

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Carolyn Bertram

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: (Indistinct).

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to the gallery. I do want to mention a couple of things.

I had the opportunity to attend a great event last night, as it was the 100th anniversary of the Women's Institute in the Province of Prince Edward Island. Great organization. They do great volunteer work across our province and I want to wish them all the best over the next 100 years.

The other night, obviously, it was a big loss in PEI with the Rocket losing, but I think they had a great season, and we want to wish them all the best in the future, and hopefully they'll have bigger and better runs into the future.

Last night was also a good sporting event for Prince Edward Island and for Summerside. The Storm advanced to the next round of the playoffs and we want to take this opportunity to wish the Storm all the best as they move on in the next round of their playoffs.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's my pleasure to stand in the House today and welcome everybody to watch us here on a Wednesday, those that are in the gallery and those that follow along at home, via EastLink or the Internet.

I'd like to take special note of a couple of guests we have here today: Bridget Cairns,

she's the executive director of the PEI Association of Community Living, and with her is Jen Gosley and she's a digital media intern for the PEI Association for Community Living. I want to welcome them here today. I hope you all enjoy the proceedings.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to take the opportunity to rise and welcome everyone into the gallery today. We've got a good crowd in today.

Also, I would like to offer my deepest condolences to the family of Richard 'Dick' Green from Sherwood. Dick passed away suddenly on Sunday and Dick was an extremely active member of the Parkdale-Sherwood Lions Club. I know Dick will be greatly missed in the community.

As well, I'd like to take a moment and say hello to Sherwood resident Bob Craswell. Bob is at home recovering from some health issues he had this winter. Didn't have a very good winter this past winter, but Bob has things back on track now and he's looking very forward to live racing getting started at the Red Shores Racetrack & Casino. He did want me to pass along that he was very pleased with the level of service that he received at the QEH and nothing but high praise for everybody over there.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to welcome Mike Redmond here today, the leader of the NDP. As well as Mike, we also have Wendy up in the gallery with us today. I'm sure everybody remembers meeting Wendy a number of times, as certainly a great advocate for all

Islanders and especially people on fixed incomes. I'd also like to say hello to Kenneth who is with us too, from the Brain Injury Association.

Finally, I'd like to say congratulations to a young man and a friend, Jack Perry from Tignish, who was actually athlete of the year. He comes from a great mom, Brenda; great grandmother, Bernie; grandfather, Roy; he has a wonderful brother Ben; and actually has a father that sits in this House with us.

Have a great day. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

Mr. Greenan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Just to follow up what the Premier had mentioned. Yes, last night the Summerside Storm made it to the finals of the National Basketball League and they go up against the London Lightning in the best of five game series, and the first two are in London this weekend. Game three is in Summerside Wednesday, May 10th and game four, if necessary, will be in Summerside on Friday, May 12th. I invite all Islanders to get their tickets and we'll see you at the games.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I welcome everyone back today, especially those in the gallery and everyone watching on EastLink.

Eastern Kings lost another great lady this morning. Kay MacIsaac passed away March 31st with a long courageous battle of Parkinson's. Kay was not only a great wife, a great mother, a great grandmother, she was an author of six books of the Eastern Kings area. She will be well missed, her books will be well missed and her writing. I'd like to pass on my condolences to her husband and her family.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to welcome all those up in the public gallery there, as well as all those that are home watching on EastLink in the beautiful District of Alberton-Roseville.

I'd also like to offer congratulations to my own son. Drew won the geography challenge and he'll be representing PEI at the national level for the grade 9 geography challenge.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome all members to the gallery. I'd especially like to welcome Ronnie McPhee, a member of my constituency and the vice-president of the young Liberals. Welcome to the gallery, Ronnie, I hope you enjoy the proceedings in the House today.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Jessica Gallant

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Recently it was announced who will be in the role of the kindred spirit Diana Barry, Anne's consummate best friend, at the Charlottetown Festival this upcoming season. It will be PEI's very own Jessica Gallant, which marks her first appearance on the festival main stage.

In a recent news release from the Confederation Centre of the Arts, Gallant said: I have always wanted to delve into the world of Avonlea since I was a child. I am ecstatic to learn more about Diana and bring some of the Island to the role. As well, to be working with such an amazing cast and production crew is a dream come true.

Jessica is the daughter of Allan and Darlene Gallant of Ten Mile House, and she is currently studying at Sheridan College, and has spent two seasons performing with the Confederation Centre Young Company. Jessica has also appeared on national television this past fall singing the Canadian and American anthems at the Toronto Blue Jays' games. Gallant will also be cross-cast in Evangeline this festival season.

I am sure my colleagues would like to join me in congratulating PEI's own Jessica Gallant in her upcoming role as Diana Barry.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

LEAP

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is always nice to acknowledge our seniors and their contribution to society and our communities.

Recently during the month of March, the Learning Elders Arts Program, also known as LEAP, wrapped up their winter projects. The LEAP program is held in a social setting during the winter months where seniors are more likely to be isolated.

LEAP is also a project-based initiative designed to provide Island seniors with the opportunity to learn various artistic discipline from local artists. LEAP is based on the belief that the arts greatly enhance the lives of our seniors, and honestly, who doesn't want to do that?

The longer our seniors live an enriching life, the more beautiful life becomes. In my district, seniors hosted a rug-hooking art

display featuring rugs created by the Mont Carmel seniors at Le Club d'Âge d'or Mont Carmel. A special thanks to instructor Claudette McNeil who guided our seniors in this endeavour.

As well in late March, at the Silver Maple Seniors Club in Miscouche, they celebrated an open house displaying some great paintings by Miscouche seniors with the help of painter Lynn Gaudet, who I would also like to extend a special thank you for her contribution of sharing her talent and expertise.

Anyone who continues to learn stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young, and what better way to keep our seniors young but to offer such a wonderful program to them, which it only enriches their lives but ours as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

4-H 100th Anniversary

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

From a collection of the small clubs in Ohio and Minnesota with such names as the Tomato Club and the Corn Growing Club, 4-H has grown into an international organization with a well-earned reputation.

Two thousand and thirteen marks the 100th anniversary of this organization here in Canada, and as such, I want to stand and recognize its achievements. As I'm sure the members of House and many Islanders know, 4-H is one of the most common youth organizations for people between the ages of eight and 21.

Members can take programs that teach them expertise in many activities from learning about the fisheries, money management, gardening and, most famously, various aspects of agriculture and livestock raising. Above all, though, members of 4-H clubs learn to dedicate their heads, hearts, hands and health to their club, to their community and to the country.

From the five PEI 4-H districts of West Prince, Summerside, Charlottetown, Montague and Souris, many young Islanders have taken advantage of these programs and have gained crucial leadership and life experience as a result, 4-H runs many conferences and exchanges specifically in order to give its young members such experiences. Members can travel on 4-H sponsored exchanges and 4-H runs conferences all over Canada and the US, as well as some international opportunities.

I'd like to honour this wonderful organization by reciting the 4-H pledge: I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community my country, and my world.

Madam Speaker, these are words to live by, and I hope, at the very least, that everyone would try to incorporate at least one of these goals into their daily lives.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Reponses to Questions Taken as Notice

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Testori Americas (various)

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday in conversation in the House here with respect to Testori and TMC, I was asked if I would be able to table the purchase agreement in the House, and the answer is no, that agreement is – there's third-party involvement, and that would be subject to a FOIPP request.

I was also asked: Did the government pay a tax bill in the US and what the date of that bill was? I can say the date of that bill was paid was January 11th, 2013. Property taxes were paid once for one year, and I'd like to table a copy of those taxes here today.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: Madam Speaker, I was also asked whether or not the company has filed a business plan.

The company has provided a business plan, financial statements, and projections of the company going into the future.

I'd also like to comment on one other comment that was made, and I quote. This comment was by the interim leader of the opposition: "There were some shady dealings here.... We know the senior officials with Testori and TMC are subject to a RICO case in California. That's a racketeering and corruption case in California." Testori, TMC Avion, they're not the subject of a court proceeding under the RICO statutes in California. They're a plaintiff in an ongoing case involving –

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Roach: So, Madam Speaker, I guess the point that I want to raise on that, I think it's very dangerous to the reputation of a company –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Roach: Madam Speaker, I think it's very dangerous to the reputation of a company, where they are supporting 140 employees in rural Prince Edward Island, to kind of put that out there when it's totally an unacceptable statement to make, and I'm glad that we were able to come here today and clarify that statement.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Plan B

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I have a question for the transportation minister. Can he please give us an update on the Plan B project?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, the update on the Plan B project is it will proceed as soon as the frost is out of the ground.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister give us the figures for the provincial and federal funding parts to Plan B this year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, could he repeat the question?

I couldn't hear him there.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm wondering could you provide for us the figures, both the federal part and the provincial part, that will be spent on Plan B this year.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, we know the opposition are against safe highways in our province.

I think we heard that last night here on the floor of the House when the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road called it a curve in the road.

We on this side of the House, we take our highway infrastructure seriously. We invest in it, and we also invest in things like school buses for our children, which the hon. member, when his party was in power, they didn't do that. We also invest in manors so

our seniors wouldn't have to wear hard hats when they come into their senior homes.

Madam Speaker, our government stands by its record and we'll stick to that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Perhaps the minister here will be reading from a statement tomorrow, like his seatmate there, updating me on the actual details on this.

Capital work projects

This minister's getting \$9.4 million from the feds for cost-shared transportation-infrastructure projects this year. Minister, outside of Plan B all federal monies are committed in your capital work plan. Will you list your projects for us?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, our budget will be coming to the floor and it'll be a great opportunity to ask questions on our budget when that comes to the floor.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Infrastructure projects and cost-shared funding

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister of transportation explain to the House here, then, how cost-shared funding for infrastructure projects work when you deal with the Government of Canada?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, infrastructure programs, depending on the project, are different.

But the hon. member, if you have an exact (Indistinct) question on the alignment, on

what you're really looking for, be a little more precise.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question to the minister: Are you spending \$9.4 million this year in federal cost-share infrastructure dollars on infrastructure projects in the province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Mr. Vessey: Madam Speaker, I don't have all that at my fingertips, but I'll bring back what we have scheduled for this construction season, I'll bring it back and table it if I can.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Capital Budget and Budget figures

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Capital Budget that was tabled here last fall states that in the Capital Estimates there is \$14 million in revenue and \$84 million in expenditures in the Capital Budget. That's a \$69.5 million deficit. I have the Capital Budget right here, you tabled it here last fall.

This Budget here that the finance minister tabled here last week shows estimated program expenditures at \$1.4 billion. The Budget also has a line for restate of capital revenue that's \$14 million.

Will the Premier explain how the same revenue appears both in this book and in this book?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

With regard to the capital revenue being restated in the book that was just published

last week, capital revenues under the new policy with regards to PSAB, our Public Sector Accounting Board, means that we have to account for all capital spends within the same fiscal year that they are billed.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Now, I think this government needs to stop being so sneaky. Last fall in their Capital Budget the government stated that they had \$14 million in revenue. That's fine. It's in the book. But this minister, now this year, he reprinted the same \$14 million in revenue just to make his deficit numbers look better. He took revenue already accounted for and passed in this very House and he put it in this year's Budget to make himself look better.

Question to the Premier: Can you please explain how revenue magically made your capital deficit and your program deficit look rosier?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, the opposition leader is mistaking two categories of spend here.

When we talk about capital spend it's one issue. It's outside in capital spending. What we're talking about here in this number that he's stating inside this year's operating Budget – these two budgets are very different. Inside the operating budget, we have to account now, due to PSAB rules, for capital revenues in the years that they are expended. Can't be amortized out over the entire project time.

This year, inside the operating Budget, it's restated there, and that's what the opposition leader's speaking of.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It amazes me how this government continues to find ways to invent revenues for themselves to make their deficit look better than it really actually is. Meanwhile they introduce the biggest tax grab in the history of Prince Edward Island. The Premier admitted here last week to that. Fees and services have gone up right across the board in this province, and they increased the small business tax, which is a major hurt to small businesses in this province. Their spending is completely out of control and they're not being honest about any of it.

Question to the Premier: Why is your treasurer not being honest with Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much.

I'm very happy to say, Madam Speaker, that we've delivered seven budgets here in the Province of Prince Edward Island, six now without including the most recent one. Out of those six, five, I believe, the provincial treasurer actually beat his targets.

In fact, even just this past budget year, it was noted yesterday by CIBC that Prince Edward Island met its budget targets. In fact, I'm going to quote from CIBC. They said that: PEI managed to hit its budget target for 2012-2013, a rare feat in Canada given the global economic weakness of Canada.

So I want to congratulate our minister of finance for being so accurate with his numbers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You aim so low, it's hard not to congratulate him for what he's done for your children and my children by saddling them with this great debt that they'll never be able to pay. You should congratulate him. We all should congratulate him because he's done a terrible job.

This government loves to play the blame game. It looks like this time that we probably caught them in a fast one. Take, for example – if the money the government got for Plan B was not spent on Plan B, apparently this treasurer believes that he could use the money to pay for social services programs.

Question to the Premier: Will you admit that this is nothing more than smoke and mirrors accounting?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: No.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This government operates as truth deniers, as the Premier shows us here. The treasurer's magic money seems to appear in two places in two books. The program budget looks pretty cooked at this point. This year's estimate Budget deficit target is reported at \$59 million. However, if I remove the \$14 million in revenue that we've already accounted for twice now, this is the second time, if we accounted for that, the true deficit would be \$74 million.

Question to the Premier: Why is your government hiding the truth from Islanders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: That's not true. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition should get a better researcher with regards to what goes on in the budget. Obviously, we have the Auditor General who checks these numbers out on a yearly basis, Madam Speaker.

Last year we were able to beat our financial targets based on the revised budget estimates, and then this year our number's \$59 million. Like I indicated, out of the last six years, our minister of finance has been able to beat expectations five out of the six times. CIBC has noted how we are a rarity within Canada for meeting our budget targets.

Obviously, every province in Canada, including the federal government, is currently running a deficit situation with the exception of Saskatchewan. We're on a plan to make sure that we get our budget balanced by 2015-2016. I want to congratulate the provincial treasurer on the great job that he's doing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

FEMA minister's figures

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will the treasurer explain to the House why he has tried to mislead Islanders by cooking his books so badly?

Speaker: Hon. member, I'd ask that word not to be – there's an unparliamentary word there not to be used.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It is too bad that the opposition would ever pick on the Auditor General's reports in this kind of fashion. There's a professional staff that prepares these budgets and they would never, ever restate numbers in a budget book that puts their reputation on the line.

Leader of the Opposition: They did.

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, these are all within the public sector accounting board's changes that are restated.

Every single one of the provinces in Canada has made these changes. It is not something that Prince Edward Island would ever dream up.

It's very clear that all they have to do is take their researcher back, sit with the Auditor General, check out PSAB rules and you'll see very clearly that this is exactly what has to be done inside our restatement.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Not even the HST, the biggest tax grab in Island history, as quoted again by the Premier last week, could save this treasurer and his financial mismanagement.

Will the treasurer explain how he missed his three-year target for this year by not \$25 million but in fact \$40 million?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Very quickly with that, we did not miss our target at all this year. In fact, we bettered it.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This treasurer was off his target by over double for this year. What an embarrassing display by the treasurer. Will the treasurer stop the suspense and give us his excuses – again, he's great with excuses – as to why he missed his target by \$40 million?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Again, Madam Speaker, we beat our target again this year.

As the Premier said, six out of the seven budgets have produced a record that I'm very proud of. When we look back at the previous administration, those that sit in the same seats that they did, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven – seven years out of the 11 best years in the history of Canada, in the history of Prince Edward Island –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Sheridan: – including two of the largest deficits in history, no questions asked, \$125 million one year and \$83 million, one on either side of an election, Madam Speaker.

Those are the two largest deficits in the history of the province. May I point out that they are the two best economic years that Prince Edward Island has ever seen.

When we have gone through the five toughest years in the economy since the 1930s, we have done some great things for Prince Edward Island and we make no bones about it. We went into stimulus spending and we improved Prince Edward Island's infrastructure at the same time stimulating this economy. Stimulating it to the point where Prince Edward Island is the only jurisdiction in North America that did not suffer a downward spiral. In fact, we had slow, moderate gains each and every year of that five-year period.

No other province can state that. We're very proud of that record. Now, as we move forward into the future, the three-year plan that everyone calls credible that will bring Prince Edward Island back to a balanced budget, and we'll move very clearly on our path of building education and health care here in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Since we're having a little history lesson by the treasurer, let's try some accurate history. Last year this treasurer said in his three-year plan that his deficit would be \$34 million. Well, we know that's not true. It's restated as \$59 million, and now we know that it's actually \$74 million.

This treasurer needs to have initials after his name, and that would be CA, and I'm not saying chartered accountant, I'm saying creative accountant. Will the treasurer admit that this confirms his inability to properly manage books, exposing his dismal fiscal mismanagement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Sheridan: One of the issues that the finance critic has is that he has a very difficult time distinguishing between this year, last year and this current fiscal. I believe what the opposition member is speaking about is into the future.

This year that we just presented, that ended March 31st, we exceeded our target, and going forward, of course, as we spoke very clearly, after consulting with Islanders, we decided to push our balance out by one year. We decided that we would push the balance out by one year and ensure that Islanders would not feel the brunt of us –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Hon. member, the minister has the floor.

Mr. Sheridan: So we would ensure when we bring Prince Edward Island back into a balanced position it would not be on the backs of Prince Edward Islanders, at frontline services that are so dear to their hearts.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister is now using more of his excuses that he's pushing the balanced budget out yet further, another year. Last week he was stating that the business community wanted him to do that, that the chamber of commerce wanted him to do that. We actually know that the chamber of commerce, the CFIB, which represents thousands of companies, actually had been pleading with the minister to balance his budget sooner than later, but that's not the case.

Will the treasurer do the right thing, remove the capital revenue, and amend the provincial budget to show the true \$74 million deficit?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The finance critic must ensure that he's speaking all truths here in the House. Of course we have said very clearly that the chambers wanted us to balance on the same three-year budget plan. CFIB asked of the same thing. We talked very clearly last week that 85% of the people that were consulted in the pre-budget consultations asked for us to push it out by one year.

Never was it quoted that the chamber asked us to do that. The chamber was one of the entities that would like to have had us stay on the current three-year plan. CFIB was of the same mindset, no question about it. Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm wondering if the treasurer then can confirm which of the 85% of the Cabinet did he consult that actually asked him to push his deficit balance, or the balancing of his budget, out one more year.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Premier Ghiz: (Indistinct), 100%.

Mr. Sheridan: I think it would only – it would be very wise of this finance critic to speak to someone that actually understands PSAB, that understands the public service accounting board –

Leader of the Opposition: Obviously not you (Indistinct) –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Sheridan: Madam Speaker, before the opposition comes to the House, (Indistinct) questions the professional staff of treasury that are responsible for the book, that comes out with a budget attached to it.

Their professional reputations are at stake when they put these books out.

If this was not a change in public service accounting procedures it would not be in our book. It's in every book right across this nation. These are the changes that are provided by PSAB and we must adhere by them.

As a matter of fact, it isn't a benefit to us this year, but it is an accounting change that had to be made inside our books, just like every other province in Canada. If it was, I would make my professional staff very available for the opposition to have a little bit of a tutorial on this, and I'm not being wise. I'm offering the staff to be able to come over and explain the change in the capital expenditures, Madam Speaker, so that they would be very clear on the PSAB rules.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

CSS caseload and rent

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Government has promised, they've promised many times, that they were going to protect low-income Islanders and people vulnerable when they introduced the HST.

My questions are to the community services and seniors minister. Minister, would you tell the House how many people that are on your financial caseload actually rent their accommodations?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I can't give the exact number, I don't know that.

I can tell how many clients we actually have on social assistance, but I will bring that back to the member tomorrow.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last year there was actually over 2,200 people that had to rent that were on her caseload.

For many of us we understand that shelter is an actual basic need. Rent ceilings for a family of four this year, or for many people, have actually gone up by 5%. That was an increase in January.

A family of four living on social assistance have to live by a rent ceiling. What they actually get is \$829 a month. For the minister, I want to remind people, that rent has to include their electricity, their heat and their basic rent.

My question to the minister: How can she justify these deplorable amounts for a family of four trying to survive on social assistance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, as a government we realize the impacts that are happening to – whether you're single or you're a family on social assistance, and it's a place that none of these people actually want to be.

If they had a choice that they could make that choice themselves, they would be earning income another way.

Circumstances are such that they find themselves that they need that form of support, and that's why social assistance is there. It's there to be able to provide them with that bridge until they can overcome whatever unfortunate situation they find themselves in.

As far as the families, it may not be necessarily what the member in the opposition wants to hear, but I don't set the rates, our government doesn't do it. IRAC sets the rates. Are we aware of the fact that

IRAC keeps increasing the rental rates to the landlords and we're not quite keeping up? Yes, we know that.

We've made a commitment through our Social Action Plan that we're going to continue to make increases. We've done a great job over the last number of years. We have increased it 11%, but we've more to do, and I recognize that, and we're going to keep working on it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

First off, social service policy and regulations are determined by your government. Secondly, there's probably about 300 or 400 people on social assistance that work full-time or part-time and have to draw assistance.

So minister, I'm really upset and I'm sure many people are that are watching.

I'll go back to the question. I have some rent opportunities here in the Charlottetown area from Saturday's paper. One ad is for a three-bedroom apartment. It's over \$1,000 a month, heat's included, but no electricity. Second apartment, over \$836 a month, lights not included, and it goes on and on and on.

A family of four on social assistance for a month receive \$829 for their rent, and they have to add their electricity in that, and their heating source. Minister, how can you defend that? These are deplorable rates.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, housing has been a big issue for our government to address.

Prior to our government coming into power, the previous administration literally forgot that there were people out there requiring affordable housing.

Since 2007 we have increased affordable housing –

Leader of the Opposition: Six years ago.

Ms. Docherty: – well over 340 units –

Leader of the Opposition: Six years ago.

Ms. Docherty: – and just this past year we have also allowed –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Ms. Docherty: We've also created rent supplements, so instead of us having to find a place or work with a client that needs help, we're providing rent supplements to the client who's working with the landlord in – that can provide for families. Just in this past year 20 rent supplements were created of which 16 of those went to families and four went to those with mental health issues.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Madam Speaker, there's 400 families right now on a wait list for social housing, but that's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about the over 2,000 people that need to rent and what the rent ceilings are. It's not about what's in the past. This year, starting April 1st, your government's telling Islanders you're bringing in an additional revenue because of HST, and each of you on that side of the House, and every MLA around here, all voted for HST and all told Islanders you were going to take care of low-income people.

Okay, to the same minister.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Ms. Crane: The amount – no, actually, I think I'll change this around.

Social assistance and cost of food

To the minister of agriculture. An adult on social assistance receives \$156 a month. Do you think that that is fair when you have a good understanding of what food costs? That's a month.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and Deputy Premier.

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, we totally realize that food is a necessity of life.

We work hard with the farming community to provide high-quality food at the lowest cost possible. Food is escalating in price worldwide and there tends to be higher prices in the last year or so, which some of that is reflected back to the farmers.

What we really need is everyone with adequate food supply. It's extremely important, and we work towards that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

Summerset Manor

Mr. Greenan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As the MLA for Summerside, I, along with my colleague, the Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General, and other area MLAs try to meet semi-regularly with the elected city council.

At our last meeting the topic of the disposition of the vacant Summerset Manor came up. I would like to ask the Minister of Community Services and Seniors: What is happening with the old Summerset Manor?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the Summerset Manor, it's kind of confusing as to why, I, as minister responsible for Community Services and Seniors, am actually speaking to this.

For your benefit and for those listening, it's because it falls under the housing corporation and that's why I'm sort of the lead on this.

When property becomes surplus – in this case, any of the manors that we are responsible for – we work really closely with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and we look at a number of criteria in regards to the surplus

property. We make decisions on what the market value is for that particular property. Can it be utilized by ourselves within government? Should we offer it for sale for others? Does it have to be disposed of? Whatever the case may be.

In regards to the Summerset Manor in Summerside, to the hon. member, he can assure those in Summerside that between myself and the minister responsible in transportation that we will be working quite closely to figure out what we're going to be doing with this. What we want to make sure is that it's going to be used for the best use possible.

Thank you.

Speaker: Supplementary question.

The hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors.

Mr. Greenan: Yes, to the same minister.

Might your department be looking at this property for future social housing in Summerside?

Speaker: The hon. Member of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That is definitely one of the areas that we're looking at. Personally, I can't speak to the quality of the existing building, but one has to assume if we felt that seniors couldn't live in it and that's why we built a new manor, it's probably not in a condition to refurbish.

What we will be looking at is in the event that we wish to dispose of the property, we may consider options like was done with the Charlotte Court in Charlottetown. It's hard to say. I don't want to create any hopes for potential developers out there what we're going to do. But what we want to do is work with the city and with the two MLAs to figure out where are the best needs. Is it for social housing for families, those with disabilities, mental health issues, or more seniors? Regardless, it will be looked at very closely because I do know affordable housing is needed in Summerside.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Rapid response units and location

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Minister, you announced a number of initiatives under your health changes, one of which is the rapid response units. Could you please give more clarification on what those roles are going to be?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I was pleased to announce a number of weeks back that we will be expanding our ground ambulance fleet. As a government we've very committed. Obviously, ground ambulances today are emergency rooms on wheels. Rapid response vehicles will be located in the province and will be manned – they'll be SUVs and they will be manned or staffed by an advanced care paramedic which will be used to respond to 911 calls in transit, and to assess and to triage individuals at the end of the 911 call.

Not only have we expanded on our rapid response vehicles, we will be expanding a dual unit transfer vehicle as well, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Supplementary question.

The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. Mr. Minister, what particular geographic region of Prince Edward Island are they going to be designated to?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Obviously the expansion of the ground ambulance fleet continues to build on the

investments that we've made in 2011, where we expanded I think approximately 104, 105 hours of ground ambulance time in the east and the west. We will be locating the response vehicles in the east and in the west.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) east.

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Currie: That will be the responsibility determined by Island EMS who have the expertise and the data and the statistics on the volumes of calls that come from a range of communities.

But the real issue that's facing our ground ambulance fleet here in the province is our aging population. Today we would have approximately –

Leader of the Opposition: Oh, blame the seniors.

Mr. Currie: Today we would have approximately six ambulances that will be transporting Islanders outside the province to major hospitals in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, 10 hours a day, which is 60 hours of ground ambulance time impacting our response time.

The number of inter-provincial transfers last year was an all-time high at 3,300. It's the reality and the way we're adapting to the pressures that we're experiencing in the health care system, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: Second supplementary question.

The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Minister, one of the significant changes is the redesignation of Stewart Memorial Hospital into a long-term care centre.

That particular hospital serves a catchment area of about 3,500 people. One of the things that I would hope that you would put forward is extra support for that area to perhaps have a rapid response unit stationed in that area, and yet it would still support the western region of the province.

Would you please take that under advisement?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I have been in discussion with Island EMS and Health PEI. I had the opportunity to bring opposition in to Island EMS to look at the operation. We will be relying on Island EMS to look at their data which they evaluate every 31 days in respect to the calls and the pressures across the Province of Prince Edward Island. I've got great confidence that Island EMS will be strategically locating ground ambulance vehicles to meet the needs and the pressures strategically in areas of the province to continue to work towards the best response times that we can in expanding emergency services here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Social assistance and cost of food (further)

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister of agriculture understands it's important to pay farmers for the food they produce. To the minister of agriculture: Do you think it's fair for a person that's an adult living on social assistance in the province to receive \$156 a month to purchase that food?

Speaker: The hon. Member of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the answer to that is no, it's not fair.

We recognize that and we are doing everything that we can. We came out with the first Social Action Plan ever in this province last year. We made a commitment, and it's a plan that is not a start and a finish, it's a plan that will continue every year. We're going to change it as changes are required, but we've made a commitment to make a difference in the lives of those that are most vulnerable. In the case of those singles with that allotment for food, no, I do recognize that it is not acceptable, but we

are going to work towards making a difference.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We expect all the rates for social assistance clients to go up because after all, in this budget, this government actually said that they have an increase of \$4.4 million in that budget. Hopefully clients on assistance today will be receiving an increase for their food and others.

But it's becoming a crisis here in the province. There was a report done in 2012 for Food Banks Canada, and it was taking a look at Prince Edward Island, and it found that over 42.6% of people using Island food banks were actually on social assistance.

To the Minister of Community Services and Seniors. You promised Islanders that you were going to protect them when this government brought in the HST. Do you think that you can justify these deplorable rates for social assistance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, I've stated before, we recognize these rates are not enough.

If these rates were enough, if we truly felt that Islanders who were having to use social assistance were getting everything that they needed, we wouldn't have had a Social Action Plan. We wouldn't have made the differences that we've made in our government over the years, and whether that's seniors in our Seniors' Home Repair Program, whether it's the National Child Benefit, whether it's creating early years centres, there's all kinds of things that we're doing for all Islanders to make sure that we're creating the best opportunity for them as possible.

It is not something that we can fix overnight because it's not something that happened just overnight. We are working towards it, there's a promise from myself, there's a

promise from the Cabinet, there's a promise from the colleagues on this side of government. We are going to make a difference. We're working on it and we're committed to continuing.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

That government had no problem when they decided to build Plan B and use all kinds of borrowed dollars. They're bringing in extra revenue through HST. Yet there are families, children in Prince Edward Island, that are surviving because of the food bank because they're not having enough dollars in the food allotment to feed their family.

My question is to the Minister of Community Services and Seniors. Again, when that report was done, taking a look at who uses our food banks, 34% of the users were children. Many of these children, their families were on social assistance. To the Minister of Community Services and Seniors: This year are you going to increase the food rates?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, in our Social Action Plan we indicated that we are going to look at making a difference in both the food and shelter rates, and when I sit on the floor to go through my budget, I hope that we'll be able to address it then.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is the government that promised, too, that they were going to stop the clawback of the National Child Tax Benefit. What did they do before the election? They did that. But families on social assistance, they're using that money to try and pay their rent because this government's not giving them any money, any increases, even though

they've brought in HST and the cost of basic shelter has gone up.

Government continues to take in HST. It's extra revenue. Are they protecting vulnerable Islanders? No.

My question to the Minister of Community Services and Seniors. Children's clothing is exempt under HST, but adult clothing is not. For children aged 12 to 17, many of whom wear adult clothing sizes, your government is not protecting, and they, the families, have to pay HST.

Social assistance and clothing

My question to the minister: Are you going to be increasing the amount on clothing for children who are on social assistance? Giving them a mere \$27 a month just does not cut it.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the families that are on social assistance certainly do struggle.

We've never hidden that fact, we've never denied it. They do struggle, and it is indeed unfortunate. But the impacts that we are going to make in such a positive way by implementing HST will turn things around. The more money that we can generate into this economy makes my department more eligible for dollars that we would all like to – all my Cabinet colleagues are aware of the fact, the negotiations that basically go on in order that I can do what I need to do to help Islanders.

If money was flowing like crazy, no, we probably wouldn't. I'm speaking for myself, I, but HST might not have been even an issue. But we believe that HST implementation into this province is going to make a difference.

When it comes to HST, yes, there are going to be some areas that the vulnerable Islanders are going to be impacted. If they do heat with electricity, yes, they will. However, home heating oil, we know that. We've indicated that that's what form of home heating fuel is used, that's why it's not going to be taxed. There are no changes to

public transit, if they use that. Medications, any medical supplies they need. Basic groceries are not changing.

We are making a difference in making – we are doing what we can to make a difference in the lives of Islanders, and I believe that we are going to make a change.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Minister, it's so hard to even think that's how someone can think when in 2012 people were not meeting their basic needs. Families couldn't afford their rent or their food, they're relying on food banks in 2012. That was before HST.

Social assistance and basic needs

My question is: Minister, how do you expect a family of four in Charlottetown today to be able to afford their rent, and their food, and they're on your caseload? How do you expect that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's very important that all members of this House are fully aware that the program that we put in place, the three pillars that we've installed, are the best programs that have been put in place for a harmonized sales tax across this nation.

We were very clear when we brought forward harmonization it was not an eradication of poverty. There is no way in the short term that this is going to eradicate poverty. It's just not going to make it any worse in the short term. But in the long term, that's what we're aiming for. We want to create more jobs, we want to create better-paying jobs to allow individuals that are being impacted in the kind of fashion

that the opposition member is asking. That's what the harmonization of the sales tax is all about.

We want to create a better place 10 years down the road, and there's no question that's what will take place. But for those families that are making less than \$55,000 gross household income, on average will not be impacted. As a matter of fact, some of those families will be a little bit better off. We're talking about very small amounts. The three pillars that we put in place, we'll make sure that all families that are in that category are going to be taken care of, that they are not going to be worse off than they were in 2012.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Final question, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Madam Speaker, a family of four, with a rent ceiling of \$829, who cannot find accommodation at \$1,000, and this finance minister thinks by giving that person a \$100 divided by four times a year?

They're not meeting their basic needs. That person's not even making \$55,000 on assistance. It's deplorable.

Since this government decided to bring in HST rent has gone up 5%, gasoline 6 cents a litre, electricity 11.2%. I need to quote this, this finance minister, why, he says: We would love to be in a position that we could give everyone back their tax. It'd be a wonderful Garden of Eden.

Well, there were serpents in the Garden of Eden, and when it comes to this government and not understanding how people really live, my question is to the Premier: Will you finally take a look at perhaps a guaranteed annual income? Take a look at the real issues of poverty, since you refuse to do anything on a poverty strategy. Will you actually start to do something?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The leader of the opposition is – or the former, former Leader of the Opposition – is

raising some very important issues, and actually this is a very good debate to have. I wish she had been this vocal when she was in government for a number of years, but unfortunately she wasn't.

I need to address two different issues here. First is the HST. I can assure her, even though she doesn't believe me, and Islanders, that when it comes to the HST our number one issue was looking out for Islanders that could be deemed as vulnerable. That is why we set up a program where the exemptions were put around home heating fuel, around children's clothing. That is why we put in the exemptions.

We will analyze it after a year. If our finance officials did not give us the proper information, under their estimates, and it is going to impact low-income Islanders worse, we will take a look at that. But under our estimates –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Premier has the floor.

Premier Ghiz: Under our estimates, Madam Speaker, when we brought in the HST, it was our number one priority to make sure that the individuals that the former leader of the opposition is currently talking about would be addressed.

Now, I do want to point out that yes, we do wish we could increase rates considerably around all social assistance, but when we got in, yes, we eliminated the clawback of the National Child Benefit, which is \$750,000 more into the pockets of those Islanders that she was talking about. I do want to point out that while I was leader of the opposition I did put a motion on the floor here in the Legislature and there was one member of the government that did support the opposition at that time, and I will give credit where credit's due: it was the Member from Morrell-Mermaid who did that.

But also since we've been elected, we've exempted registered disability savings plans from eligible calculations and social programs; 2% increase for shelter in 2010; 5% increase in 2009; 10% food rate increase in 2009; another 1% in 2008; 3% shelter increase in 2007; total increases of over \$2 million.

In fact, this year within our budget, while every department is being frozen with the exception of health, we are also making sure the Department of Social Services and Seniors gets an increase as well. When we have more availability, we are a Liberal government, a compassionate government, we will make sure that that is where our priority is, helping out those Islanders that need the help.

I thank the leader of the opposition – the former leader – for her great questions today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

Social Worker Month

Ms. Docherty: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

March was Social Worker Month, and this year the nation-wide theme was: Social Workers Defending Social Programs for a Stronger Canada.

Social work is a profession with two very broad and overlapping dimensions. They help individuals, families, groups and communities develop skills and abilities to prevent and resolve problems, and they promote social justice and equality for all.

Social workers deliver important services to Islanders every day, and in doing so, they defend social programs for a stronger Prince Edward Island. They work to advocate for fairness, they protect human rights, and they recognize the right for everyone to be treated with respect and dignity.

There are 270 registered social workers in Prince Edward Island, and I am proud to say that more than 80 of those professionals are employed with the Department of Community Services and Seniors.

On behalf of our department, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all Prince

Edward Island social workers who, through their work, improved the well-being of children and families and enhanced the quality of life for all Islanders.

These men and women deserve to be recognized for their hard work, commitment and determination, and it gives me great pride to honour them here today.

Specifically, I would like to recognize some guests that are in our gallery. We have: Phil Matusiewicz, who is with the PEI Social Worker Registration Board; Kelly MacWilliams, the president of the PEI Association of Social Workers; and Will MacDonald, who should be very proud of the fact that he received the Canadian Association of Social Work Distinguished Service Award for Prince Edward Island.

To all of them, Madam Speaker, thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Replying to the ministerial statement, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to respond to this. If Phil Matusiewicz is actually here in the gallery today, I had the pleasure of working for Phil for a number of years when I started my career down in the Souris area, and I want to thank Phil very much. As a young worker I wanted to work with people and he actually helped me learn how to do group work, and I had the pleasure of working with lots of women and families in Souris for a number of years because of Phil.

I also would like to complement Will MacDonald. Will and I go way back as well, and today, as we are asking questions around policies that impact on low-income people, Will MacDonald for years has been there as a great advocate for all kinds of people. In the 1990s when the social services programs had to change, Will was there for that as well.

I compliment the minister in recognizing social workers and the month. Many people, when they think of social work, they often think of the work that child welfare workers do, and that is extremely great work as well, but social workers, you can find their work

in any place. Myself, I really enjoyed most of the work that I spent when I worked in the correctional system, but every day you use your skills as a social worker.

I throw it out there, congratulations to all the people, both the people that are credited, registered, and there's still a few of us that have social work degrees that never registered.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Additional Community Meetings

Mr. Currie: Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to announce two additional community meetings on Better Access, Better Care.

These meetings will be in Charlottetown this coming Saturday morning, April 6th, from 9:00 to 11:00 at the Murchison Centre, and in Summerside on April 20th at the Loyalist Lakeview Resort.

Better Access, Better Care is about enhancing our health care system to benefit the needs of our patients.

I want to be clear: these new health initiatives will affect every Islander from Tignish to Souris, including those of us who live in Charlottetown or Summerside.

As I have said before, the QEH and PCH will remain our two main larger referral hospitals and provide acute care services. In addition, we will have Souris and O'Leary hospitals providing extended care. That means if my mother needs a hip replacement she will most likely have surgery in Charlottetown at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. She will undergo her acute care at the QEH will access to the specialists she needs, but when acute care is complete, and if she still requires a level of restorative or convalescent care, then there is a very real possibility that she may be transferred to Souris or O'Leary hospitals for a few days to receive their extended care.

We need to realize that we have a One Island health care system. This is an integrated system where each facility and each caregiver plays an integral role.

Changing how services are delivered won't happen overnight, and it will require strong leadership from health care providers, particularly our physicians. As minister, I'm calling on our physicians for their strong leadership and stewardship, both in our hospitals and in our communities.

I hope all Islanders will take part in our community information sessions. For details on all of the times and locations, visit our website at www.betteraccessbettercare.ca.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Responding to the ministerial statement, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's great that the minister is going out into the communities, but the minister kind of put the cart before the horse. I wish the minister had have went out to the communities before he made his decision to make changes in the health care and hopefully the minister will get to the eastern end of the Island up to Souris.

Thank you.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General, that the second order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 2, Consideration of the Estimates, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Sheridan: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General, that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll call upon the hon. Deputy Speaker to chair the Committee of the Whole.

Chair (Biggar): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Members, we are on page 48. We have read and were discussing the section on Watershed and Subdivision Planning.

Were there any further questions in relation to that?

Leader of the Opposition: I have some.

Chair: Just – I'm sorry, Leader of the Opposition.

Minister, you had someone you wanted to bring to the floor –

Ms. Sherry: I'd like permission to bring my finance commissioner on the floor, Mary Kinsman.

Chair: Permission to bring someone on the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Absolutely.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition, just while she's coming, we'll take your question.

Ms. Sherry: Just wait until I get set up. I'm trying to figure out where I'm at. What section are we in?

Chair: Watershed and Subdivision Planning.

Whenever you're ready.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure. So we were talking yesterday about the watershed thing. I didn't have a chance to touch on it. But I have a question as it relates to the SEA group. I know I asked this last year as well.

The SEA group, as you're well aware, falls under some sort of federal funding that limits them or completely disqualifies them from being able to get any provincial help. My understanding is that the way the federal funding works is that they have to submit for a specific project and see if they're approved for it and then they get some money.

There are some groups that follow under that umbrella or that area who would probably like to have a little more leeway in what they're able to do so they can go back and do some of the things that they used to do, or some of the other things that the other water management groups do.

Is there any way that you could work with either the SEA group or the groups that make up the rivers that feed that SEA group to rearrange their funding so that they fall under you? Because it's a steadier source of funding that you guys provide through the streams here. I have the list in front of me of the ones that you fund. It gives them a steady year over year source of income that they can take the winter to plan how they're going to operate. It seems like this is a reoccurring theme.

I'm just wondering what your thoughts are on that.

Ms. Sherry: I guess to be perfectly honest, as I mentioned yesterday, I have met with this group. There has to be perimeters around the dollars when it comes to funding. One of the perimeters of our watershed funding is they cannot be obtaining funds from another source. That's one of the

criteria. They are already receiving these dollars.

As I mentioned yesterday, they certainly make great points. They have a valid situation. I know our department has gone out there and had a look at the situation on a couple of occasions. You brought up yesterday in regards to the roads and the runoff from the roads. I know that some of our department staff has met with department staff from transportation and infrastructure to look at that more seriously.

At this time, I would have to say that because they are receiving funding from a federal source – and how unfortunate, even though we've talked about it and talked to them about considering allowing them to do some watershed management with those federal dollars. Unfortunately, the feds have said no. So we will not be dually funding at this point.

Things could change. But right now we're looking at funding 25 watersheds across the province, \$870,000; staff support, like in-kind support through staffing, and also equipment to help them with some of the work in the watershed.

I would say as long as they are receiving funding from another source – we would never discourage anyone from applying, I'm certainly not saying that, but our perimeters say they cannot be receiving funding from another source.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. So, back to our conversation then that we had yesterday.

We talked about those particular roads and that one particular watershed. I'm wondering: Are we on for having a look at that, with the minister of transportation, to see between your department and his department if it's something that you think needs to be pursued or should be pursued?

Ms. Sherry: Absolutely. As I've said, the staff in environment has been down and had a look and has been talking with the people. It's a great report. Anything that we can do to help, we certainly will.

One of those things is their frustration and concern over the runoff from the road. They

are looking at that. They are working with staff in transportation. I think that's a step in the right direction.

Leader of the Opposition: If we set up a time sometime, like, I could get a regional area expert, somebody who knows those watersheds really well, to kind of come with us and say: This never happened before, this stream used to look like this – just to give you an idea of the results of whatever. I'm not going to blame anything in particular. But these are the results of what has happened, just to kind of give you – because I think the history of where we came from is important. It's probably as important as where we are today.

In a very short period of time we've gotten to here, and perhaps these may be reasons why, if it's something that we could discuss.

Ms. Sherry: I know, also, in the meetings that we've had I've certainly included the MLA from the Montague area has been a part of those meetings. I do stay in contact with him. He kind of – how could I say? – goes back and forth between the group there in Montague and he keeps me up to date with some of the things that he's been talking to them about.

Leader of the Opposition: So the lion's share of the tributaries that feed into the Montague River I'd be the MLA for. Knox's Dam is in District 2. The whole river that feeds into it all the way back up to that whole South Montague Road, that all falls into my district. There are a whole bunch of tributaries over on the north side of there that feed into mine.

Part of the reason I ask is I represent quite a big chunk of that area as well. I know the Member from Montague-Kilmuir also has the other half of it. It's something that I continue to push for.

Ms. Sherry: I guess that some of the lobbying – obviously, you're lobbying right now, but I have been lobbied by the Member from Montague-Kilmuir. That's important.

Any time an elected person phones my office with a concern, be it in Tyne Valley-Linkletter or Montague or Tracadie-Hillsborough Park, those are the calls that are important, because they are raising

issues that are important to their constituents. As a Cabinet minister I have a responsibility to ensure that we get answers and do work to ensure that their concerns are looked after.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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Oh, I'm sorry. Recognition of guests.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Thank you.

I'd like to welcome Ronnie Nicholson. He's in the House this afternoon. He's joined us in the gallery. A very strong advocate for children with autism, including his own son.

Chair: Welcome.

Drinking Water and Wastewater Management. "Appropriations provided to administer approvals/regulatory compliance and protection related to drinking water and wastewater systems and for the administration of the Water Well Regulations including approvals for high capacity wells; water quality investigations; and other related services." Administration: 3,400. Equipment: 3,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 16,200. Professional and Contract Services: 10,000. Salaries: 411,700. Travel and Training: 41,600. Total Drinking Water and Wastewater Management: 486,400.

Any questions on that section?

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Minister, are you aware of any plans for PetroWorth or Corridor Resources to do any fracking in the next year or the next few years?

Ms. Sherry: I haven't received any requests or letters in regards to anybody who is interested in fracking on Prince Edward Island to date.

Mr. LaVie: So, Chair, I wonder if the minister – or the agreement for PetroWorth, are they expired?

Ms. Sherry: That is a name that I have not heard anything of since I've been minister. I can certainly find out. But I know that I have not received a request or a letter in regards to any fracking on Prince Edward Island.

If there was a request that would come through in regards to fracking it would have to undergo an environmental impact assessment.

Mr. LaVie: So there are no requests in now?

Ms. Sherry: No, there are absolutely no requests on my desk for fracking.

Mr. LaVie: Chair, I wonder if the minister can explain fracking to me, how it works.

Ms. Sherry: Basically, it's a drilling process where they put a bit down into the ground, and it's used to disrupt the levels of shale for the purpose of finding gas in the core of the soil.

Mr. LaVie: Is that a new process or an old process?

Ms. Sherry: I think that probably the process that they use now for fracking is potentially different then it was 25 years ago. But I think that the term fracking has always been used to refer to removing minerals or gases out of the earth.

Mr. LaVie: Do you deem that to be dangerous to the water?

Ms. Sherry: I would say that I would have concerns, absolutely. I know that I've watched a lot of coverage in regards to fracking in other parts of the country and other parts of the world. I guess you always have to keep in mind the source of the information, who is giving the information and from what side. I'd say that for – my own personal opinion doesn't come in to play, it would have to be a decision or thoughts through a process of exact science. We are watching what's happening in New Brunswick and we are still waiting to finish reviewing the federal report in regards to fracking, the science side.

As it stands now, I don't have the request on my desk. When that time comes there will be a process in place. I keep my mind open;

I listen to all of the information that I can in regards to fracking. My biggest concern, I would have to say, is the water. The amount of water used in the process of fracking that I have a lot of questions about.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Chair, the minister mentioned New Brunswick. Do you think we have the same big rock in New Brunswick as we do on the Island?

Ms. Sherry: I would say absolutely not.

Mr. LaVie: Absolutely not?

Ms. Sherry: Absolutely not.

Mr. LaVie: Did you ever have anybody in any of these companies, from PetroWorth or Corridor, to explain fracking?

Ms. Sherry: No.

Mr. LaVie: You haven't?

Ms. Sherry: No.

Mr. LaVie: How long have you been minister of environment?

Ms. Sherry: I was sworn in as the Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice I believe November 13th of last year.

Mr. LaVie: That's 2011. You don't think it's important to have somebody in to talk on fracking?

Ms. Sherry: I guess from my perspective we run a very large department. There are a large number of issues on any given day. If the opportunity was one that was of relatively pending concern, as minister I would be obtaining all of that information prior to any decisions being made. We do have enough issues on the table at this time and my method has always been to deal with what's right in front of us and in the near future. That's what I intend to do.

I have great people who work in the department who I feel have great expertise. It may not be me directly who is gathering or sitting in on briefings, but certainly the staff in environment recognize that fracking

is an issue of interest and concern to Canadians and certainly Islanders.

Chair: Anything further?

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Yes, thanks, Chair.

Did you ever go out to speak to watershed groups?

Ms. Sherry: I've been to one of their annual meetings and I think I'm due to go back within the next couple of weeks. I had a number of watershed groups that I have met with across the province, yes.

Mr. LaVie: Chair, I wanted the minister – did they ever mention fracking at these group meetings?

Ms. Sherry: I have been involved with very high level discussions, not necessarily with people in the watershed groups, but Islanders have asked me about fracking and shared their feeling about fracking to me, whether they're in a watershed group or not.

Mr. LaVie: If any company came to us or to you on the Island for fracking, would you have public meetings?

Ms. Sherry: I would say that if anyone came to our department looking for – they would be looking for a permit to frack. In that process there would be an environmental impact assessment which would have to happen as part of it, and part of that process would definitely be public consultation.

Mr. LaVie: So would you have public consultation before or after?

Ms. Sherry: It's part of the process. It would be part of the process as it was for the realignment of the Trans-Canada Highway. You have to have the public consultation prior to the final approval. It's part of the process.

Mr. LaVie: So you'd have it before the final approval?

Ms. Sherry: Yes. It is part of that.

Mr. LaVie: Would it be the same as Plan B or would it be the opposite? Would you listen to the public or would you listen to your own?

Ms. Sherry: I'm not quite sure what your question is there.

Mr. LaVie: Well, Plan B, you never listened to the public.

Ms. Sherry: Pardon me?

Mr. LaVie: Plan B, you never listened to the public.

Ms. Sherry: We absolutely did listen to the public. Now if you're talking from the proponents – I won't answer the questions in regards to the proponents which is –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Ms. Sherry: Madam Chair?

Chair: Could we just stay to the topic here on this?

Ms. Sherry: When I think of Plan B and I think of the history of Plan B, there was public consultation right from the beginning in regards to what projects where. I remember the process, which was well over a year before any work had started, where the headlines in the paper were that government listens to Islanders saying that they were going to change the direction of the realignment and go around Strathgartney, because Islanders felt very passionate and were very sure that they did not want it to go through Strathgartney Park.

There came the second design or realignment and there was public consultation. It was very important to me as the minister of environment to ensure that every person who had an issue in relation to the realignment of the Trans-Canada Highway were heard and responded to. I can tell you that I think we left 10 days after the public meeting as a cutoff point for any public feedback.

If my memory serves me correctly, I believe there was around 265 concerns brought forward by the public. One hundred and fifty-one of those concerns were not related to the environment, they were questions of

cause, etc., that would be responsibility of the proponent themselves. I believe that there were 98 of those questions that were already answered in the original EIA, and 18 that required addressing in the second draft of the EIA from our department.

So I do believe that the public was listened to and heard.

Chair: (Indistinct) next section. Anything else under this?

Mr. LaVie: Not right now, no.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: Yes, I'm just checking with this member.

An Hon. Member: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, you had a question in relation to this section?

Mr. Aylward: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just wondering if the minister could verify whether or not there are any lands here on PEI that are currently being held or in trust for future fracking processing, or process?

Ms. Sherry: I'm sure you'd like an honest answer to that.

Mr. Aylward: I'm not used to it, but sure, let's give it a shot.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Sherry: From my perspective, I have not heard of any land that's being held on Prince Edward Island for fracking.

Mr. Aylward: So you have not heard personally?

Ms. Sherry: Nobody has ever indicated to me – my director of environment, any of my staff, broad or deep, have ever mentioned to me that there is land being held in the Province of Prince Edward Island for the purpose of fracking.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, Madam Chair.

Another question out of this category. I just may be missing a piece of information here in front of me in the handouts that we were supplied with yesterday. Under drinking water and wastewater management, under professional and contract services, when I go to the handout, I see two line items there that total 3,672 but the budget states 10,000. Are there other contract services or professional fees that are associated with that category that I'm missing?

Ms. Sherry: Okay, are you looking at what we're projecting from next year? Because this year we spent \$4,000 and I can give you the breakdown on that, but the \$10,000 is projected for the next.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, so there's nothing yet that have actually been contracted within that \$10,000?

Ms. Sherry: No, but I can tell you what the \$4,000 for this year was, if that would be helpful.

Mr. Aylward: Sure.

Ms. Sherry: Okay, there was \$472 that was paid to the Association of Boards of Certification. This was for certification examinations for operators of water and waste-water utilities. There was \$3,200 to the Canadian Water Network which is a federally funded NGO, and this is a contribution to research on bio-solid sampling techniques, and then there was just another small amount to forecast us to year end, \$328.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, minister.

Chair, I wonder if the minister could just explain to me what the research on bio-solids sampling techniques actually is?

Ms. Sherry: We could bring you back the details, but that is some of the work – this is some specialized work that they're doing in regards to affluent, and you know, proper ways to break it down and dispose of it to the highest level of efficiencies. It's very detailed work and some of the people in our department have been involved in that work for a number of reasons. It is an issue.

I can get you some more detailed information on that if you would like.

Mr. Aylward: Actually, I wouldn't mind receiving some, yeah, because as you're aware –

Ms. Sherry: It's very interesting.

Mr. Aylward: – in Stratford itself and the Charlottetown Harbour we continue to have issues around this, so –

Ms. Sherry: And, you know, possibly some of those issues are what spurred on some on certainly some of this specialized work.

Mr. Aylward: Contributing to that research, certainly.

Thank you minister, no, that would be wonderful, appreciate it.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Microbiology and Chemistry Laboratories

“Appropriations provided for the microbiological and chemical analysis of drinking water, surface water and waste water.”

I believe that was in relation to your last question, perhaps, even?

Administration: 5,000. Equipment: 16,800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 115,200. Professional and Contract Services: 61,800. Salaries: 531,700. Travel and Training: 2,400. Total Microbiology and Chemistry Laboratories: 732,900.

Questions, anyone, on that particular section?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Climate Change and Air Management

“Appropriations provided to conduct air quality and ozone depleting substances monitoring, hazardous materials transport monitoring, administer climate change and pesticide management programs: including the *Pesticides Control Act* and regulations, and respond to public concerns and general information requests.” Administration: 5,100. Equipment: 4,900. Materials, Supplies and Services: 50,800. Professional

and Contract Services: 59,300. Salaries: 419,400. Travel and Training: 24,400. Total Climate Change and Air Management: 563,900.

Any questions?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

If the minister could just give a little detail as far as the two line items there, materials, supplies and services, as well as professional and contract services, why those particular line items essentially are double or even a little bit more than double from last year's budget forecast. Is there something that you see on the horizon that's going to impact that budget?

Ms. Sherry: You want to know what the increases are?

Mr. Aylward: I'm just wondering in particular why your – your estimate last year was for 46,600, your forecast is coming in at 25,800, and you're moving forward again this year with an estimate of 50,800, and again a similar trend to your next line item.

Ms. Sherry: It's federal dollars that are coming in. That's what the difference is between them, some project money that we'll be using.

Mr. Aylward: So that was in fact an increase from the federal government?

Ms. Sherry: Yes, but those were five-year contracts, were they not? Do you want me to elaborate a little bit about what those dollars are going to be used for?

Mr. Aylward: Yes, please.

Ms. Sherry: Erin Taylor, who runs this department, has been a great proponent of raising the awareness on the issue of climate change. These dollars, she applied for them, and it's funding for her to continue her work with municipalities across the province to make them mindful of some of the changes that they need to consider in order to be prepared for the impacts of climate change.

It's extremely good work, we've had a lot of great feedback and she did apply for the funding. We want to continue, then, on with

the municipalities so that people are very aware of some of the things that may need to change in the years forward.

Mr. Aylward: All right.

Ms. Sherry: Great program.

Mr. Aylward: Great, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition, did you have a question?

Leader of the Opposition: Yes I did.

On the topic of the climate change budget here, what planning or plans are being put in place to meet the challenges that particularly our coastal communities are going to face in the coming years?

Ms. Sherry: Basically, that's what I had shared with your hon. colleague. Erin Taylor is the lead on this file and I can't say enough good about the work that she's been doing to work with municipalities in informing them of the lay of the land, so to speak –

Leader of the Opposition: I met her once, she's very good.

Ms. Sherry: Yeah, she's great. I think that the first step is for communities and for Islanders to be mindful of the fact that climate change is here and we need to ensure that we move forward in a proactive manor.

Coastal areas are certainly areas that are most at risk. We've got Mount Stewart, we've North Rustico, and we've got Souris. Some of those communities, Victoria, that are certainly most at risk and we know that to be true, and when I think of North Rustico, for example, they've been very proactive, they've been great to work with. Erin's done some wonderful work in that community, and that council itself are now looking at moving their community infrastructure away from its present location, which is right on the water's edge.

Those are things that we need to be mindful of. I know when you look at building permits and things like that, we have these discussions about the fact that people need to be aware that if they build within so many feet of the shorelines that they can be at risk.

The discussion happens all of the time, if we need to go further than that and make regulations or legislate mandatory changes when it comes to some of those issues, so this is something that there has been a lot of work done and there will continue to be a lot of proactive work done in regards to climate change to educate people and (Indistinct) –

Leader of the Opposition: So in the upcoming round of infrastructure, has the Premier or the transportation minister brought that to the attention of the federal government that this is something that may require some additional funding in the future?

Ms. Sherry: I don't think that there would be any question that those infrastructure dollars come through, that there will be municipalities and communities that will be looking to access infrastructure dollars for those very kinds of things.

Leader of the Opposition: I guess my question more is that for – this is a specific issue unto itself, right, and it affects us in Prince Edward Island –

Ms. Sherry: Absolutely.

Leader of the Opposition: – and it affects other coastal communities in Atlantic Canada and on the west coast.

Has there been any approach by our Premier or by the transportation minister to ask the federal government to look at this as a special project that may need to be funded to come up with solutions for (Indistinct)?

Ms. Sherry: I think that when you talk about climate change and the impact, when the Canadian coalition of ministers responsible for environment across the country come together, definitely the discussions happen at those tables with the federal minister. I don't think it's any secret that, especially in Atlantic Canada, we are all the same, but we also have our very unique hurdles that we need to pay attention to.

Jim Young, who is the director in this department, attends those meetings with me, and also the deputy. Jim attends a lot of senior official tables in regards to these issues, and we are always keeping those

issues at the fore of our concern at those tables.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Sorry.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Just the minister had mentioned about Mount Stewart, and she's absolutely right, there are huge issues around the infrastructure and Hillsborough River and the water area and that.

Is there an appetite to take applications for potential proposals? I know there's not new money until later on. Or is it too early in the process?

Ms. Sherry: I would say a little early in the process.

Ms. Crane: A little early. Okay.

Ms. Sherry: I think that everybody is, number one, trying to confirm that the \$400 million is really there.

Ms. Crane: Is really there.

Ms. Sherry: Is really there, and whether it's coming. I'm sure quietly across government there's lots of people that would have needs that they could look at and say: That's what I'd be looking at those dollars for. But there's been no formal discussions at this point and I would say that it would be premature.

Ms. Crane: Do they have any kind of timeline as to – or is it just wide open, broad?

Ms. Sherry: Wide open, broad at this point.

Ms. Crane: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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Environmental Land Management

“Appropriations provided to administer and coordinate the environmental assessment and sub-division review process; environmental permitting; contaminated

sites; oil spill response; home heat tank program; and to administer watercourse and wetland protection regulations.”

An Hon. Member: Question.

Chair: Sure.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Could I have some order, please?

Thank you.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Sure. This area, I know some people have some insurance to protect against oil spills, but often you're told that if they're lucky enough to have insurance, it may cover \$5,000. But to clean up the property is a lot more than that.

Do you have many cases right now where the department's either trying to help the homeowner – I know there was a gentleman from District 2, he and his wife had run into some problems there with their oil tank and they were not in a position to actually pay what it was going to cost in the end to clean up. Are there many of those cases? How are they resolved?

Ms. Sherry: I was just trying – it's funny, I was just saying that I have a list of the difference in the numbers for cleanup over the last years, but I know that they're sitting over at my desk.

But to answer the question that you have, there are instances where we would do the cleanup, and we would put a lien against the property. Then if that property was ever sold, then –

Ms. Crane: You'd get your money back.

Ms. Sherry: – it would have to be settled. Yes.

Ms. Crane: Are there –

Ms. Sherry: I've seen a couple, there's been a couple this year, yeah.

Ms. Crane: There's been a couple. Okay.

I know the inspection around oil tanks – because that changed quite a bit. There was a number of people thought their oil tank was guaranteed for life when indeed it really wasn't. How is that now impacting the department? Is it an issue? Are there many oil tanks of that, that are not really –

Ms. Sherry: The uptake on the program and the change to the regulations was, for the most part, accepted extremely well. I mean, we worked with the insurance companies and the P.E.I. Petroleum Marketer's Association. There was a great working relationship to kind of get to the end by a very effective means. I know that when I look at the numbers, it seems to me that up until probably the initial change to oil tanks the number of spills we had was quite substantial. When we made the change in the reg it brought it down, and I believe, I think last year or two years ago there were over 200 oil spills, but this past year we've only had 43. So there is a markedly different look.

Ms. Crane: It's going in the right direction.

Ms. Sherry: It is going in the right direction, and we feel very positive about that work.

Ms. Crane: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Madam Chair, minister, just on the oil tanks again and spills, are you seeing a common theme? I know you said the spills are going down, occurrences are decreasing, but has there been sort of a common fact around the majority of those spills or leaks?

Ms. Sherry: I wouldn't say that they're all exactly the same, but a majority would be a tank failure.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Chair, just another question, sort of along the same line for the minister.

I know, for example, I had to replace my oil tank just in the last year or so, and I went from a steel tank to a fiberglass tank. Probably within a year of that I just

happened to be sitting down with a fireman, and he came out and he said: You probably shouldn't have went that route. I said: Why is that? He said: If you think about it, if your house goes on fire, your fiberglass tank is going to melt, you're going to have a major leak on your hands. He said: I wouldn't be surprised at all if the government at some point looks at that and makes some changes or regulations where those types of tanks aren't usable.

Has there been any discussion around that at all, minister?

Ms. Sherry: Anything will burn –

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct).

Ms. Sherry: – if the temperature is high enough. Yes, there has been, I have heard a conversation almost verbatim of what you've just shared there in regards to fiberglass tanks, but they are guaranteed, and to my knowledge that is not an issue at this point.

Mr. Aylward: Okay. So any of those files sitting on your desk, or past files on your desk, have never involved fiberglass tank in a domestic fire?

Ms. Sherry: In a domestic fire?

Mr. Aylward: Yeah.

Ms. Sherry: I would have to go back and look, but I think if that were to happen it would be highlighted. No, I have not heard of that.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Thank you, minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

Mr. Perry: Regarding the construction and demolition sites, how does the permit process work on those?

Ms. Sherry: I'm sorry?

Mr. Perry: For C&D sites, construction and demolition sites, how does the operator go about – or how does one go about having an operator's permit or license?

Ms. Sherry: To apply for it. Right now there's a moratorium. There'll be no more C&D sites –

Mr. Perry: Okay.

Ms. Sherry: That were already, are you meaning –

Mr. Perry: Existing, let's say, so existing –

Ms. Sherry: So somebody has a C&D site –

Mr. Perry: How does the permit process – or how did it work?

Ms. Sherry: (Indistinct). I can't give you the exact details. I think it's a – I believe it's every five years, but if you would let us just take a note of that and we'll come back with the process.

Mr. Perry: Okay. So after five years, though, are they – reapply, or are they given extensions? Or is it just –

Ms. Sherry: I'd have to ask that question.

Mr. Perry: Okay, and you'll get back to us with that information?

Ms. Sherry: Sure.

Mr. Perry: Okay. I've talked to a few operators, and I've heard rumours that there is supposed to be some changes here in the Legislature coming to C&D sites. Is any of that correct?

Ms. Sherry: I would have to get back to you on that answer.

Mr. Perry: Okay. Also with that would be concerns about liability, insurance, environmental insurance on that, and that might change the ticket price, let's say, for instance. Again, these operators would like to have some answers to those questions. They're valid concerns, of course, they're operating –

Ms. Sherry: Anytime anyone would have a concern like that, we would certainly encourage them to call.

Mr. Perry: But they did. These people did call and they said that they had no

communication with your department whatsoever.

All they're asking for, seriously, one in particular, all they're asking for is that maybe your department would sit down with them and just have an open discussion about where their future is. Because they have to plan for their future, of course, and just an open dialogue is all they're looking for.

Ms. Sherry: I would suggest that perhaps, hon. member, when we're done going through the process that maybe it would be a good idea for you to give me the name of that person and their number. If somebody calls my department with a concern I would absolutely expect my staff to answer any questions that they were looking for information from.

Mr. Perry: Does your staff go out and speak to the operators that have existing permits?

Ms. Sherry: I don't know how that process goes. I would think that they would probably – they'd have to go out and do inspections. That's Greg Wilson's shop.

Mr. Perry: So you guys would be open to having communications with these operators regarding any legislative changes when you've come back with an answer, let's say, or with the permit process?

Ms. Sherry: I think that it's kind of – your approach, I guess, is a little suspect, like it's some kind of a –

Mr. Perry: It's not. No, it's not. What it is is this one particular operator is trying to – it's a business, so he's trying to prepare for the future. He just likes to know what direction the department is going to send him in, so to speak, so he can plan for that.

Ms. Sherry: I guess, obviously, somebody's obviously raised his concern in regards to where to from here on C&D sites. To my knowledge, the best way for him to do that is to speak with somebody in the department. I will take his name and have somebody call him and talk about his concerns.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Perry: Great, thanks.

Chair: Total Environmental Land Management: 768,000.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Inspection Services

“Appropriations provided for the operation of Inspection Services including building and development; on-site sewage disposal; electrical; boiler and plumbing; and elevators, lifts and amusement rides.”

Would you like line by line read or the total, hon. members?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: Total Inspection Services: 2,008,600.

Any questions?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Beverage Container Management

“Appropriations provided for operation of the beverage container program including administration and regulation of the Beverage Containers Act and Regulations, collection of containers, payment of refunds and handling fees, and program promotion and operation.”

Total Beverage Container Management: 5,427,100.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I wonder if the minister can just clarify that this is the deposit process for bottles and cans within this.

Ms. Sherry: Yes, this is it.

Mr. Aylward: Okay. The monies that are collected at time of sale at the POS versus what the consumer gets as a deposit refund, where do those monies appear within the

budget? Let's say, for instance, you've got a can of Coke and you have to pay 10 cent deposit on it, but when you take it back to Aubrey's you get five cents. That difference, where does that revenue show up in the budget itself?

Mary Kinsman Director: We operate the program. The revenue itself comes through the department of finance. We don't see the revenue within this budget.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, but within this budget itself, this is the entire administration of the program?

Mary Kinsman Director: That's correct.

Chair: Okay, anything further?

Mr. Aylward: I just want to go into the professional and contract services, if you don't mind. I just have to pull that handout.

Chair: It's 5,268,800.

Mr. Aylward: So then all of the expenses for the revenue or for the refunds come out of your budget?

Mary Kinsman Director: That's correct. We have the full expense of the program.

Mr. Aylward: You've got the full expense, but finance has the full revenue field?

Mary Kinsman Director: They collect the revenue on our behalf, yes. They're set up to deal with the large, like, Coca-Cola companies and whatever is registered with them. They remit the revenue through to them. They're set up for that, but we show the expense because we run the program.

Mr. Aylward: Is there anywhere that it can be identified as far as what type of profits the province makes in the run of a year for the deposits collected versus the refunds paid out?

Mary Kinsman Director: Sure, I can tell you that in 2013 we're forecasting the profit to be around \$1.8 million.

Mr. Aylward: Clear profit, and the difference between –

Mary Kinsman Director: The difference between the expense, yes, and the revenue coming is about \$1.8 million.

Mr. Aylward: 1.3?

Mary Kinsman Director: 1.8.

Mr. Aylward: \$1.8 million.

Chair: I'm just going to give way for a second to the Minister of Tourism and Culture for recognition of guests.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize a couple of guests in the gallery from the great riding of O'Leary-Inverness.

We have Stanley and Adrienne MacDonald. Stanley is the community chair of the community of O'Leary. I can list a lot of other things that he's involved with including the Canadian Potato Museum and the O'Leary and Area Development Corporation. It's always great to see good constituents coming down and keeping an eye on the proceedings down here. Hopefully you'll learn a little bit more on the whole legislative process here when you're involved with the community council. His wife Adrienne was also a former councillor in the community of O'Leary. She operates a business in the community, a quilt gallery. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly today.

Chair: Welcome.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and then the hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I know just myself out driving around in the community or out driving around in rural areas, quite often you see a large amount of coffee cup containers strewn along the roadside and things like that. Has there ever been any discussion as far as putting a refund policy on those? Because I know that the cans and bottles, it's certainly working extremely well as far as keeping those items off the roadside. I'm just wondering if there have been discussions around that.

Ms. Sherry: We haven't been involved in any discussion in regards to that.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The revenue that comes from the sale of the beverage cans, was that earmarked for the watershed groups?

Ms. Sherry: Watershed groups and the ALUS Program both.

Mr. Watts: And the ALUS Program?

Ms. Sherry: Yes.

Mr. Watts: So that \$1.8 million that's where that money goes?

Ms. Sherry: Yes, that's where those dollars go.

Mr. Watts: So if there was more money generated from the sale of those cans, there would be more money for the watershed group.

Ms. Sherry: Not necessarily, but those are the dollars that we use in order to fund the watershed groups and the ALUS Program.

Mr. Watts: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Okay. Great. Anything further?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Actually, I think I forgot to read that total. Oh, no, I guess I did.

Total Environment: 12,416,700.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Community Safety and Justice Policy on page 51.

Policy, Policing and Crime Prevention

“Appropriations provided to assist the Minister and Deputy Minister regarding policy advice, program support,

federal/provincial discussion and negotiations.”

Total Policy, Policing and Crime Prevention: 836,200.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, questions.

Ms. Crane: Just a couple of things first before we have some detailed questions there.

For a while we've been hearing about abuse of prescription drugs on PEI. Is that showing up in the justice system, minister?

Ms. Sherry: Actually, no it is not. As far as cases go?

Ms. Crane: Yes, and charges, etc.

Ms. Sherry: I don't have the numbers with me, but it's something that I certainly have been paying attention to and have discussions in regards to this very issue that you bring forward with my director, Erin Mitchell, and my deputy, and certainly Mr. Picketts, who is also involved in this area.

The numbers do not show increases.

Ms. Crane: Interesting.

Ms. Sherry: They do not. I'm not really sure whether that is because of the way we communicate with one another and the amount of information that we are exposed to today, as opposed to what it was even five, seven, 10 years ago, that the numbers themselves do not show, in fact, well, certainly violent crime. Those numbers have gone down year after year over the last 10 years. So it's puzzling.

Ms. Crane: Most of the crime, would it be mostly, then, break and enters or what? What are the categories and then what are the underlying indicators or issues around –

Ms. Sherry: Break and enters would certainly be one of the larger categories. If you would like, I can get you a breakdown that might be helpful to you.

Ms. Crane: Sure. Because as you know, in Summerside there was a lot of leadership with Cory Thomas and a number of different

people a few years ago. It seems like it was a big issue that people were worried about home invasions and a lot – it seemed to be driven by people with addictions. I'm just curious if some of the interventions and things that have been different now started to work. Are the numbers going down? Are they consistent? Are they staying the same? Summerside is just an example, but right across the province.

Ms. Sherry: We think that when you look at the youth justice side of things which we'll come to eventually, that the early interventions and some of the community work that's happening –

Ms. Crane: Is working.

Ms. Sherry: – as a preventative measure is working, and that may be impacting numbers are far as having those interventions prior to them entering into the justice system.

Ms. Crane: The changes, and I'm not sure if it's here, I know we're going to get to corrections –

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock has a question as well.

Ms. Crane: Oh, I'm sorry. But it's just sort of a general overview of the department before we get into the questions.

Chair: Sure.

Ms. Crane: Minister, last year you were quite concerned with some of the changes that the federal government were making around justice. Did that follow through? Are people incarcerated longer? Is it the same people? Are the caseloads of who's coming into the jail system, have they gone up the way that some people were kind of predicting or has it been kind of the same?

Ms. Sherry: There have been a number of people who have gone to the federal system. Repeat offenders. We're feeling right now that we don't seem to have the pressure that we first anticipated. We still think it's going to lag. We believe that it's sort of a saving grace. That's kind of a strange term to use in regards to this.

But because we had a number of repeat offenders who have gone into the federal system, it has taken some pressure off, so we're not feeling – we feel it's a false sense of security at this point in regards to the numbers. It's almost like a cyclical thing that you hit a bubble every now and again just by the way it happens, and with the number of people going to the federal system it's kind of pushed out that pressure that we anticipated by now.

Ms. Crane: By now. Okay.

Ms. Sherry: So we're still preparing for it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm just wondering if the minister could explain the significant increase within professional and contract services for the past forecast of 25,300. It appears to have jumped up to 177,000 for this budget estimate.

Ms. Sherry: Are you asking about the breakdown on the 177?

Mr. Aylward: That's correct, yes, and why there was such a dramatic increase over the past fiscal year.

Ms. Sherry: When we look at the issue of the economics of policing in Prince Edward Island and across the country, there has been a lot of discussion at senior officials' tables in regards to this, and certainly at the ministers of justice-public safety tables in regards to the change in the dynamics in the economics of policing.

We do know that when we're looking at police services, whether it be municipal or RCMP or whatever, that there's a lot of interest in where to from here in order to be efficient. We know that there's work to be done and a look to be taken. I guess in order to be prepared for what that might be, whether it be a study or extra ground work, we wanted to put some money aside because it may cost us some money to really have an in-depth look. Those dollars are set there just in case we need those dollars in order to take a closer look at the economics of policing in the province.

Mr. Aylward: There must be something that was identified, though, to actually move forward and identify an additional 150,000 in a line item.

Ms. Sherry: Policing is an expensive part of this budget. I know that from the conversations and the discussions that I've been in, the economics of policing is an issue right across the country. Different provinces are looking at it through different ways. We know that the way policing is done today is different than it was 10 years ago or 20 years ago. We know that to be true.

Do we need to look at how we're doing it? Can we be more efficient? The discussion is up across the country and I have no idea at this point just exactly how we'll look at it, but I feel it is something that is on the radar in the next 12 months. I wanted to make sure that if it was a study or whatever process we might use, that there would be dollars in the budget to allow for any work that we may need to do in order to look at the economics of policing in the province.

Mr. Aylward: Madam Chair, I would ask the minister though, I would think that when a budget is being put together there would be details around a budget line item, especially when we're going from approximately 25,000 and adding 150,000 to that line item.

If I took my own budget at home and did something like that, I mean, my partner would certainly be asking questions. Like, are you buying a new car? It's a Lamborghini.

Ms. Sherry: I think I am giving you a sufficient answer. I believe that with the trends that we see across the country, from the tables that I sit at across the country, the work that the senior officials are doing, we see that the dynamics or the economics of policing is changing.

Are we going to need to look at how we police in Prince Edward Island? Maybe. What do we need to know in order to be more efficient in our policing? It's certainly going to come down to doing a study or a review or something at some point in the next very short period of time. I am watching other jurisdictions to see how

they're handling it, and I want to be able to be in a position that, if there is in-depth work and study needs to be done, in these times of restraint, that myself as minister will have the dollars in order to move forward on an issue that may require some further investigation and study. That is my answer.

Mr. Aylward: So there is nothing in particular? We're not looking at –

Ms. Sherry: I don't have a plan at this juncture. I do not have a plan, but it is very obvious to me that other jurisdictions are doing this work and I want to make sure that we keep ourselves abreast of other provinces and jurisdictions in the country, if there is going to be changes and things that we need to be proactive about. I think we owe it to the citizens of Prince Edward Island to be ready and prepared to do any work that improves policing for Islanders.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, so you said in the very near future that there would be probably a study or something done that you don't know what it'll be focused on. Can you tell me if there's an RFP that has been –

Ms. Sherry: What I'm saying is there is –

Mr. Aylward: Excuse me, minister, if I could just finish my question?

Ms. Sherry: Oh yes, sure go ahead.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I'm wondering if the minister could tell us if there is an RFP that has already been started in the process as far as a planned study?

Ms. Sherry: No, there's been absolutely no RFPs, this is just – it's just merely ground work that we're looking at and watching the trends in the other provinces across the country. I do feel it's my responsibility as minister to be prepared if we do need to look at our policing and we need to have the dollars there in order to move forward.

I don't want to be caught in a situation where other places are moving forward and we're staying still. It would not be acceptable, proactive, responsible behavior on behalf of this minister.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, so pretty much assured, then, that – because this 150,000 increase in this budget line has been approved within the budget, that it will be spent in this fiscal year?

Ms. Sherry: I can't answer that.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, I look forward to watching for an RFP.

Thank you very much, minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira had a question and then the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Can the minister – this section here again, it's the 177,000 on the special contracts, professional contracts, it says crime prevention. Could the schools have used a contract for the RCMP?

Ms. Sherry: Can you repeat that, the last part of your – you're talking about –

Mr. LaVie: I'm getting back to the 177,000 –

Ms. Sherry: Yes, yes.

Mr. LaVie: – in professional and contract services. I know your government cut out the policing in the schools for the education.

Ms. Sherry: We never cut it out.

Mr. LaVie: Oh, you didn't? Okay.

Ms. Sherry: No.

Mr. LaVie: You stopped it?

Ms. Sherry: So what's the question?

Mr. LaVie: You stopped the program?

Ms. Sherry: They had a police officer in the school and they decided that they were not going to continue with that program.

Mr. LaVie: Who was not going to continue?

Ms. Sherry: The school.

Mr. LaVie: The school was not going to continue?

Ms. Sherry: They didn't have the dollars to continue with that program. Right?

Mr. LaVie: Because it never got the funding, or –

Ms. Sherry: We never paid for that police officer in the schools.

Mr. LaVie: Oh, you didn't fund it?

Ms. Sherry: No. No, we did not.

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) in the school?

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Mr. Brown: In Souris?

Mr. Aylward: No, the Colonel Grey.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

An Hon. Member: That's the city (Indistinct).

Ms. Crane: Just a couple of, again, it's more on policy side of this section.

One, ankle bracelets that, I believe, maybe two or three years ago the minister talked about looking at, instead of having people locked up where it's really expensive, looking at that as an alternative.

The other I'm curious about too is I believe the minister had mentioned perhaps a drug court at some time in the past.

The third one is I'm not sure – the trends across Canada have been the people that end up incarcerated are often Aboriginal people, and I'm curious what it's – the court system, do we have an exceptional number of Aboriginal people going through the system, are their sentences longer, and do they always result in jail time in comparison to the general population?

Then the final one on that area is there's been a couple of incidents brought to my attention where, in the relationship of family

violence kind of crime, that the justice system, the court has given pretty simple sentences or light sentences, and I'm just curious if the minister has heard complaints in those areas as well.

Ms. Sherry: Which question do you want answered first?

Ms. Crane: Whichever you'd like.

Ms. Sherry: I do not interfere with the administration of justice and the processes of the courts –

Ms. Crane: Sure, but do you get the complaints? I was thinking more: Do you get the complaints that people are concerned about and not that you, in case A, get involved, but do you hear those types of complaints?

Ms. Sherry: Absolutely.

Ms. Crane: Okay, and so does your department try and educate people in general, or how does that work? Because –

Ms. Sherry: It's a very subjective situation in most cases. I guess people, I mean it's not often, but it's enough that people are not happy with how things turned out –

Ms. Crane: Turned out?

Ms. Sherry: – in the court. For their brother, for their partner or for themselves, for – you know, it happens.

Ms. Crane: Sure, and if they see a life sentence for that and then for a property sentence X amount of months, it just doesn't seem to –

Ms. Sherry: I think that's why the courts do the work. They're the ones that are trained. I'm sure that from whatever perspective you may look at a particular case, the mitigating circumstances may be different, and that's why Crown prosecutors do their work and defense lawyers do their work.

It's detailed work and I think sometimes people don't realize all of the mitigating circumstances that are considered during somebody being sentenced for a crime.

Ms. Crane: Okay.

The ankle bracelets?

Ms. Sherry: Still having some discussion in regards to that, but there's been – it's not off the table, but we haven't made any decisions in regards to ankle bracelets.

Your question, the –

Ms. Crane: Drug court?

Ms. Sherry: Courts?

Ms. Crane: Yeah.

Ms. Sherry: We are still working on that. In fact, there is a company who is doing a review of court services, mental health court, domestic violence court and drug court, as we speak, and I'm very interested to hear what the outcome of that work will be.

Ms. Crane: Okay. In the scope of that work are they interviewing victims, like a whole range, or are they looking just at data?

Ms. Sherry: I wish I had kind of the protocol that we had asked for –

Ms. Crane: Sure.

Ms. Sherry: – in the RFP. I do have a copy of that and I can give it to you, but they will be looking at many different avenues. They will be looking at services that are available, community services that are available. They'll be looking at the needs of people who find themselves in that situation. They'll be talking to people who work in the courts. All of those people, their input will be important in making decisions in kind of a picture of what a made-for-PEI therapeutic court would look like.

Ms. Crane: Would look like? Okay, thank you.

And the last –

Ms. Sherry: So, and that's – I'm really interested in that work.

Ms. Crane: I certainly wouldn't mind being kept informed of the progress that that report

– is it an internal document when it's done or is it for public?

Ms. Sherry: I would think it would likely be a public document. I will certainly get Mary to make a note of that –

Ms. Crane: Sure.

Ms. Sherry: – and I'll look forward to getting that.

Ms. Crane: Okay, and then the final question there is just on Aboriginal youth.

Ms. Sherry: Numbers?

Ms. Crane: I'm just curious because, again, elsewhere in Canada there's been Idle No More protests. People are really concerned with the number of issues. One that was raised was the high number of Aboriginal people that tend to be incarcerated for similar crimes that someone else may not, and I'm just curious as to what's the reality here in the province.

Ms. Sherry: Yes, Lori St. Onge does a tremendous amount of work with the Aboriginal population who if – you know, are in the court system. Actually, she does a lot of work and gives a lot of support. I don't have the numbers with me, hon. member, but certainly –

Ms. Crane: I'd be curious if you could bring just a synopsis back of what it's like here in PEI –

Ms. Sherry: Yeah, I'll get Mary to make a note of that and we'll – yeah.

Ms. Crane: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Question was answered.

Chair: What?

Mr. LaVie: The question was answered.

Chair: Oh, was it? Okay.

Shall this section carry? Carried.

Provincial Policing Services – RCMP

Total is 15, 211, 300.

Any questions?

Mr. LaVie: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and then the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. LaVie: Chair, is the minister aware that we do have a mobile breathalyzer going across the Island or is that still going?

Ms. Sherry: I wouldn't know that necessarily.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Sherry: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: There was a mobile breathalyzer that used to go across the Island. Can you tell me when that was discontinued?

Ms. Sherry: I wouldn't have a clue. They have a whole different process now for impaired driving. I can certainly try to find that out for you.

Mr. LaVie: Could you please find that out?

An Hon. Member: Do you mean the stops? (Indistinct)?

Mr. LaVie: Checkpoints, yeah. You could find out when that was discontinued.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, (Indistinct) travel around.

Mr. LaVie: They used to go across the Island, they used to have checkpoints, that's all that unit did. You can probably check with your minister of innovation and he'd probably be aware of it.

Mr. Roach: Madam Chair?

Chair: Oh, I'm sorry -

The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Roach: My experience with that, I left the force roughly seven years ago, but that hadn't been in place prior to 1990. From

1990 until 2007 they had small units that would give a strong indication of whether or not the person was impaired. They may use that at stopchecks or they would use that just in routine when they stopped somebody and believed that they may be impaired.

I wasn't aware that that was reinstated since 2007, but again, I haven't been in the organization since then. Enhancement of the handheld unit that would give them a fail or a warning or a you're okay, I think that pretty well did away with the mobile units that were around the Island.

Thank you.

Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Crane: Just in terms of, minister, how many highway traffic control officers are on the highways?

Ms. Sherry: I could not tell you the exact answer of how many people would be on highway patrol. I could tell you how many RCMP officers there were (Indistinct).

Ms. Crane: Could you find that out? Because I've been told there's a reduction in the number of officers that are actually patrolling the highways. I don't know if it's true or not, and I'd like to know.

Ms. Sherry: Certainly there was a unit that was dedicated to just –

Ms. Crane: Highway.

Ms. Sherry: – highway patrol. They made changes, I believe, a year to a year and a half ago that disassembled and people went back to their own areas of responsibility. But traffic patrol is always something that is part of any detachment's general work.

Ms. Crane: Sure. I was thinking in relation to the high number of drinking and driving, and the fact that I know it's a goal of government, and certainly the general public, to see that reduced. I was just curious in terms of (Indistinct) the old system not work? Is this a better system to try and help identify and deal with that issue?

Ms. Sherry: I think one of the biggest things that is working right now for us in the province is public education, and the awareness of people's responsibility to report if they believe somebody is getting behind the wheel and drinking. I think that's the biggest (Indistinct), and I think whether you have a dedicated highway patrol unit per se or carry out those duties within your own precinct or community or area of policing, one would not make a whole lot of difference over the other. The issue is they do have to be mindful when they are stopping someone that they are actually showing the signs of being intoxicated.

I think that the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning sort of touched on that. You don't just do routine checks like you used to. They carry the small breathalyzer tests on them and they have to have good reason to stop someone. But I truly believe that one of the biggest impacts on the impaired driving is the buy in from the general public that they are not going to accept the fact that somebody gets behind the wheel impaired and call 911.

Chair: I have two members – did you have information, hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale?

Mr. Dumville: Yes. That was I believe a six-man traffic services unit, and it was kind of, like, abandoned. In the past, what the RCMP always did, you were in detachment duties, like you did highway patrol and all those things on your way to, you had files in regards to break and enters, etc., and you did traffic services. Anyway, those traffic service units were specialized so that they could dedicate time to actual traffic duties just in case people were (Indistinct).

Chair: Could you just address the Chair, hon. member?

Mr. Dumville: Oh – given this special interest. But since that, there's mobile radar and everything that the detachment didn't have it, and the traffic services units, they were always stationery units. Now with the mobile units, when they're meeting you, like, they've got you. Technology has moved farther ahead so detachment people have more opportunity to pay more attention to traffic violations when they're on their

route to break and enters or domestic complaints or whatever you have.

Chair: Okay, thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Could you tell me how many Mounties are on PEI under this contract?

Ms. Sherry: I believe the number is – I mean, it fluctuates a little bit, but I'm going to say around 147 to 158, thereabouts.

Mr. Brown: Anyway, yeah, that's a lot of officers. It's good.

I've been working with Colonel Gray and the police officer that they have at Colonel Gray sponsored by the City of Charlottetown and the province last year. I really believe that this program is working. I'm a strong advocate of this program, of having a police officer in our high schools.

High school kids are under extreme pressure nowadays, I'd say even more pressure than when I was going to school with all the activities that are going on today. When I was (Indistinct) high school it was just go out in the street Friday nights, more or less, or hanging around with a few other guys. Nowadays they have the Internet, the online, all the online stuff that's going on. You could be bullied online now. In the old days you'd be bullied on a Friday night in a park or something, with a fight. But nowadays it extends beyond the classroom, beyond the outside, it's in the houses of these students, and there is a lot of pressure on them. I think that the more we can do to prevent drug addiction in the schools or the more we can do in the schools, before they hit the criminal level, it'll be a major saving in that area.

I think that we have to look at the program of maybe having a couple of Mounties go through the rural schools and explain it to them. From the one at Colonel Gray, kids can go to the police officer at Colonel Gray and explain their situation to them, or explain the potential bullying that's occurring. Because my personal opinion is that a lot of drug addiction in our youth is a

result of bullying or peer pressure. When kids are in a group, and they may not want to drink or take drugs, the peer pressure may extend into bullying and then they're forced into taking narcotics to keep up their group or otherwise they're expelled from the group. Or sometimes they're abused by the group, physically and mentally.

With the officer at Colonel Gray – and I commend the city for doing it, and I commend the volunteer groups that have come forward with the funding in order to continue it going, I think that the kids, what my information is, and it's a very hard topic, my information is, is that the kids can go to the officer. I know the officer, he's a great officer, something like the officers when I was going to school. There was Keith Williams, Shorty, or Keith Wakelin, Shorty Williams. Those guys, although they were police officers, they were community support people, too. Because being a young person, they mentored me in a lot of situations and a lot of my friends in a lot of situations that avoided us going to the next level of activities.

I think with the amount of work that officers have today that we're losing that community connection. Our police officers are losing the community connection, I believe, because if it was not true we wouldn't have the drug problems we have today.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Brown: Yeah, well, you may have your opinion. I have my opinion.

Because that's the way it is. The peer pressure that is on the children in the schools, the way the system is set up today, it's all legalized. The children are criminalized right off the bat. Our youth offenders act I don't think has worked properly. I think when the youth offenders act came in the drug addictions in the schools have gone dramatically up. I think there's something wrong with our system that we can't intervene at an earlier stage in order to keep our children away from drugs, away from liquor, and away from crime. If it's a matter of our police officers spending more time in the schools and helping out our kids before they enter that stage, I think it's a good approach.

It's working at Colonel Gray, I'm told, it's working substantially well at Colonel Gray. The principal says with some of the anonymity that goes along with a kid being able to say: I'm under a lot of pressure here, I'm under a lot of pressure to take drugs. The officer then can go to the group and say: Look, we know what you're doing. I know Shorty Williams and Keith Wakelin and all that did that in the past. It worked very well. We can say it was bad. We can say it was never working. It worked. I know. I know.

Chair: Do you want to ask the minister something?

Mr. Brown: My question – well, I want to preamble, because this is an important topic, Madam Chairman. We should be discussing things like that in this House. That's what this House is for.

In some way – and maybe we should have a resolution on this or something – but in some way we have to intervene at an earlier stage with these kids. I think we're spending too much money – but we have to spend that amount of money now on the after-effect.

We're spending \$10 million a year on drug addictions after the fact. We're spending a lot of money on crime. Why can't we just spend a little money on prevention and go into these schools and try to stop our kids before they enter? That's my question. Why can't we allocate some of this RCMP budget or some sort of money to go into the school system?

I know what's going to be said: If we have to go into Souris, we have to go into every school. Look, if it's one day a week, it's one day a week more now than it was in the past. That's my request.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms. Sherry: Did you want an answer to that question or feedback?

Mr. Brown: Yeah.

Chair: Do you want a response to that?

Mr. Brown: Sure.

Ms. Sherry: I don't disagree with what you're saying. But as you can see that the number of dollars that are spent on policing in this province, it's a huge number. I believe that if Charlottetown Rural feels that it is a very proactive approach to having –

Mr. Brown: Colonel Gray.

Ms. Sherry: Colonel Gray. Sorry. Feels that it's a proactive way to pre-empt crime or help reduce crime, that it's an effective use of dollars to have an officer in the school, I think that that's a wonderful choice that they would make.

But I do believe that it has to happen within the dollars that are already allotted for policing, be it through the RCMP or the municipal police forces. I think that's a decision that needs to be made within the budget, within the dollars that they are given to provide policing services. The same as if they felt, for whatever reason, that they needed an extra officer down on the waterfront. That's just an example. They felt that there were issues there. By having an extra officer down there would alleviate issues. I think that it's well within their decision on how they use their policing dollars most effectively within their budgets.

Mr. Brown: Would you prefer to catch a child before or after?

Ms. Sherry: I think that when –

Mr. Brown: I bet it's a lot cheaper to catch them or to prevent crime instead of waiting after.

Ms. Sherry: Proactivity, public education, all of those things are absolutely worth their weight in gold. I'm not saying that they're not. I'm not against the fact that any school would choose to have a police officer doing work within the schools. I think it's a very proactive thing.

What I'm saying is that I believe that the amount of dollars that are spent on policing in this province is ample, and I believe that the decisions to provide those services within school and the jurisdiction, be it the city of Summerside, the city of Charlottetown or wherever, that they decide that it is a good use of policing dollars to

have an officer there, then by all means they should do that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Question to the minister. I agree 100% with the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park. Because in our school we did have an RCMP officer funded by the government. That program was cut out.

The Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park is right. It's better to educate the kids when the kids are younger. When the kids are educated younger, you save that money in the jail system, the drug system, all the way down the ladder. Will you start that program up again? Because you've got \$177,000 right here in professional contracts you don't know what you're doing with.

Ms. Sherry: It seems to me, hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, when you look at the cost of policing in this province, it's an exorbitant amount of money when you look at those dollars. I'm not saying that it's not necessary or that it's not needed.

I challenge you to recognize the fact that you can't reduce spending and save dollars and increase services at the same time. That's my response to that. I firmly believe that it's a decision that has to be made within the jurisdiction of the community that's making decisions around policing.

I'm fully aware that it could be a great idea and I don't not support it. I support what you're saying. I support what the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park is saying. What I'm saying is that those dollars are gone out to jurisdictions and to municipalities. If they feel that it is absolutely imperative and the better use of dollars, as the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, in prevention, if putting an officer in the school every day the school is open is a way to drop the crime rate in Prince Edward Island and they feel dedicated to that, then by all means they should do that.

What I'm saying is that we have budgets to work within, and how they use those dollars

is a decision of that municipality or community.

Mr. LaVie: Chair, the minister is saying educating our kids to keep them out of the drugs, out of the jail system, out of the court system, won't save you down the road.

That's like the Minister of Health and Wellness saying he's trying to push everybody into sports, be active, and it'll keep them out of the health system. If we educate these kids, we'll keep them out of the justice system. That should help us.

Ms. Sherry: Do you as a parent believe that a police officer in the school, it's their job to educate children on appropriate drug use or lack thereof?

Mr. LaVie: Yes.

Ms. Sherry: I absolutely believe that they can help be mentors in those situations –

Mr. LaVie: Yes. I've seen it. I've seen these kids go to this RCMP officer – I won't mention his name. He's a great guy, a great community guy. The kids trusted this RCMP officer more than they trusted the parents.

Ms. Sherry: So, we have two questions going on here.

Mr. LaVie: You're asking the questions.

Ms. Sherry: No, no. The two questions are: Do I believe that officers provide a service if they were placed in schools? As the minister of justice I say: Any support that kids can get is a good thing. The second question is: Am I going to pay additional dollars for a police officer to provide those services in a school in every community?

Mr. LaVie: You've got \$177,000 here you can't account for.

Ms. Sherry: The decision has to be made. I'm saying that by all means, if they feel that that's a good use of their budget dollars, then by all means they should use it in that fashion.

Chair: I do have two other members. Do you have a question or another comment? I'll just go to them.

I have the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Currie: Just a couple of comments. Obviously the resource position at Colonel Gray – we were in conversation a number of years back with one particular councillor that was promoting the model. All of a sudden this year the city decided that it was time to put a resource officer in.

I'm fully supportive of resource officers in schools in the province, particularly at the high school level. But I think the way the city of Charlottetown handled it it was set up to fail, simply because of their – they made a decision to implement a resource into a school with only a half a year commitment of funding. Those types of implementations usually never succeed. I think that there's an opportunity now. I think the majority of the people, I mean, there's a good debate in this, but there are a lot of individuals that would support the resource position.

I think the municipalities, the provincial law enforcement, the RCMP, and government departments really need to – and I think, from what I understand, that Cabinet has directed a committee to start a conversation around that. If we're going to do this, we have to do it right. This sort of one-off for half a year funding was completely fumbled and a big mistake by the city of Charlottetown.

I think that I see the challenges. I've got students and families that attend Colonel Grey and I see the value and the need for a resource officer in the school. But I also have students and families that attend the Charlottetown Rural, and I also just saw an article in the media last week regarding, or just recently in Montague, about a drug seizure.

So this is a very serious issue and I think if we're going to do this right – and we're going to look at resource officers – I think there needs to be a formal plan, and done quickly. It's not just making decisions off the side of municipalities' desks for certain reasons.

I think it's a good idea and I think it's – if you look at Fredericton High School and the major high schools in New Brunswick, they have them. They've had them in there for 12 to 15 years, so they're working. But I think that we need to look at it from a provincial lens, not from just a town lens, because there are as many issues in rural Prince Edward Island with substance abuse as there is in Charlottetown.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Currie: Listen, can I finish what I'm saying here, and put a muzzle on him?

Chair: We're having a good discussion, hon. member, please show respect during the discussion.

The minister here would like to respond.

Mr. Currie: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Sherry: Is it a question? He made a statement.

Chair: It's part of their topic.

Yeah, okay, if you –

Mr. Currie: Go ahead.

Chair: If you want to finish your discussion.

Mr. Currie: Yeah, just, I mean, it's an important issue. But I certainly am a big proponent. I think it's a resource.

We know that times we're fiscally challenged in government departments and municipalities, but there needs to be a conversation and a collaborative approach to these – this is not about the municipal government, this is not about the department of health, this is not about – this is about kids that are struggling. I agree with the Member from Charlottetown- Victoria Park, that a lot of conversations can run a whole lot of interference and deflect children and youth from going down the wrong path.

I believe that, and I would like to see us continue to work together to look at results for high schools all across Prince Edward Island, not just downtown Charlottetown.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning, do you have a comment or a question?

Mr. Roach: Just a comment, perhaps for a little bit of clarification, Chair.

Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Roach: I certainly agree with the Member from Charlottetown- Victoria Park. Having been involved in drug enforcement for a greater part of my 37 years in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, having been involved in drug enforcement and school programs, certainly in Kings County, and aware of what's gone on throughout Prince Edward Island.

There's been a great debate over the years whether the concentration should be in enforcement to get drugs off the street, whether there should be prevention, or where the concentration should be. I think that, clearly, conversation can be had around that, but there needs to be work in each of those areas.

In terms of the comments made from the Member from Souris- Elmira, there was an officer that spent the majority of his time in the schools in Souris, but that officer was never assigned out of funding to totally do nothing but the school program in Souris. That officer was subject to an injury on duty, and there was a duty to accommodate that officer in work. So although the officer wasn't fit to be on duty to be on the highway or to be out there wrestling people or fighting, there was a duty to accommodate and keep the officer working where possible. There was no funding at that time ever dedicated solely to that position to be in the schools. That was a situation that worked out both for the benefit of the member that had to be accommodated and for the community. I understand that since then that that member's been transferred to another duty area, and of course, the funds go to that.

I think one of the problems we have is we're talking about two different jurisdictions here, and we're talking about two different budgets. We're talking about the city of Charlottetown and rural PEI. I know that the

RCMP does have officers assigned to every school in rural PEI, and they're school liaison officers. The RCMP does have a drug awareness officer that's located in the headquarters building on University Avenue, and they make themselves available to go to all schools across PEI, including in the city of Charlottetown. I think we need to continue to support that as much as we can.

It's a problem and it's not going to go away. The area where I do agree with the Member from Charlottetown- Victoria Park is that it is an issue, and the sooner that we can get to those youth and make them realize the dangers and the harm of drugs, it's going to prevent a lot of crime down the road. When we attack drug traffickers and we get them off the street, I think that also goes a long way to reducing all those other crimes that are committed. Because a lot of the other crimes that are committed, the petty crimes, the theft, the home invasions, you'll always find out at the end of the day, and 95% of those cases, it's to go to either buy drugs or pay off drug debt.

Thank you for giving me the time.

Chair: Sure.

I do have a follow up and another question, and I want to make sure everyone gets time to voice their questions or concerns around this budget line.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown- Victoria Park and then the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to set the stage, I think it's great the discussion that goes on. Sure, it's a budget number, it's 150,000,000 or 15,000,000 or whatever. I think it's –

Chair: Yeah, I think it's a good discussion.

Mr. Brown: – we come to this Legislature for this kind of discussion. The innovation minister was great, he explained some of the things that are occurring.

Can we get the RCMP, and maybe the – we have a police commission, I understand now, and I don't know if the police commission is just about –

Chair: That's the next budget.

Mr. Brown: – enforcement of the rules in the police commission itself, or can the police commissioner – can someone take a look at this? I know there's a committee, but I think it's beyond an internal committee. I think it's time for a public discussion on this. It's time like – look, when I went to school, I was no angel, okay? But, you know, and – but I –

An Hon. Member: When you went to school?

Mr. Brown: Yeah, I went to school. I did pretty good in school, too. I did really good in school because I'll tell you why I did good in school, because it was cops like Shorty Williams and Keith Wakelin and them guys like that that pulled me back from going over the other end.

That's why I'm here today to say that we can save a lot of children, we can save a lot of problems here if we just look at it and do – never mind the number. We can say we were in fiscal times or bad troubles with balancing our budgets and things like that, but at some point in time we have to put the budget aside for a little amount of money to save a lot of people.

That's all I'm asking. All I'm asking is can the RCMP, can somebody, take a look at this problem and see what we can do in order to stop the onslaught of drugs in our schools? That's all I'm asking for. We can talk about you have to do this or we have to look at this, we should look at this and we should look at this. We know there's a problem. It's not a liquor problem, it's not a six-pack of beer out in the backyard anymore, it's not a six-pack of beer in a car anymore, and a few guys in a car anymore.

These things are not a one-night drunk or a weekend drunk. When you get caught in this stuff you're in it for a while. So I ask that we look at it.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Minister, you were ready for your next question?

Ms. Sherry: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition and then we have the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira and the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Now the minister of health touched on the issue in Montague and I know there was an arrest this week for drug trafficking that was in a close proximity to the intermediate school, which isn't overly close to the high school, but it brings me to the high school question.

I think Montague is in a real need to have somebody in that school. Not just available to talk for an hour or two or show up every now and then. I think there's a real issue there that needs to be addressed when it comes to policing in the school.

I know that you're going to say that you don't have the money for it, but you have money and it's placed all over the place. I mean, it's about priorities and I think it's a – the whole debate about drugs, our youth, youth addictions and stuff, it's becoming a very serious issue in the province. I don't know if we're doing enough to address it. I think, from the stories that I'm hearing out of the Colonel Grey situation, that there's a real opportunity there to provide the students with some stability, along with the feeling of safety that's provided.

I think that somewhere in this total Budget, if it's not just your budget, we need to look at how we best approach that situation. The minister of health, he likes to talk about he has money for addictions in his budget. I mean, maybe he can put his money where his mouth is and help you out-

Chair: Just, watch –

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. But maybe he can help you provide this if he's got these great ideas. It's an opportunity for maybe many departments to work together to provide the type of environment that we should be sending our kids to in a high school. I'm just wondering if you think there is any opportunity there.

Ms. Sherry: Again, in principle, I do not disagree with the effectiveness and the police officer in the high school setting.

What I'm saying is that if it is a priority for a community that they would wish to see that happen, they need to have some frank discussions with their policing service. If that's something that they feel very strongly about and they put an officer in, then what I'm saying is the policing dollars to me are ample. The decisions of how they spend those dollars within their municipality or community is something that needs to be placed as a priority in community by community. That's what I'm saying.

Leader of the Opposition: So is the case of Charlottetown Rural, for example, it falls within the municipality of Charlottetown. But the students who attend that school, they reach out from all over around the outskirts of Charlottetown. There may be a significant concern for people who don't live in the municipality that their children may not be safe or students are –

Ms. Sherry: I guess – who is providing policing to that area? What police –

Leader of the Opposition: The Charlottetown Police would for Charlottetown Rural.

Ms. Sherry: So then that would be who they would have the discussion with.

Leader of the Opposition: So it's up to the city of Charlottetown to – so what about Montague? The RCMP provide it.

Ms. Sherry: Same idea. If they feel that that is a priority then the community –

Leader of the Opposition: Why is it up to them?

Ms. Sherry: – that they need to look at that. What I'm saying is if you look at the dollars that are allocated within the budget for policing in the province, I see it as a decision that happens within those dollars.

Leader of the Opposition: But there's no –

Ms. Sherry: Anything outside of that, then that's another (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: There is no fluency in the way your department runs if that's the case. Because what you want to do –

Ms. Sherry: We allot dollars to the area and the area decides (Indistinct) that.

Leader of the Opposition: But you should be making sure that one group is talking to the other, that you haven't created silos. We have a justice system that – we have jails and you have issues there with crowding in jails and whatnot. But then we're going to leave it up to a community. If you decide you want to have a discussion about having an officer in your school, go ahead. If you don't, we'll just put them in jail later is basically what you're telling me.

Do you think that there's a drug -

Ms. Sherry: That's not what I'm saying.

Leader of the Opposition: That is in essence what you're saying without saying it.

Chair: Could we just have questions rather get in an argument?

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

Chair: I know it's easy.

Leader of the Opposition: It's so easy. The drugs in the schools. Do you think that drugs in the schools are a major issue?

Ms. Sherry: Absolutely.

Leader of the Opposition: So how do we best deal with that?

Ms. Sherry: I think that we do have some effective tools in the tool box. Are they all working? Is there more work that we need to do? Absolutely. I don't think it's something that we're going to solve overnight. But I think that the proactive approach by the RCMP and some of the programs that they have, as well as the focus that municipal police forces have – and certainly the public awareness campaign that engages families and people into being aware of the seriousness of the issue - are certainly all things that help the situation.

Leader of the Opposition: I think there are some serious drugs in school. I'm not sure if everybody's understanding of it is not from the 1960s where it was beer and marijuana. This is a much different – there are heavy,

harsh drugs that are in our schools right now and we need to figure out a way to get them out, keep them out, and to deal with the people that are bringing them in.

I don't know, I guess I'm wondering what the plan is to ensure that we do do that in the best possible way for the future of our students, right?

Chair: Thank you.

Minister, anything you'd like to add to that?

Ms. Sherry: No, it's good.

Chair: I recognize this is a very important and emotional issue, so I do have other people waiting.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm done.

Chair: You're okay?

I have the hon. Members from Souris-Elmira, West Royalty-Springvale, Charlottetown-Sherwood and Stratford-Kinlock. If you could just make sure, if you have a question for the minister, keep your comments short enough if possible so everybody has a turn.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is a great discussion here today and you probably heard from six, seven, eight different members here today. So it is a serious issue. Again, I go back to the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria. Forget about the money issue, it's all about these kids. These kids get to a certain age point and it's one bad conversation out behind a building and they're on the wrong track. I see it, minister, and probably most members in this House see it. Money shouldn't be an issue when you can't account for 177,000 there in professional fees.

The Member from Montague-Kilmuir – yes, the RCMP in Souris when he was doing the pilot project in SRHS was on the injury list, and he's still on the injury list, and they sent him to Charlottetown to sit in an office. They're still paying him but they're paying him more because they're paying him

mileage. It's things like that – you should have him probably keep in SRHS, keep him off the road and you'll save yourself some money.

Let's stick the money thing aside. You heard from lots of members here today, minister, and you seem pretty reluctant to take their advice. My advice, and the Minister of Health and Wellness had real good points there, and I'd like to see you take this advice and come back to this Legislature ASAP.

Could you do that for us?

Ms. Sherry: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Mr. Dumville: Yes, I'd just like to say it's kind of a bigger issue. The RCMP recognizes that with the advent of cars the officers were becoming isolated from the community. If you look at all the big metropolitan forces now, you see the officers. The officers used to walk up and down the street in any major city and they knew the people, they knew their community, and they lost that. They weren't talking to the community grocery store operator, etc. They tried to get back to community-based policing. All these police forces recognize that.

Through the time – like, I got in the RCMP because an officer came and he coached our football team in O'Leary and he set an example. Officers try in smaller communities to coach teams, etc. I think that Colonel Gray, as our Member from Charlottetown-Victoria – why it's so successful is that police officer is connecting with the kids. The kids don't want to rat out their friends, but when the officer becomes a friend, too, and they talk about the situation, it's not a question of: I'm telling. It's just oozing out all the information. The officer knows the territory.

I think that's what we got to get back to. A radical idea. It's too bad the RCMP detachments weren't attached to the high schools where the RCMP officers would be coming and going and be part of the young people. The young people know more what's going on in the community than the adults do. The officers were coming and

going and being part of the community. I know it's kind of a radical thought, but it is this important that the officers are getting closer to the students.

How we do that I don't know. But a lot of concern has been placed here today and I commend the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park for being an advocate of getting back to not only community-based policing but student-based policing.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll try to be very brief. I know –

Chair: You don't have much time.

Mr. Mitchell: – it took a little longer than expected. I just want to make a couple of comments.

I know most of the focus has been in the high school areas and there's no doubt there is a major problem in the high school situations. I think there's things been proven there.

But my back yard, I've lived beside one of probably the largest junior high schools in Charlottetown for a number of years, way before I got in to politics. I've witnessed lots of occurrences at the junior high level as well.

I guess what I'm asking minister, if you'd consider, if there's some thought put into this. No doubt the younger age, you get to provide guidance to them, the better off they'll be, and maybe you won't need them in the high schools down the road. There are also some issues probably at a younger age that – give that consideration, I guess, as well, and that may add to some prevention in high school levels.

Mr. Brown: And our kids are good.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Madam Minister, could you please read this?

Ms. Sherry: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and that the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Madam Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again.

I move the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, this House adjourn until Thursday, April 4th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good night, everyone.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 2:00 p.m.