually, Geoff, I am, but it's actually a combination in discussions with the RCMP and some of the jurisdictions where the court-based programs were removed, particularly where they're already close to a court. They felt if we can enhance some of their funding, they would be able to pick up that slack. We have enhanced the funding to those police-based programs in those particular locations in addition to where we have identified. Where some of the communities haven't had community-based programs, they would also be able to do that. It's an across-the-board mandate. We didn't isolate it just down to the community-based level.

Hon. G. Plant: In general terms, though, the hope is that there would be, through the new program that you have outlined here, an ability to ensure that victims also get assistance through the court process in some of the ways that were done by the Crown victim service program in the past.

Hon. R. Coleman: Yeah, in some of the ways, because as you know, there was a lot of duplication and overlap between the competing types of victim services, where we would actually have trouble even on the pass over and loss of continuity between one victim service worker who may have built a good relationship with a victim who is then cut off and handed over to a court victim service worker. The intent here is to have a more seamless operation.

Hon. G. Campbell: Kevin.

Hon. K. Falcon: Rich, I want to commend you, too, on this. A couple of things jumped out for me. One is that there were almost a thousand volunteers involved in some volunteer services for victims of crime. I thought that was tremendous. I can see the direction you're moving is to strengthen and reinforce that.

The other thing that I very much appreciated was that the smaller communities across this province are going to now have access to services they never had before. In the larger urban centres you often have, as you were saying, multiple – in many cases, duplicative – services being provided, and in many of the smaller communities you have none. I appreciate you taking note of that and dealing with it. I think that's a very, very big improvement.

Hon. R. Coleman: Kevin, if I might add to that, I actually patrolled a detachment of 1,040 square miles with four members of the RCMP many years ago, when I was much younger and much slimmer. The one thing I think about back then is the lack of support to those officers in that difficult, large geographical area. I think this is a real boon for small detachments and smaller communities, simply for the fact that they can build a volunteer-based community service with their victims program that can back up their local police as far as dealing with some of these issues, given the stresses they have with large geographical areas.

I think it's an important aspect, and I know the deputy commissioner of the RCMP does too, because we've had numerous conversations as we've come through this process relative to that.

Hon. G. Campbell: Great.

Linda.

Hon. L. Reid: Thanks, Premier.

I, too, want to lend my support to this initiative. I am absolutely committed to the notion that if we can provide safe and secure environments for babies and young children, it will determine the quality of the society in which we live, no question about that. The fact that you've done it – and I think in an incredibly timely way – and that this is one of the projects that I think needed ongoing attention over the past decade.... I take my hat off. I think you've done an absolutely fabulous job, and I thank you very, very much.

Hon. G. Campbell: Ted.

Hon. T. Nebbeling: Just quickly. Rich, the crisis line, which I think is just a tremendous tool – that it will be available provincewide. There are today, of course, a number of organizations that on 24 hours a day give their services. One of the bigger ones is the crisis line from Abbotsford. They actually cover a fair amount of trade. Is there any thought of incorporating these organizations in a network? How do you see the base where the information is to be had by people who need advice and consultation? How do you see that working?

Hon. R. Coleman: Well, Ted, there are a number of differing kinds of lines that are operating in the province. Some of them are as simple as a voice recording where the voice mail is checked every two hours or so to see if somebody's phoned in. In others there are some crisis lines. The intent here is to do an RFP to consolidate the services and work with the community groups to come up with a solution. That's why it's April of 2003.

[11:15]

In addition to that, part of that was proposed by Richard Lee, who is one of our MLAs, yesterday when we were having a discussion about something else. He mentioned that if crisis lines were going to be considered, we would want to make sure that they also had the language issues in and around some of our communities that have that issue. That is also part of our intent within that proposal: that those language services would be available to those people. I think that's a project we're going to walk through the next number of months to make sure we coordinate it well.

Hon. T. Nebbeling: I just want to say that I admire you for putting so much focus on making this happen. I think it is extremely important for many people who often, in crisis, don't know where to turn. To have a toll-free number available anywhere in this province is tremendous. I certainly also appreciate that part of the initiative you have launched today incorporates the broad knowledge base and expertise that is already in our communities and incorporates that in how these programs will be developed over time. My compliments and my congratulations.

Hon. G. Campbell: Gulzar.

Hon. G. Cheema: Premier, I also wanted to say thank you to Rich for being sensitive and being very inclusive. I think this is something that was of concern to me. While I was in part of the campaign, there was a concern expressed about having the services available in their own language and that people can be more comfortable talking to somebody who will understand those things. Rich and Lynn both have been very

supportive. I want to say thank you. I think the community will be well served. This is something they'll be very appreciative of.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you very much.

I'll take from those comments that the recommendations are approved. The meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

The cabinet adjourned at 11:16 a.m.

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