

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Carolyn Bertram

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Third Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly

Wednesday, 17 April 2013

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS.....	1586
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS.....	1588
TRACADIE-HILLSBOROUGH PARK (The Canadian Mental Health Association).....	1588
CHARLOTTETOWN-SHERWOOD (Papa Joe's 25 th Anniversary).....	1588
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Mooney's Farms Soil Conservationist of the Year Award).....	1589
ORAL QUESTIONS	1589
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Cancer Deaths Among Women).....	1589
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Prostate Cancer).....	1590
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Breast Cancer).....	1590
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Reason for High Mortality Rate re: Cancer).....	1591
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Epidemiologist re: Cancer).....	1591
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Cancer Treatment).....	1592
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (HW Minister's Method of Operation).....	1593
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Cancer Control Strategy).....	1593
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Cancer Treatment Facility).....	1594
ALBERTON-ROSEVILLE (Western Hospital Closure).....	1597
ALBERTON-ROSEVILLE (Western Hospital and CEC Model).....	1597
ALBERTON-ROSEVILLE (Hay Report).....	1597
TYNE VALLEY-LINKLETTER (Cyberbullying).....	1598
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Retirement of Oncologist and Effect on Cancer Patients).....	1599
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Off-Island Travel to Oncologist).....	1599
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Off-Island Travel Assistance).....	1600
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Off-Island Cancer Patient Wait Times).....	1600
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Off-Island Travel Assistance-further).....	1601
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Oncologist Wait Times).....	1602
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS	1602
COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SENIORS (Social Action Plan Update).....	1602
ENVIRONMENT, LABOUR AND JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL (Youth Engagement Projects).....	1604
AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY AND DEPUTY PREMIER (Prince Edward Island Burger Love Day).....	1605

FISHERIES, AQUACULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (Shellfish Research Program).....	1605
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (Advance Care Planning Day).....	1606
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	1607
REPORTS BY COMMITTEES.....	1607
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (First Report)	1607
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT).....	1608
ESTIMATES.....	1608
TOURISM AND CULTURE	1608
ADJOURNED.....	1638

The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the public gallery today.

I see a gentleman here who's not here very often, Reg Chapman, who is actually making national news recently, selling a building in the Souris area, I believe, for a dollar. I happened to be home that night watching the *Lang and O'Leary Exchange* and he made the *Lang and O'Leary Exchange*, got some great press out of it for Souris, Prince Edward Island, and for all of Prince Edward Island. I'd like to congratulate him on doing good work for the province.

I'd also like to say hello to all those watching on EastLink, Channel 10. Also, if my girls are home and awake right now I'd like to say hello to Julie and Emma.

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.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here to the gallery today and those that are following along at home.

A couple of things to note. Tonight there's another health meeting, and it's in O'Leary, and I hope the people from the area come out to hear what's being said and have their say.

I also want to remind people that we're about halfway through Burger Love. I know myself I'm not going to get all the way through it, but I hear there are some people

already reporting that they've eaten every burger. I don't know how that's humanly possible. I encourage everyone to get out and try Burger Love.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I do want to say thank you and like to rise and welcome everyone in the gallery.

There are some familiar faces here and it's great to see the regulars show up and any guests. It's nice to see them as well.

Like to welcome everyone on EastLink, and a special welcome to a cousin of mine who is retired now. Her name is Marilyn Barlow and she lives in Augustine Cove. She has a beautiful home overlooking the water, the ocean, and it's a very tranquil beautiful spot, very peaceful on a sunny day like today. I do wish her well and everyone out there watching from every district on PEI.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It gives me great privilege to rise and welcome everyone in the gallery. Chris Ortenburger and her daughter. Reg Chapman, and Reg got with him today his brother-in-law Ferdinand Gallant. Ferdinand Gallant's daughter is married to my nephew. Real great people.

I'd like to welcome everybody watching on EastLink from District 1.

Madam Speaker, thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise to welcome those who are visiting us in the gallery. I see Travis Gordon there today, the vice-president of the executive of the Student Union at UPEI. I'm sure he's finished his exams so he's here to visit us. I can tell by the smile on his face that he is finished exams. Welcome to Travis.

Also, I'd like to say hello to all those from Charlottetown-Lewis Point who are watching. You know I always appreciate their advice that they give to me.

It's on a sad note – the first lady of song, Rita MacNeil from Cape Breton, has passed. She was a great singer/songwriter who through song connected with the issues of the day and all Cape Bretoners. My condolences go out to her friends and family and fans, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Docherty: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is a pleasure to stand today, and of course such a gorgeous day. There is hope. Summer is on its way for sure by the look of that sunshine.

In the gallery today I have the luxury of some of my constituents. The Ortenburger family has already been recognized, as well as Chelsey Condon is here. Chelsey worked last summer with us. She was a Page in here, but she worked last summer with Dr. Wendy Verhoek-Oftedahl and the issues of family violence. She was so well appreciated that Dr. Wendy actually almost pleaded with both of us not to let her go back to school, and that says a lot with who Chelsey is.

Also, I think I saw – Jodi Swan is in the gallery as well. Jodi and I have created a nice friendship and it's always a pleasure to see her. Finally, Norman MacDonald of the community of Crapaud is in the hospital. Norman's not doing well but he's holding his own and we're very hopefully that he will be coming home shortly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise today and welcome everybody to the gallery. Of course, our regular, Eddie Lund, is here and also I'd like to say hello to Dave and Joyce Thompson who are here today from out Dunstaffnage, and also to Reg Chapman and his brother-in-law. Also to everybody watching from the great district of number eight, Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

Also, I'd just like to make note of yesterday evening there was a fair amount of ice left in Winter Bay and it was getting pretty shaky looking, and this morning when I went over Corran Ban Bridge there was not a sphere of ice to be seen. The ice has completely disappeared overnight, so that's a great sign, a sign that it's spring. The temperature is just humming today and everybody is busy, and it's a great time to be an Islander.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

Mr. MacKinley: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to welcome all of the viewers here today and also the viewers who are watching on television. They tell me to tell the Tories to increase your question line, it's been pretty poor lately.

I'd like to also welcome Cliffe and Vivian Snider from the great district of Cornwall-Meadowbank, and with them today is Greg and Rosie Snider who are visiting from Alberta. It's great to have them here today and maybe they'll take the (Indistinct) liberalisms back to Alberta when they go back.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise today and to welcome everyone in the gallery including back here in the press gallery, of course. We don't always recognize you but it's great to have you here.

I'd also like to recognize a young gentleman up in the gallery, Kip Holloway. Kip, as everybody undoubtedly knows here in the Legislature, he does tremendous work in our community and particularly for veterans. Reg Chapman, the Premier sang his accolades a few minutes ago, but something else that Reg is very integral in making happen every year is a food drive in Stratford. Reg has been doing this for many years. I know he's been trying to develop a succession plan in the hopes that somebody may take it on, that he might be able to retire, but at this point in time Reg is still the man.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

The Canadian Mental Health Association

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Prince Edward Island Division, recently held its fifth annual women and wellness event at the Murchison Centre in Charlottetown.

This unique and popular event is designed to give women a night off while increasing awareness of mental health issues, while raising funds to support the work of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Prince Edward Island Division.

The event was born out of one family's loss of a son and brother by suicide and their resulting awareness of how common, yet hidden, mental illness continues to exist.

The first event began in Moncton, New Brunswick, 10 years ago, with the first Prince Edward Island event happening in 2009.

The most recent successful event featured Wade Lynch, the associate artistic director for the Charlottetown festival, and award-winning journalist Jan Wong. Also attending were representatives from 16 communities across Canada.

Joyce Thompson, chairperson of the group, informed me that in the last five years the group has raised over \$150,000. Joyce has expressed her gratitude for a huge turnout and looks forward to continued support as countless numbers of families both locally and nationally deal with this silent and disturbing disease.

In today's society, people dealing with mental illness should be listened to without stigmatism or judgment. We are no longer living in the stone ages and it's time to make mental illness and their struggle a part of everyday life.

Today, we have the chairperson; Joyce Thompson, with us in the gallery so –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Watts: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Sherwood.

Papa Joe's 25th Anniversary

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

At one time or another I'm sure most of us have enjoyed a meal or two at Papa Joe's restaurant on University Avenue. On Thursday, April 6th, Papa Joe's celebrated their 25th anniversary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mitchell: Papa Joe's is a family business run by Barb, Johnny, and Joanne. On most days you will also find Amelia, their mother, keeping a watchful eye over her children and the restaurant.

Now when I say family restaurant, I don't mean that in the typical sense. The family has come to know their patrons personally, and it is not unusual to hear them catching

up on their clients' news, and what's going on in their lives.

Papa Joe's new clientele continues to grow, as does their regulars. They have seen families with small children dine there every week over the years, and some of those kids are now grown up and married and are coming back with their kids to enjoy Papa Joe's and the Jabbour family. If that's not a good review for a restaurant, I don't know what is.

I'm sure Joe, Amelia's husband, and father of Barb, Johnny, and Jo-Anne, who unfortunately passed away in 1991, would be extremely proud of his family for successfully continuing on with the family business.

So today I would like to say a heartfelt happy 25th anniversary to Papa Joe's and the Jabbour family.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mooney's Farms Soil Conservationist of the Year Award

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise today to recognize the hard work of Mooney's farms in protecting the environment.

Arthur Mooney's son's farm was the recipient of the Soil Conservationist of the Year Award this past February. The annual Soil Conservationist of the Year Award is awarded each year to a deserving farm business. This prestigious award recognizes practices that conserve or protect the soil and water. It is awarded at the PEI Soil and Crop Improvement Association conference.

Mooney's Farm was awarded for their recognition of the importance of protecting the environment and taking measures to ensure this. They have showed that they are leading in the industry in sustainable agriculture developments.

We have to ensure we protect the environment so we can have a sustainable agriculture industry into the future. Prince Edward Island, as with the rest of the world, will depend on this. The agriculture industry is one of the most important industries in our Island economy and we cannot afford to allow it to slip through the cracks.

I would like to thank Mooney's farms for their pro-active approach on ensuring the safety of the environment in which they farm, and wish them all the best in the upcoming farm season.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Cancer deaths among women

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Prince Edward Island has the highest mortality rate amongst women with cancer in our country.

Question to the minister of health: Why are you failing to help our mothers, our sisters, our daughters on PEI who are passing away due to cancer?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I do agree with the statement from the Leader of the Opposition. Obviously the cancer trend report that was created and conducted by my department indicates that we are seeing a high incidence of cancer here in the province. We take that information very seriously. But one of the realities of the information is that we have an aging population, and that is tied to the rates we're seeing.

As government we will continue to use that information to continue to make appropriate investments and good policy to continue to battle the fight against cancer, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We're not only talking about the incidence of cancer here, we're talking about the mortality rate. Thirty women will die this year because of breast cancer in this province, and it has nothing to do with age, it has nothing to do with an aging population. It has everything to do with your failures, and that's what we're going to talk about here today, your failures.

Prostate cancer

Dr. Dryer has indicated that our province has a significant problem with prostate cancer. Minister, why have you failed to help these fathers, brothers, and sons with prostate cancer in our province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Last Friday I had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Champion, who is an oncologist here in the Province of Prince Edward Island, with the Canadian Cancer Society, with some of the staff.

As government we're very interested in looking at ways that we can continue to address the challenges and the needs. Dr. Champion talked about the investments that have been made, but also the investments that need to continue to be made. We're waiting for correspondence from Dr. Champion to look at ways they can reorganize and be more efficient as a cancer treatment unit.

As the minister, I'm very pleased with the progress and the work that is – and the health care that's administered through our

cancer treatment centre, which was a new \$4.1 million investment by our government.

We are making inroads, but I recognize as minister there's a lot of work yet to be done, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Prince Edward Island. I think what the minister here doesn't understand is that it's going to take more than him looking for ways or him sitting down to talk. It's actually going to take some action from him.

Breast cancer

Dr. Dryer is also concerned about the high number of new cases of breast cancer that are very advanced. This suggested cancers are being missed and our screening program is for some reason not always working.

Question to the minister. Actions speak louder than words. Why have you continued to fail the mothers, daughters and sisters of our province who have advanced stages of breast cancer?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As minister, we're very interested at looking at wait times. As a province we are performing well in respect to our national standards, in respect to radiation wait times. We're at 97%. PEI's leading the way for Atlantic Canada in radiation wait times.

Our investments in the provincial colorectal screening program last year saw over 3,300 Islanders that have been screened. We've reduced – coming into government we were faced with a huge challenge in respect to the wait times for breast cancer treatments. We reduced the breast cancer wait times to days rather than months.

We are continuing to work at the wait times in a range of services in respect to cancer treatment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Reason for high mortality rate re: cancer

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Now the minister talks about wait times, and he talks about leading the way. It's sad to say that we are leading the way. We have the second highest incident rate for prostate cancer in the whole country. We have the second highest mortality rate for cancer in this whole country. We have the third highest mortality rate for lung cancer in this whole country. We have the highest mortality rate for women in all cancers combined in the country. That's what we're leading the way in, and you should be ashamed of that.

Islanders are worried about the alarmingly high levels of cancer here in our province.

Question to the minister: Do we even know why Prince Edward Island has such high mortality rates for cancer?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I don't have the cancer trend report here but will bring specifics back in respect to the clinical questions that the Leader of the Opposition is asking.

As government, we take the realities of cancer here in the province very seriously. Our investments have been very progressive in respect to the \$4.1 million investment. I constantly get feedback from Islanders in respect to the care they're getting.

As minister I recognize that we've got huge issues and challenges in respect to cancer rates. As minister, the cancer trend report clearly indicated that, which is a public document. That document will give us good

data to continue to make the appropriate investments in the prevention of cancer.

As government, with the changes that we've made in the *Smoke-free Places Act*, we're leading the country in the prevention of smoking regulations. Recently, last fall, I brought in tanning bed regulations to bring in legislative policy to be very aggressive on the preventative side of cancer, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister talks about leading the way, and sadly, again, you are leading the way. We have the second highest incident rate for colorectal cancer and the second highest mortality rate in this whole country. We have the highest mortality rate for breast cancer – 26% higher than the national average. We indeed lead the way, and you should be ashamed to say that.

Epidemiologist re: cancer

These aren't clinical questions. These are questions that need to be answered. I'd be interested to hear what an epidemiologist has to say on this issue. Epidemiologists deal with the science and the studies of what causes cancer and ways to treat it. Every province in this country has an epidemiologist to look at cancer trends, except PEI.

Question to the minister: Do you know, minister, that if PEI had an epidemiologist, you would not only be able to answer my questions here today that you can't answer, but you'd be able to identify the causes and cures for cancer on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I believe that Dr. McClure in our department is an epidemiologist. She is the individual that led and provided the data and the work

in the cancer trends report. I must add that it was an exceptionally well done report.

As I communicated to the Leader of the Opposition, that's exactly what I'm referring to in respect to the data and the information that we get, that we'll use in respect to working with Health PEI and the cancer treatment centre.

This is the exact discussion that we had with Dr. Champion on Friday in respect to ways that we can bring in new investments, but also making sure that our investments are very strategic and to address the priorities from the leadership at the cancer treatment centre.

I'm very interested in listening to the conditions, particularly our oncologist. We're committed. We recognize that we will have some vacancies in the unit. We are committed. It's the area of recruitment that keeps me up at night and it's an area that I want to continue to focus hard on.

We've had numerous interviews, and hopefully with the work that's being conducted, we'll have results on those vacancies, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The province has two epidemiologists and they work for public health. They don't work for the cancer treatment centre. They have a much different job.

Question to the minister: Why isn't an epidemiologist solely to work for cancer and study cancer trends on Prince Edward Island not your priority?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As minister, our track record in health care here in the province – when we came into government in 2007 we were left with a

health care system that needed some strong vision and some clear direction.

Over the last six years we've invested over \$200 million in a range of health care divisions and services. In respect to the discussion yesterday, which was a fantastic discussion on catastrophic drugs, I hope, before the conclusion of the Legislative Assembly, to be announcing our direction and investments in a catastrophic program.

We as government came in in 2007. Since 2007 we've added 166 new drugs to the provincial formulary. We were at the back end of formulary listings in the country, which saw about a 42% increase. We recognize the importance of drug therapy and the role and we continue to take that challenge today and moving forward.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister likes to talk about his health care record and we've talked about his record here already today. Cancer is the leading cause of death on Prince Edward Island. We have the highest incident rate for men, all cancers combined in the country; we have the second highest incident rate in prostate cancer; the third highest mortality in lung cancer; the highest mortality rate for women, all women cancers combined. Come on, that's your record. Did you want to avoid it (Indistinct)? But you can't because it's right there on paper.

I wish this was more a priority for you and your government. The cancer society does so much great work but they need your support and they want this. The highest mortality rate for our mothers, daughters, and sisters. We have the highest cancer incident rate with our fathers, sons and brothers. Yet we have no epidemiologist to figure out why.

Cancer treatment

Question to the minister: Why does this government refuse to show leadership and

make cancer treatment a priority here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Currie: Madam Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition is raising some great questions today, and I'm proud to be able to stand up as the minister of health here in the province to reiterate to the Leader of the Opposition and all Members of the Legislative Assembly, as they represent Islanders across the province, that we are very dedicated and very committed to the battle against cancer.

Not only from a legislative perspective with the *Smoke-free Places Act*, tanning bed legislations, screening programs, the investments that we've made in colorectal screening, mammography.

When we came in in government we were experiencing some of the longest wait times in the country. We have that down from months to days. Not only have we invested in operational spending to deal with the issues that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, but we're also making investments in prevention, not only at the QEH but in communities all across Prince Edward Island.

We'll continue. We're not batting a thousand. I recognize that. I appreciate the questions raised and the data is accurate. As the minister I'm very concerned about the trends we're seeing. That document and that information will give us good information to shape good policy for strategic investments to continue to fight against cancer here in the Province of Prince Edward Island, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We all know that actions speak louder than words. All we hear are words from this minister. It goes back right since he's been elected. This minister, he's all style and he's no substance at all. Just like the palliative

care issue here yesterday. The minister is only in it for the photo op and the headline. If there was a photo op for curing cancer he would be trying to cure it a lot more than he is now.

HW minister's method of operation

Minister, under your watch health care on PEI has come to experience a total lack of respect and dignity for Islanders, and you really should be ashamed. Everything you touch turns into a big mess. Why have you chosen to operate this way?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I will not dispute that the health file is a very challenging file. I, as the minister, right now I'm the longest standing health minister in the country and have had the opportunity to sit with ministers for the last seven years across the country, and recognize the obstacles and challenges that health ministers face not only here in this province, but across the country.

As government we recognize that health care needs a vision, a clear direction, but also a high level of engagement with the clinical leadership in this province. We're embarking on that journey.

I've had the opportunity to be in communities, in health care facilities over the last seven years. We're very fortunate here in the Province of Prince Edward Island to have a very dedicated group of health care professionals, our physicians, our LPNs, our RCWs, our nurses.

Very proud to be the minister of health today and very proud to continue to wear this responsibility on behalf of our government, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Cancer control strategy

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As mentioned earlier, cancer is the leading cause of death here on PEI.

To the minister of health. Your government's failure to implement your cancer control strategy is impacting the treatment of cancer patients right across this province. Minister, why are you dragging your feet about implementing a cancer control strategy here in our province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Currie: We as government are working very closely with Health PEI. I've stood on my feet for the last 15 minutes and shared the number of investments, not only from an infrastructure perspective with the new cancer treatment centre, operational spending to improve colorectal screening programs, mammography, infrastructure on digital imaging equipment, but we've also expanded our provincial formularies, our high-cost drug programs, are addressing some of the challenges and some of the needs for drug therapy.

I look forward to presenting to Islanders a very well laid out catastrophic drug program in the future.

I recognize that we have more work to do and the cancer control strategy, I'll bring updates back to the member to update him on our current progress in that area.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You don't have to bring it back. I already know your update. You've done absolutely nothing with your promise of 2007.

Minister, the staff at the cancer treatment facility, they're frustrated because your

government has failed to implement the cancer control strategy that you promised.

The staff of this facility is so frustrated about how this government is allowing the facility to be operated. Minister, why do you fail to implement the cancer control strategy that you promised in 2007 so that they can have the direction that they need?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We sat down, as I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition, last Friday in respect to concerns. Dr. Ruth Sellers is the director of medical affairs in the province, and as the minister I respect the process inside Health PEI. I know that Dr. Champion and his staff met with Dr. Sellers on my advice re: concern.

After that meeting I've had an opportunity to sit with Dr. Champion and had a very positive conversation, and asked Dr. Champion to send us some of his recommendations and concerns in respect to some of his issues. I am awaiting that correspondence and I will act on that feedback and advice in consultation with Health PEI and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Cancer is a very serious issue. I recognize the numbers that are being presented to Islanders in the cancer trend report, but also there's all kinds of other areas of our health care system that need attention, and I feel confident that to date we're moving in the right direction, and we're going to continue to make a huge effort and commitment to the treatment of cancer here in the Province of Prince Edward Island, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Cancer treatment facility

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I do agree, other areas in the health system do need some attention. But cancer is the

number one cause of death here on PEI. It needs priority.

You made a promise in 2007, now stand behind it. Minister, under your proposed cancer control strategy that you have failed to implement, your government said that there would be a multi-year funding commitment to the cancer treatment facility.

Minister, why, when PEI has the highest mortality rate in Canada, that you have not made our cancer treatment facility a priority?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

All we have to do is drive by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and look at the magnitude of investment that this government has made in respect to the \$4 million cancer treatment unit, the \$28 million ambulatory care centre, the new emergency room, and the \$8 million surgical suite enhancements that we're providing.

Our government's investment –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Currie: Our government's investment in health care spending, Madam Speaker, from an operational spent is unprecedented, from an infrastructural perspective is unprecedented.

We've hired more doctors, more nurses, more LPNs, more RCWs. We've got a clear direction in respect to where we're evolving health care. All of or the majority of the opposition has been taking part and sitting at the back of the room quietly in respect to the conversations in communities on health care. I would welcome any suggestions or ideas to continue to improve health because as of yet, I've heard zero from opposition in respect to the direction or ideas.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

These sales meetings that the minister talks about us standing at the back of the room, we go there to listen to Islanders. We want to listen to see what they have to say. We're not there to grandstand, minister, we like to listen. And as far as driving by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, that's something that you do way too often. Stop in sometime and talk to the staff.

Minister, our cancer treatment facility has been very dedicated and is very hard working. This staff is struggling because they cannot set their own priorities and they cannot allocate resources where they are most needed.

Minister, why are you holding this centre back from providing the life-saving care to our mothers, to our fathers, to our sisters, to our brothers, to our daughters, to our sons, who have cancer, minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I do appreciate the line of questions from the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road because this is a very serious issue, and as minister, I take the evolution and the investment into cancer care in this province very seriously.

Just to highlight some investments over the past few years, our province has made tremendous progress in cancer care. Our government was pleased to open, as I indicated, the new cancer treatment centre in 2009, at 4.1 million, a new linear accelerator, with significant increases in staff. In 2010 our government signed an MOU on wait time guarantees for radiation therapy. In 2010 we hired a new cancer patient navigator. The navigator connects cancer patients directly to the cancer education support specialist. We have added 10 new high-cost cancer drugs under the PEI drug formulary on top of the other 160 drugs, and we want to continue to emphasize prevention, such as the smoke-free places legislation, tanning bed regulations, to improve the overall health population in our province, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I could stand up here too and read off a list of things that he hasn't done, but you know what? I'm not going to waste our time. We have too many important questions to be asked right now.

Minister, I understand that there are staff shortages not only in oncology here on PEI, but in several areas including radiation treatment.

Minister, your government found \$4.5 million for a lottery game. Why is our cancer treatment centre not a priority with your government?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I indicated at the end of the last question, prevention is a big priority and we recognize the investments in prevention, just like we have to make continued investments in acute investments to deal with cancer.

Over the past four years we provided grade 6 girls with a vaccine against HPV virus. HPV has been shown to cause 90% of cervical cancer. We're outperforming breast cancer screening wait days, as I indicated earlier.

As I indicated, government over the last six years has spent an additional \$200 million. Last year in fiscal we spent over a 5% increase in health care spending which would put us at the front end of the country in respect to larger populations.

This fiscal we're continuing to commit to a three point increase in health care spending. That just goes and recognizes government's commitment in operational spending, which is overseen by Health PEI.

I recognize that there are challenges in front of us today, but we recognize that we have made cancer care and cancer treatment, from

an operational spend, health care provider and infrastructure spending, a huge priority over the last seven years, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, this minister likes to hide behind Health PEI. He did it again the other night when someone had a question in Ellerslie regarding Health PEI. The minister had an opportunity to stand up and say that he makes the final decisions, but he said - he threw the CEO underneath a bus.

Minister, diagnostic imaging is a provincial department program at the QEH and the QEH does control that budget, so there is no cohesive approach to cancer screening in our province. Minister, why are you making it more difficult for the cancer treatment centre to provide the lifesaving care to our mothers, to our fathers, our sisters, our brothers, our daughters and our sons with cancer?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I do have the responsibility of health services across Prince Edward Island, but I do want to remind the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road that I'm not a clinician, and I rely on the leadership, not only from Health PEI, but the clinical leadership. That's just an example of what we engaged in on Friday afternoon where we sat down with Dr. Champion and his staff to look at ways that we could look at sort of a provincial strategy, to look at ways that we can continue to build on the investments that we made and continue to provide the most efficient care to Islanders, both from Tignish to Souris.

I await their information and we'll be taking that information and sitting down with Health PEI and the leadership of the PCH and the QEH to look at ways that we can continue to improve services and access to appropriate levels of care for all Islanders dealing with cancer, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Western Hospital closure

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is also to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Has this government ever considered closing Western Hospital or the emergency room at Western Hospital?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

The answer to that is no. There's been no discussions about closing any facility. I see Western Hospital as a very key asset to our provincial integrated health care system. It's a facility that has served the region well and continues to work very closely with our two main referral hospitals, the Prince County Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. As we continue to make investments, whether it be in dialysis or collaborative emergency room centres –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Currie: – we look forward to making sure that Western Hospital plays a very integral role in health care delivery here in our province.

Thank you.

Speaker: Supplementary question, the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Western Hospital and CEC model

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. I have always been and always will be, of course, an advocate for Western Hospital and the emergency room there. Of course, my preference would be to have it staffed by a doctor 24/7, but that's not working, as everyone is well aware. Closures are happening every day. There's closures this month.

I support solutions to keeping our emergency room open 24/7. Can the minister tell us when the CEC model will be implemented at Western Hospital?

Mr. LaVie: And Souris.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly have been very impressed with the collaborative emergency room centre. After having discussions with officials in Nova Scotia, we're seeing examples in communities the same size, and larger communities, in rural Nova Scotia that have experienced the same challenges that we're experiencing in rural areas of our province.

The model is effective. It's allowed physicians to focus on primary health care during the day. It's allowed an emergency level of service to be available at night for residents. I've clearly directed Health PEI, we made a public statement, that this is the direction and the implementation model that we're going with. I hope that within three months we'll have the CEC up and running to meet the needs of the region and the total population it serves of 17,000 people, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: Second supplementary question, the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Hay report

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

To the same minister. I keep hearing out there in the public domain about the Hay report and the number of doctors that's recommended in that report should be around 60. There's currently well over 200 doctors in the province today. I would think that being the case we're obviously not following the Hay report. Can the minister explain?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I'm pleased, but not totally pleased, in respect to our recruitment efforts here in the province. We have approximately – we've got a full complement of about 230 physicians. I think we're in around 225. We've got 95% of our entire population that has access to a family physician but we continue to make investments. For example, on the medical residency program we continued to make investments. I announced before Christmas the new rural recruitment initiative to attract physicians to vacancies for five years' return of service into rural communities.

We're very committed. I have seen the Hay report. Right now, we've got approximately 96 family physicians and there's no intention to reduce that number. We're also looking forward to embracing the number of nurse practitioners that will be graduating. The first class this spring, three will be coming out of the program, the masters program at UPEI, and we look forward to embracing their skill sets and their scope in communities in rural Prince Edward Island as well, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Cyberbullying

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the hon. Minister of Community Services and Seniors. Madam Minister, I know that you were down to the UN and gave a presentation on our cyberbullying program. I'm just wondering if you can give more of an explanation of the scope of that program and what your department is doing with it.

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

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, I would just like a little bit of extra time than normal, considering the seriousness of the subject.

The Cybersafe Girl website that we have developed as a regional collaborative approach from all four ministers responsible for the Status of Women came about simply because we were recognizing the issues with bullying on the Internet and, of course, primarily girls and young women are the main targets.

It was an opportunity to present, not only to those from across Canada that were at the UN, to let them know about what we're doing, but to make them aware of the fact that this is a five-year plan that we're doing. It's a collaborative approach, as I mentioned, and it's something that we're working hard to keep updated to ensure that girls and young women, their parents, guardians, educators, have a source to go to when issues of cyber violence occur.

This is a website that we hope to continue to grow all the time because unfortunately, as we can tell from the most recent media news, this is not a subject that is going to go away easily.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Supplementary question, the hon. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, Madam Minister of Community Services and Seniors.

What is your department doing to collaborative with other departments, for instance, with the department of education, to get this message out on a wider range so that this issue can start to be addressed?

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

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, the collaborative approach that I mentioned regionally also is happening within each province.

In regards to the school systems, we have been coordinating with the two school boards. In every school across the province there are posters about the Cybersafe Girl website in both languages and we're providing as much material as we can to the teachers so that they can, not only be aware of the website but that they can address any issues that they may be aware of.

As well, I last week made announcements on the interministerial women's grants that we gave this year and the theme behind that, in order to be successful, was about cyber safety and the protection of young girls and women.

Not only are we collaborating within the government, we're collaborating out within the community as well, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: A second supplementary, the hon. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Will, Madam Minister, anyone from your department be – you did say you're working with the school boards. So will you be having a broader focus on a media campaign around that through a collaboration between the departments? More of a media –

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

Ms. Docherty: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, it is a five-year plan.

The work that we're doing right now with the school boards, as I mentioned with the posters, for example, those of us that are IT savvy know what a QR code is. But on the bottom of the poster it's where the students can scan with their cell phones and always have that information directly there. We're trying to make the information as available as possible wherever they may be, but on a go-forward basis, as we are making this information available, we're going to be collaborating with other departments in government as it's needed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Retirement of oncologist and effect on cancer patients

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As we've already discussed here this afternoon, PEI has the highest rate of mortality when it comes to cancer in this entire country. Dr. Dryer, one of two oncologists here on PEI, is set to retire. The minister of health has lamented this

afternoon that the oncology issue, the lack of oncologists here on PEI, is actually causing him to lose sleep. I would love to feel sorry for the minister, but there are cancer patients on Prince Edward Island that are losing sleep because of what they're experiencing, going through, living with having cancer.

Minister of health: How many cancer patients will be left without a cancer specialist as the result of the absence of Dr. Dryer?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

My focus is not on the number of patients that are going to be left after Dr. Dryer's retirement. Our focus right now is to fill the vacancies. We're recruiting aggressively. I'll bring an update exactly the number of oncologists that have been interviewed, the number of oncologists that have come in through site visits, the number of oncologists that have come in through Skype and were interviewed.

We're very committed. We recognize the seriousness of this as a high specialty area, and as minister I'm advised weekly and updated on the number of conversations. Per our conversation with Dr. Champion, he's very much engaged with the recruitment efforts as well.

I want to reassure everyone in the Legislative Assembly that this is a huge priority, probably the number one priority – not that any of the other recruitment areas are not important – this is the number one recruiting area.

I'm not entertaining – obviously Health PEI has a backup plan in respect to how to manage this post if we continue to struggle filling the positions. But we're continuing to put our energy from a department into filling those vacancies, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Off-Island travel to oncologist

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just really don't understand the lack of urgency in this file. I mean, we know from experience what happened to our only vascular surgeon on PEI. I really hope that that same circumstance doesn't happen to our only oncologist that's left here, Dr. Champion.

Minister, the amount of Islanders needing treatment does not seem to be declining. Actually, it's increasing every year. How many patients will now be required to travel off-Island to seek treatment from an oncologist?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Once again, from the Member from Stratford-Kinlock, our focus is on filling the retirements. As indicated, Dr. Champion and I had a great conversation with recruitment and retention in respect to options and possibilities. We will be making an announcement, hopefully in the near future, in respect to the direction that we're moving in.

In respect to our province, we've got a \$570 million health care budget. We've seen substantial growth, almost a 50% increase in spending in the last six years. As government I recognize that we've got an out-of-province health care budget that is \$50 million, which is our second-largest hospital, which does provide services outside of the Province of Prince Edward Island, second behind the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's budget.

We're very committed to making sure that we provide all the services to Islanders, not only here, the ones that are being offered, but ones in specialty areas that aren't offered here in the province and we're very committed to that, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Off-Island travel assistance

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With this minister of health and his track record as far as recruitment of doctors - and I'm not even going to get into retention of doctors because that's even more deplorable. With what we know already, and the track record, we know Islanders are going to have to travel off-Island to see cancer specialists. Now, with the increase in gas prices that your HST has brought on to Islanders, minister, will you ensure that Islanders having to travel off-Island to receive cancer treatment will also receive travel assistance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Our investments in recruitment since coming into government have been strong. We've got more physicians in the province today than we ever had. Today we are experiencing a few vacancies. Obviously, oncology is one of those areas, but we recognize that the investments that we made in the residency program - last year we saw the first class of five all stay here in the province. This year three of the five have already signed on to stay here in the province. We continue to support the purchasing of medical seats at Memorial that Island students are holding and we're continuing to work with our Island students that are graduating from medical education programs and moving into residency.

We also are looking at creative ways to find incentives like our return in service resources, the 110,000 plus the 50,000 for signing on to a rural community.

We're very dedicated and very committed. Today in this province, as I indicated, we've got 95% of all Islanders have access to a family physician. In Ontario they're seeing numbers in around 51%, in Quebec 53%. So we're proud of our record, but more work needs to be done, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Off-Island cancer patient wait times

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let's get back to what we're talking about here today. Let's talk about cancer patients and their access to an oncologist for their treatment of this terrible disease.

Minister, you know Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are beginning to become more reluctant to take on our patients. We've already seen that in the past around other health specialty concerns. Because those provinces already are having their own issues with lengthy waits.

Minister, will you assure our cancer patients that they will not be waiting lengthy times for the treatment due to backlogs off-Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I know that Health PEI does have contingency plans, just like we saw when our vascular surgeon left the province. We currently now have an MOU and Islanders receiving vascular care are getting quality care with the agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia.

Unfortunately, Halifax is over three hours away, but the quality of care and the investment that the province is making is strong. Our focus will continue to be on filling all vacancies here in the province. I'm confident that Health PEI has a very well laid out contingency plan in the event that Islanders need cancer treatment and cancer care off the Island.

Right now our focus is on recruitment and filling those vacancies, Madam Speaker, moving forward.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Off-Island travel assistance (further)

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to take the minister back to a previous question I asked because I still haven't received an answer.

Minister, we know that you are not going to be able to fill these positions by the time Dr. Dryer retires. I mean, we're talking two oncologists here. So it's logical, it's very logical to state that cancer patients will have to travel off-Island to receive care. Will your department, will your government, provide travel assistance to these cancer patients that have to go off-Island to receive treatment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I did indicate that in conversations with Health PEI and the interim CEO, Dr. Wedge, there are discussions going on. Obviously, we do not want to be in that situation, but here in the province we recognize that when Islanders need health care, whether they need it in Tignish, Souris, Charlottetown, Summerside, Alberton, they're going to get it. We also recognize that if they need specialty services, like vascular, cardiac care, neurosurgery, we provide it as well.

Our focus will continue to be on filling those vacancies, but we also, as I indicated, and I'll repeat it again, that there's always contingency plans laid out ahead of time. We're not going to start addressing that issue post-vacancies in any specialty area in our province, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'll repeat it again.

Minister, will your government provide travel assistance to patients that have to travel off-Island for cancer treatment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Islanders that do have financial issues, there are programs available. I can bring that information back to the Member from Stratford-Kinlock. But my priority right now is to focus on recruitment and working aggressively with oncologists that are looking for opportunities to come to our great province and to work in our great health care system. I look forward to that, and certainly will continue to work with Health PEI on contingency plans if needed, Madam Speaker, and hopefully we won't be in that situation.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Final question, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Oncologist wait times

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

The fact is that this minister really just cannot guarantee it. Dr. Philip Champion is our only remaining oncologist, which means we are now short two oncologists. How can the minister expect one doctor to treat all cancer patients in PEI when there are already problems with wait times? How are you going to fix this, minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

As I indicated to the member, we are very committed to filling the retirements and the vacancies here in the Province of Prince Edward Island. We recognize and value the role that our oncologists play. As I indicated, part of our conversation on Friday with Dr. Champion was the discussion around recruitment and potential opportunities looking forward.

I will remind all Members of the Legislative Assembly it's a very serious issue, and we as government are committed to making sure that we address the issues that are in front of us, and work at filling the vacancies that are in front of us, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: End of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

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

Social Action Plan Update

Ms. Docherty: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last spring, I announced Prince Edward Island's very first Social Action Plan to reduce poverty. This plan included actions and initiatives from across government.

While the Department of Community Services and Seniors holds primary responsibility for many social programs, the social well-being of Islanders is the responsibility of all levels of government and departments, individuals, communities, faith groups, the business community, and charitable organizations.

Today, I would like to provide an update on our progress which has been made on the Social Action Plan as of the end of the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

The provincial pharmacy programs have increased access to medications needed by Islanders. Government enacted legislation to reduce the cost of generic drugs for its public drug programs, so these programs will remain in place for seniors and others who need them now and in the future.

Sixteen additional families and four individuals have received rent supplements through my housing division. As well, an additional six individuals are enjoying new supportive housing units in Alberton.

Two hundred and seventy families have benefitted from \$121,000 contributed to the Salvation Army emergency home heating program.

Over 500 social assistant clients have been referred to employment support services since June 2012, which is a partnership between Community Services and Seniors, Skills PEI, and rural development. The

program assists Islanders who receive social assistance to connect with an employment service within their community.

Ninety clients have secured employment through the job creation program, 44 clients have been employed via Skills PEI, and approximately 250 clients have been supported to secure their own employment.

The minimum wage increased to \$10 per hour in 2012.

Island children are benefitting from investments in early learning through literacy action plans in early years centres, more highly trained staff, and improved child care subsidies. Research is underway on the viability of a therapeutic court in Prince Edward Island.

In the coming weeks, the Social Action Plan working group will be releasing a progress report outlining achievements to date and plans for the coming year, and the report will be posted on the Community Services and Seniors website.

Earlier I stated that the social well-being of Islanders is the responsibility of all of us. I want to express my appreciation to the many individuals and groups who have provided thoughtful input, held meetings, invested time and generally voiced their support for strengthening the social opportunities for vulnerable and low-income Islanders.

I believe we have a good working relationship with these groups and I thank all of the stakeholders and individuals for their contributions to the development and ongoing direction to the plan. Together, we will make a difference on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Crane: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

A couple weeks ago in this House I was asking questions for some people that are trying to live on social assistance, around

their rent ceilings, around their cost of living including their food. At that time there was a gentleman watching on TV who called me after who had a disability, and when I went over to see the gentleman, he's trying to live off \$600 a month, and he explained to me that he's lucky, he feels, because he has a wife that has a year-round income, and she's probably in the range of around \$14 an hour. But what is worrying is if something happens to their relationship or to her, how would he actually survive?

At the same time, I also heard from a senior in the Kensington area. That particular couple, they had moved into one of the new rental units in Kensington, and the unit actually heats with electricity. We all know that HST is on electricity. This couple is on a fixed income, and there's just no room for movement for anybody that's on a fixed income to pay anything extra. There are seniors out there and people on fixed incomes that are making decisions around: Do I buy medication, do I buy food or heat my home?

Yes, the minimum wage has increased but there are so many people in Prince Edward Island that are working for minimum wage and trying to travel back and forth to work and we have no transportation system in the province. As these rates continue to increase, the costs, more and more people are falling through the cracks.

This is not about politics, this is about the people that we know and love in the province, and I really believe also the changes to the employment insurance system – I know I continue to hear from people that are falling through the cracks and that their employment insurance has exhausted and life has become very tough for them.

I believe a solution – now is the time for a discussion, working on a basic income goal or what some people refer to as a basic guaranteed annual income. I know we have a lot of stakeholders and people with expertise in the province and also people across Canada that would help with such a conversation.

As we continue to change in terms of from people living and working in the industrial era to the knowledge economy, more and

more people are going to fall through the cracks. I think there's many of us that would like to try with a new conversation so that people would have the resources they need to be able to live.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General.

Youth Engagement Projects

Ms. Sherry: Madam Speaker, since 2008, Prince Edward Island has benefitted from the work of the PEI Partners for Community Safety.

This knowledge and communication network works across government and community sectors to champion and contribute to community safety and well-being.

The Department of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General is proud to support the Partners for Community Safety. Membership includes government departments, community groups, RCMP and municipal police, municipalities and others.

The mandate of the group is to reduce crime and create environments where people feel safe and where people are safe.

I would like to highlight a recent initiative, the Youth Engagement Project, in which Partners for Community Safety help communities to engage with at-risk youth.

In collaboration with Partners, Health PEI and Health Canada, my department secured funding for a number of community projects to strengthen the work of community groups, and to increase their capacity to engage at-risk youth.

Projects were funded with the following groups: The Native Council of Prince Edward Island, the Boys and Girls Club of Charlottetown, the Montague Home and School, the Abegweit First Nation Mi'kmaq Wellness Centre, the Hughes-Jones Centre for People and Animals, and the Women's Network of PEI, to name a few.

These projects work to engage youth and prevent youth crime on a number of fronts.

They encouraged conflict resolution, examined personal struggles and provided healthy living education. They built community connections through drumming, they used animals to teach empathy and responsibility, and they sought to address some of the challenges being faced by young men and young women in our complex and ever-changing social landscape.

Most importantly, these Youth Engagement Projects treated young people with respect and taught those who participated to give respect and consideration to themselves and to others.

There is no simple answer to the challenge of youth at risk, but I am very encouraged by projects like these that recognize the value that caring, preventative work can have on the lives of our young people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Replying to the ministerial statement, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The minister certainly talks about some great groups that are involved in trying to help the youth in our province. I know after last night I had the opportunity to talk to some of those groups because some of them had – some of those groups called me last night about the issue we talked about on the floor. They think that government needs to do much more, and we feel that the government needs to do much more too, so while the community safety program is a great program, we feel the need to push government much harder to show some results.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Prince Edward Island Burger Love Day

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to declare today, April 17, as the official Prince Edward Island Burger Love day.

This month-long campaign has reached the halfway point. I'm very happy to report that the response so far is nothing short of amazing. Islanders love PEI Burger Love. Restaurants are reporting record sales. Some are so busy they are running out of ingredients. Co-workers are going out for lunch in groups of 20 or more and posting videos on Facebook. People are tweeting about which restaurant has the best burger.

PEI Burger Love is being profiled on local and regional CBC programs, CTV *Live at 5*, the CTV morning show and many other media outlets.

I congratulate the PEI Cattle Producers Association for initiating this very successful marketing campaign. Not only is it raising awareness about the high quality of Island beef, this campaign is a great boost for the beef industry and our local restaurants.

I applaud the participating chefs for coming up with burger creations that are bringing customers into their restaurants.

The beef industry makes an important contribution to our economy and to our rural communities.

Government support for Burger Love reflects the commitment to a strong beef industry, a strong agricultural industry and to rural Prince Edward Island.

I have tried two of the burgers, and they were excellent. I encourage Islanders to buy a burger if they haven't already and support PEI Burger Love and the Island's beef industry.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Responding to the statement, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As I mentioned in my greetings today, I encouraged Islanders to get out to Burger Love, because we're halfway through. Even though we can officially call today Burger Love Day, I personally feel like every day in April has been Burger Love day. It's probably the most popular topic anywhere you go.

I know as you travel around to some of these restaurants, the very first thing you hear when you're seated: Are you here for the burger?

The restaurants are excited about the people who are coming in for Burger Love. The people are excited to get out and try it. I know myself, I think I've had eight different burgers so far. It's been tough. I know it probably shows. I'm out to support our farmers. That's what this is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: It's a great opportunity to support our local business through the restaurant industry and also to support our local farmers who do a great job putting a great product on the table for us.

Last night, we had the opportunity, our caucus, to take the Pages out. We went over next door to Mavor's, and there were quite a few Burger Love burgers on the tables there last night. That was my eighth one was Mavor's. I'm going to continue to try to get out and hit a couple more of them before April ends. I encourage all other Islanders to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

Shellfish Research Program

Mr. MacKinley: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to inform the House today that my department will be supporting a shellfish research program at the Atlantic Veterinary College.

Investment in shellfish research is critical to the support and development of the shellfish industry. Shellfish such as mussels, oysters and clams have an economic value assessed at \$75 million in the province and provide more than 2,500 jobs to Islanders.

Under the agreement with the Atlantic Veterinary College, the department will support the college by dedicating a full-time faculty member and technician to coordinate and carry out shellfish research at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The program has developed contacts with key researchers and development folks from all over the world.

It is great to see the Atlantic Veterinary College interested in the marine environment and working with the shellfishers to address their research priorities. Just yesterday staff at the university met with representatives of the PEI Aquaculture Alliance, the PEI Shellfish Association and my department to discuss research ideas for 2013.

Over the past number of years, AVC has helped the province develop the shellfish industry through research on topics such as mussel production, new methods to grow oysters, invasive species and understanding environment impacts on our shellfish resources.

Having a dedicated group of people focused on shellfish research allows AVC and the industry to leverage funds for projects from various provincial and federal sources that will support a sustainable shellfish industry in this province for years to come.

An additional benefit of the program has been the development of numerous summer students and graduate students who can be employed in the PEI industry and contribute to the development of our shellfish industry here in the province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's always nice to rise when the government, at least one department, is finally listening. We were out talking to the Atlantic Veterinary College and the shellfishers. We've been out on tour. The caucus has been out on tour. It's great to see, because the shellfish is vital to the economy on PEI. It provides work.

When the shellfishers are making money, they're spending money. It's just good for everybody, right from our car dealers to our small engine repairs to our engines. It's great for our economy.

It's great to see that one department is finally on board with the opposition.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Advance Care Planning Day

Mr. Currie: Madam Speaker, yesterday was Advance Care Planning Day, a time to promote the importance of thinking about and communicating wishes for end-of-life care.

It is also about understanding the options and values that guide these significant decisions.

In 2012 an Ipsos Reid poll found that 86% of Canadians had not heard of advance care planning. Less than half had had a discussion with a family member or friend about health care treatments if they were ill and unable to communicate.

Research indicates that Canadians with advance care plans require fewer interventions at the end of life, place less of a burden on caregivers and less strain on the health care system.

As individuals, planning for our health care futures is not something we want to face head on, but we have the responsibility to plan for our individual health care futures now so that our personal needs, and the needs of our loved ones, are looked after, because all Canadians are entitled to quality of life and care at all stages of their lives.

I'd like to welcome to the House today members of the Hospice Palliative Care Association of Prince Edward Island. We have: Jodi Swan, chair of Hospice PEI; we have Kip Holloway, a board member; and Marilyn Lowther, a board member as well.

Welcome here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Currie: Thank them and their members for the care and support they provide to patients and their families at what can be a very difficult time. Your selflessness does not go unnoticed. I thank you on behalf of our province.

Every Islander and Canadian should take time to reflect on their values and wishes concerning future health care plans and share personal care preferences with family members.

Raising awareness for this need and making it easier for people to begin these conversations is vital. As Minister of Health and Wellness, I am pleased to hopefully help get the conversation started.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I, too, am pleased to rise this afternoon and congratulate these three wonderful individuals for the work that they do: Jodi, Kip, Marilyn.

I know we've had many conversations over the last while regards to this topic. It is a topic that's very important. It's essential. It's vital to Islanders. We had much discussion here in the Legislature here yesterday on this exact topic. There was great debate, great dialogue back and forth. It's something as opposition that we want to ensure that it's always on the forefront. We all want to make sure that government is continually thinking about this, that it's not just a photo op around election time, because Islanders deserve to have dignity, especially towards the end of their journey.

I know the minister has said he's committed to making sure that the new palliative care unit is constructed. What we're really urging the minister to do is to give us a timeframe, give us a timetable so that Islanders, and especially these wonderful volunteers, know when that will be happening.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. Webster: Madam Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the Annual Report for the Prince Edward Island Marketing Council for the period ending December 31st, 2012 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Community Services and Seniors, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General.

Ms. Sherry: Madam Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a handbook from the Provincial Corrections Centre that outlines the several self-help and self-improvement courses that are offered to offenders in our facility, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried. Any further documents?

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I beg leave to introduce the report of the said committee, and I move,

seconded by the Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park that the same be now received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tracadie-Hillsborough Park, that the report of the committee be adopted.

During the timeframe covered by this report your committee met to plan its work for the upcoming months. By adoption of this report, your committee requests authorization to meet beyond prorogation of the 3rd Session of the 64th General Assembly in order to conduct its business intersessionally.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Shall it carry? Carried.

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.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture, that the 2nd 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.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Tourism and

Culture, that this House do now resolve itself into a 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.

Mr. Henderson: I'll ask permission to bring my director -

Chair (Biggar): Just a minute until I call you in to committee -

Mr. Henderson: Oh, sorry about that.

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

The hon. Minister of Tourism and Culture, you are bringing someone to the floor?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, I'd like to bring my director of financial services, Kevin Jenkins, on the floor please?

Chair: Permission to bring Mr. Jenkins on the floor in the House?

Okay and we'll just have you again put your name into Hansard, Mr. Jenkins.

Members, we are on page 123. Oh no, sorry, hold on, I skipped over that. We're doing Tourism PEI actually, we're on 125.

Golf Courses has been read but we had not carried that.

Mr. Henderson: I also have, from yesterday, the opposition made a number of requests for a few reports.

The annual report for the 2014 Inc., I'll table that -

Chair: You're tabling these?

Mr. Henderson: I guess that's the -

Chair: Or do you want to just give it to them?

Mr. Henderson: Just -

Kevin Jenkins Director: Just give it to them.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, we'll just give it to them, I guess, and we also have financial statements for 2014 ending March 31st, 2012.

Chair: Okay, and do you want those tabled?

Mr. Henderson: I'd say we'd table them (Indistinct) –

Kevin Jenkins Director: Yeah, we'll table them.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, we'll table them.

Chair: Okay, and was there anything else under this section?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wonder if the minister could just catch us up to speed as far as – I know we had some discussion on it yesterday, but where exactly are we at with the sale of the provincial golf courses?

Mr. Henderson: When we first put out an expression of interest we had seven proposals come in, and we've been working with those seven groups to provide them information around the financial statements, the assets that are involved in the potential sale or arrangement.

As negotiations unfolded it's taking a little bit more time than anticipated. As you can imagine, these issues would be very delicate and time-consuming as far as, you know once again, you have to go through a lot of the processes. Anyway, those proponents gave us another proposal in an RFP and we had made a decision at that time.

That was well into January. We felt that we weren't going to get a good deal that was probably in keeping with – respectful of the taxpayers and the amount of investment that we have into those four provincial courses at this point in time. So we decided to operate the courses for the coming season, and this would bide us time to get into the rest of the year to try to see if we can conclude an arrangement or not. I'm hopeful that by

year's end we'll be able to make that decision whether we are going to have an arrangement that we can make or whether we're going to continue keeping them.

Mr. Aylward: I wonder if the minister could just explain a little bit about the seven. I wouldn't expect you to give me the names of the seven proposals that you received or anything like that, but the seven proposals, were they all similar? Were they varying as far as their proposals i.e., were some of them piecemeal, cherry-picking one course, not wanting the others?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct. Basically, hon. member, the situation was on the seven proposals that we'd received, some of them were for a specific golf course, and they didn't want all four. Then, we had others that did want all four or had an interest in all four, and that's where when you look at the offers a little bit, if you sold one to one particular proponent, would the other that was interested in four now be interested in three, and that's where the issue gets to be a little bit more complicated.

Some of the proposals were a management arrangement, other proposals were a lease arrangement and other proposals were an outright sale. That's the type of issues that we're sort of dealing with...

Like I said, we have an open and transparent process to go through that, but it's just a complicated deal. We talked a little bit earlier before that there has to be an arrangement with the Rodd's resorts because they have assets and accommodations on those sites. Like I said, we're going to keep working through the process a little bit longer.

This bides us a little bit more time. We also felt that the fact that with the late opportunity of if there was a proponent that we were able to proceed with that they wouldn't have the time to do the marketing and promotion that would be necessary for the coming season. We just feel that we could have a better chance if we could conclude a deal by year end, and then that gives them the rest of the winter to do their changes and promotions and whatever it might be that they think might make it a more successful entity.

If we can't get something by year end, we'll have to make a decision as a department whether we're going to proceed or now.

Mr. Aylward: Within these seven proposals that you received and that you were working on, minister, were any of these proposals suggesting that they would also like to have the assets of the Rodd properties, the resort as well as the golf course? Because I know there are quite a few professional organizations out there with – I mean, a perfect example is what happened in Saint Andrews, New Brunswick, right? The Canadian Pacific, or Fairmont as of most recent, owned the resort, the province owned the golf course. The province decided to sell the golf course and they sold the whole thing as a package.

Mr. Henderson: I'm unaware that they're interested in the Rodd other than just an arrangement with the Rodd resorts. I don't think there's a package that says they're purchasing both.

Mr. Aylward: Okay. I know it's pretty hard to pinpoint an exact figure and I'd never ask you to do that right now, especially when you're working on as many as seven proposals right now, but what kind of a financial loss do you think Island taxpayers will see when these golf courses are sold?

Mr. Henderson: I wouldn't want to speculate on that because, once again, that would, I think, give us a weaker bargaining position at this point in time. We know what the losses on all four courses are just from our financial statements here. There are sizeable assets there and there's considerable investment and I think we want to try to be as respectful to the taxpayer as we possibly can and get a reasonable value for that.

It is a situation where the golf industry is a depressed industry at this point in time across North America. You have to question: Is it the right time to sell or not? That could change quickly or it might get worse.

Ms. Biggar: I'm just going to go to the Government House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Certainly, Madam Chair.

Chair: I'll come back.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I hope this question doesn't affect the salability of any of the courses. I'm just looking at Crowbush, mosquito control, 82,000 dollars. Is that for one year?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, that's an arrangement we have with the Morell and Area Development Corporation. There's a sizeable mosquito issue on the Crowbush golf course and we provide the Morell and Area Development Corporation funding to deal with that.

Mr. Gallant: Each year?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Kevin Jenkins Director: It's a three-way partnership with the community, with Rodd Resorts and Crowbush.

Mr. Gallant: So it's more than that?

Kevin Jenkins Director: That's our share.

Mr. Gallant: That's your share. What about other courses comparable to that? Is it costing us a lot of money for mosquitoes on other courses?

Mr. Henderson: We don't have the mosquito issues on other courses to the degree that we have at Crowbush. Crowbush is a premiere golf course and the last thing you want is to have people pay good money for a green fee and then you're run off the course with mosquitoes and bugs.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you.

Chair: Questions on this section?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Corporate Services: 3,848,600.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Strategy, Evaluation and Industry Investment

Strategy and Evaluation

“Appropriations provided for strategic planning, evaluation and research services.”

Total Strategy and Evaluation: 725,300.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering if the minister could give us sort of a little more in-depth description of what this section encompasses.

Mr. Henderson: These are the types of events – as an example, some of the funding we did here was in a review of the hotel levy, the golf course sales, some of the professional services that we had to spend on that, the Jack Frost strategic plan. Some of those things were things that we spent money on – all the statistical analysis and monthly reports that we put together.

Mr. Aylward: When you say statistical analysis, would that be some of the work that's done by the Tourism Research Centre at the university?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yeah.

Mr. Aylward: What type of projects was TRC responsible for in the last year?

Mr. Henderson: I know they were involved a lot with exit surveys when people leave the Island to try to get a little idea of where they went and what they spent their money on. I know our culinary Fall Flavours events, various events from across the Island. The exit survey would be the biggest one, yeah.

But I know you've probably been to a number of the events and there would be people there asking you questions and trying to get information. They would compile all that information and provide that information back to the department. That way the department can determine: are we spending our money wisely, which events are giving us the best payback and that type of (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: As an example, the exit survey, how many individuals would

normally be interviewed for the exit survey in the run of a year?

Mr. Henderson: I'm not sure if I'd know that. We'd have to bring that back. I'm sure it will be probably in the thousands, but I don't think it would be hundreds of thousands or anything like that.

Mr. Aylward: Those individuals, how are they targeted?

Mr. Henderson: They're usually at different events. There's one place that we do research on, but they're probably targeted at the exit points of the Island. We can get more of that methodology, I guess. We just find it's been good information to use to determine how our money is being spent and if we should change anything in that regard.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Page 126.

Industry Investment

“Appropriations provided for industry liaison and grant programs.”

Total Industry Investment: 3,079,300.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: When I look at the grants on page 1 under signature event fund, would that fall under the Industry Investment?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yeah, the Confederation Centre, Small Halls, Cavendish Beach Music Festival.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah. I have to say right off the get-go that I know the Small Halls started and then they didn't receive funding, but then the funding was brought back, and I believe I said something about that last year.

Mr. Henderson: Correct, yeah.

Mr. Aylward: I'd just like to congratulate your department again this year for funding that because I think the Festival of Small Halls is just – it's a wonderful product here on PEI.

Mr. Henderson: It's just a way to promote Island talent in different ends of the Island.

Mr. Aylward: I equate it similar to Cape Breton Celtic Colours kind of thing. It's spread across the Island.

Mr. Henderson: These are, once again, assets that are in small rural communities and it's a way to highlight them a little more and get people travelling to other ends of the Island at a time of year when tourism is kind of – the season is kicking off.

Mr. Aylward: Sure. My question, particularly on this one, is under the Cavendish Beach Music Festival. I'm just wondering with regards to – they received a \$100,000 grant.

Mr. Henderson: That's correct.

Mr. Aylward: Is there marketing done by the department of tourism as well for that festival, or is that just –

Mr. Henderson: I don't think we specifically do that ourselves. Once again, we provide them with a grant to develop. We know that the ticket sales, what general numbers that they tend to get and we know what kind of taxes are paid on that.

Mr. Aylward: How many years have they been receiving funding to the tune of 100,000 or have they ever had a year where they received more than 100,000?

Mr. Henderson: I believe so. To my understanding, it's been a declining grant. They had some start up. To get the thing on the ground there was more capital investment that was required. But I don't know, it's been going for, what, about four years now? Something like that.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: One of the issues had to do around policing. So for example, if Halifax puts on a concert they pay for the policing over there. It falls right into it, or, if the city of Charlottetown puts on a concert. But if it's out in a rural area it fall under RCMP. What we do is provide some funding for that in lieu of. There's also some in lieu of funding that will go along with that.

Mr. Aylward: So it's a declining grant?

Mr. Henderson: We have – I think it's a contract – but it has been declined.

Mr. Aylward: Sorry, it's a how long contract?

Mr. Henderson: It's just an annual grant, I guess. It's an annual contract.

Mr. Aylward: We're at 100,000 now. Let's say we keep funding this festival. In five years' time, will we still be at 100,000 then or will it be –

Mr. Henderson: Being that it's an annual arrangement, I mean, obviously, government would like to see that decline. It's still about making sure that the event is a success and make sure that we're seeing it continue in that line of numbers. They're dealing with some fairly high-end talent that they're bringing. It would be international talent that they're bringing to the province and sometimes that can be rather costly.

Chair: I'm going to go to the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

The member from Stratford was asking some great questions. Does the province put grants towards the Charlottetown Civic Centre?

Mr. Henderson: I don't think so. That's a civic centre.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Not our department.

Mr. LaVie: So is the Cavendish Beach Music Festival competing with the civic centre?

Mr. Henderson: I wouldn't see it. In the respect that the only way it would be competing, if the civic centre happened to be doing an event at the very same time of the year, would be a competition there. But other than that –

Mr. LaVie: Or looking to put some of the talent in the –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, but the type of talent that you're attracting for Cavendish

Beach Music Festival far exceeds what the capacity of the civic centre would be.

Mr. LaVie: Wait now, you're looking at the main stage, but there's a kitchen party too, they call it the kitchen stage (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Okay, I'm not quite familiar with that.

Mr. LaVie: You attend the beach festival?

Mr. Henderson: Cavendish Beach Music Festival?

Mr. LaVie: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: I did one night last year, yeah, which is the first time.

Premier Ghiz: The Cavendish section I think was smaller artists that they put on, yeah.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: But they're certainly bigger events, yeah.

Premier Ghiz: They try (Indistinct) showcase some more local talent, I think, in that area or something.

Mr. LaVie: Well a little higher than local. There is some local, yes.

Premier Ghiz: You can't get any higher than local.

Mr. LaVie: You're right.

I was just wondering, as long as you're not competing with (Indistinct) –

Mr. Henderson: No. I think that, from our perspective, it's the same with all our signature events. We want to make sure that they're at varying times of the year, and that they are (Indistinct). That's part of our department's role. I mean, if there was an organization or a group come in looking for funding for a specific thing that was right at the very same time as the Cavendish Beach Music Festival, we'd wonder: Is it the same demographic, does it impact on them? We make decisions as a department.

Mr. LaVie: So they're not going to have the same advantage as (Indistinct) –

Mr. Henderson: No, that's right.

Mr. LaVie: We know that.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: It's when they book these bands without a (Indistinct) already booked for Cavendish Beach.

Mr. Henderson: Cavendish Beach has been predominately that particular weekend in July, so the early end in July. As much as –

Mr. LaVie: We understand that. Same (Indistinct) you're going to book the same weekend.

Mr. Henderson: No.

Mr. LaVie: It's the entertainment they're getting. But they said they can't get because they're coming to Cavendish that weekend.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, that could happen, but –

Mr. LaVie: So –

Mr. Henderson: All I'm saying is if there were two of them coming for funding at the same time we would make sure that they let them know that.

Mr. LaVie: If the civic centre goes for funding you'll fund them?

Mr. Henderson: If it's, like, say, if they or any organization is coming looking to do something from a signature event, they would – it's no different from Atlanticade, did we fund that one under this one?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. There are all kinds of proposals come to us all the time and this is what our department does. We would look at the strategic investment that we would be putting into it, what the requests are, what kind of numbers they would attract. All these organizations come with very extensive proposals on what they're planning to attract and we just make judgments based on that.

Mr. LaVie: Funding for the LEAP program.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: Administered by the PEI Federation (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: That's under here?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: Is the funding going to be there for 2013-2014?

An Hon. Member: Did he say rake or leaf?

Chair: Could you –

Mr. LaVie: LEAP, LEAP program.

Mr. Henderson: L, E, A, P? I don't think that's under this department, this section.

Kevin Jenkins Director: That's under cultural grants.

Mr. Henderson: That's under cultural grants. I think we had \$50,000 for the LEAP program last year, and it's an extremely popular program, and yes, it's continuing for the coming year. But that's an arrangement that we make with the PEI Senior Citizens' Federation, and the proposals go to them. They distribute the money.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Chair: That's back in the department of culture (Indistinct), hon. member, which we already carried that budget. If we could kind of keep on topic.

I'll go back to the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to ask a few more questions around the Cavendish Beach Music Festival.

I wonder if the minister could explain how it came about. I know that the organizers went out and they looked for a sort of a natural amphitheatre, a piece of ground, so that they could hold this event there. But obviously there was a lot of money put in for the infrastructure, whether it be electrical, irrigation, water, etc. Who put the money up

as far as the capital investment for the infrastructure for the site?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: ACOA and the business, no, we just give them a grant.

Premier Ghiz: (Indistinct) there was a –

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier Ghiz: I think they applied under the infrastructure to do the stage, didn't they?

Kevin Jenkins Director: It wasn't through us.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Premier Ghiz: It's through infrastructure, it wasn't through tourism. Infrastructure, the federal-provincial infrastructure program for, I guess, small communities. They got, like, maybe a million or something between (Indistinct). Does that make sense? Something like that. It wouldn't fall under their department.

Mr. Henderson: Yes. We just (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: Okay, so that being said, they received provincial and federal funding for that. At the end of the day, let's say the Cavendish Beach Music Festival in a year or two years became defunct. Who would own those assets?

Mr. Henderson: I'm sure it being a business, the Cavendish Beach Music Festival Inc. itself, I would assume, but there are not many other things you can do with those assets.

Mr. Aylward: Is there any repayment plan or repayment schedule, as far as all the investment that the province has put into that?

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) under our department. Maybe another department could answer that. We don't lend them money.

Premier Ghiz: Once the infrastructure dollars are gone, they're gone. Now, mind you, it's a pretty valuable asset. Now it's

part of the assets there, so they would move on to whoever else would buy it. You've been out? I think it's a premiere spot, is what I'm told.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, it has great sight lines, and –

Mr. Aylward: It lends itself very well to outdoor concerts.

How profitable have they been? Did you know if they've actually ever turned a profit? Are they revenue neutral?

Mr. Henderson: We give them a grant. If they make money, they make money. I'm assuming they do. They continue to do it.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Mr. Henderson: That's a business risk that they have to take, and I'm sure they wouldn't continue if they didn't see that there was some potential for revenue from that perspective.

Mr. Aylward: You would obviously have to have a written agreement, a written contract, for the grant. Within that grant and the negotiations are there any freebies in there? Complimentary VIP passes, so on, so forth, that your department would receive?

Mr. Henderson: I'm not sure.

Kevin Jenkins Director: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: I don't know. We could find that out.

Premier Ghiz: There'd be something. I'm sure there is.

Mr. Henderson: Most sponsors –

Premier Ghiz: Under sponsorship you'd get some.

Mr. Henderson: Usually that's –

An Hon. Member: There's a section out there.

Mr. Aylward: How would those VIP passes normally be distributed?

Mr. Henderson: I'm not sure, I guess. They go to the Premier's office, or –

Premier Ghiz: I don't know. I've gone once, maybe. Actually, no, I didn't get – no, I don't go every year because my kids are not likely to go, but –

Mr. Henderson: I'm not a country fan, so – I went once to see.

Premier Ghiz: Kind of like client-based, probably.

Mr. Aylward: Chair, I (Indistinct), minister, have you ever been the recipient of a VIP complimentary pass?

Mr. Henderson: Once, for last year.

Mr. Aylward: The once. How about your deputy minister, or previous deputy minister?

Mr. Henderson: I'm not sure if he did or not. I'm assuming that they would, because once again, like I say, as a sponsor and a donator to the whole cause, there'd be some passes. But, once again, I got one, but –

Mr. Aylward: I'd be very interested if you could bring that back, and just sort of what kind of internal policy you have as far as how they're distributed, how many your department receives, and how they're, as I said, distributed.

Mr. Henderson: Okay.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Regulation and Compliance

“Appropriations provided for the management and administration of licensing, signage and compliance.”

Total Regulation and Compliance: 138,400.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I do have another question on grants, and I'm not sure if it falls back into industry investment or if it would come under regulation and compliance. Just when I go over to other projects, industry support, I see here there's a grant for \$12,000 for QTS debt reduction.

Chair: Are you in the previous section?

Mr. Aylward: That's what I'm saying, I'm just flipping through the grants here.

Chair: Oh, you found – okay.

Mr. Henderson: As you're aware, QTS, they were operating at a loss, and since then we've allowed them to increase their fees to make them more – the whole idea of QTS was to make it cost neutral. What that would be referring to there was previously reducing the debt, so now we've allowed them to increase their fees, which was the fee structure to do that, to bring it up so that's not coming out of our budget line.

Mr. Aylward: With their increase in their fees to the license operators I assume would be paying the fees, such as the hotel, motels, campgrounds, etc.

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yes.

Mr. Aylward: Then there's a grant for \$12,000 for debt reduction. Does that now mean that QTS, Quality Tourism Services, is revenue neutral?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yes.

Mr. Aylward: They're balanced?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct.

Chair: Okay?

Mr. Aylward: The East Island Ambassador Program. Can you give me a little more detail on what that program's all about?

Mr. Henderson: That's the ambassadors on the ferry.

Mr. Aylward: On the ferries?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: I think I heard an announcement the other day that that's going forward again.

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yeah.

Mr. Aylward: I believe I heard in the announcement that they're hiring a chef to look at menus –

Mr. Henderson: Okay, I'm not familiar with the details on that. I know they have a chef on board during the Fall Flavours Festival, but maybe they've gotten a chef to look at the menu on the regular crossings.

What the ambassador program is, is people on there to promote Prince Edward Island, and what's in the eastern end of the province, and try to get those people to tour around as long as they can and stay longer.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Chair: Anything further?

Shall it carry? Carried.

French Services

“Appropriations provided for the projects under the Federal/Provincial Promotion of Official Languages Agreement.” Grants: 253,900. Total French Services: 253,900.

Questions?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I just have a question. The new French services act that'll be coming in I believe in this session, will that impact that budget any?

Mr. Henderson: I don't think so. These are specifically – like, the Evangeline Tourism Association takes money, and they may promote French promotions all across the province.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Strategy, Evaluation and Industry Investment: 4,196,900.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Tourism Marketing Communications

Business Development

“Appropriations provided for customer relationship management, sales, packaging and new product development.”

Total Business Development: 683,000.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I know we've talked a lot in the last couple of days or the last week or so about the cruise ships. There was a great announcement where the city of Charlottetown is going to see a record number of cruise ships coming into the harbour this summer, 75, I believe it was.

Mr. Henderson: That's correct.

Mr. Aylward: I'm just wondering with business development, because as I had said, I've actually met with several regional tourism operators and associations. They're really keen to get in on this cruise ship business, because we know right now that Charlottetown, from the figures that we're shown, seems to be benefitting very well, as does Cavendish in particular.

Mr. Henderson: That's correct.

Mr. Aylward: I've been a really strong proponent to try to showcase other parts of the Island as well. I don't want to take anything away from Charlottetown, nor do I want to take anything away from Cavendish, but there are so many other wonderful destinations on PEI –

Mr. LaVie: Good point.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, hon. member. That could be showcased, and they're not really any further than Cavendish.

Mr. Henderson: We've sponsored a number of information sessions and training sessions for businesses and tourism operators, both through the port authority and I think Tourism Summerside has done the same. The idea is to try to put together excursion packages.

You're right in saying – the concern I have with that volume of cruise ships coming into the province is that I'm a little concerned that our shore rating might go down if it's too congested in one area.

I think it's really incumbent upon operators to start putting packages together, work cooperatively, and distance should not be a deterring factor in this. My argument is that just driving around Prince Edward Island is part of the excursion. Most ships, you disembark probably around 8:30, 9:00 in the morning, and they usually don't leave harbour until 4:30, 5:00.

There are a lot of factors there. There are the issues of whether you're going to be on the inside with the cruise line itself and dealing with putting your packages through them and having them sell that. With that there's a cut that goes to the cruise ship itself. Or you can work with the PEI Tourism Operators Association and put packages together there. Or you can do things directly and market it online and visitors can book it that way.

I think there's tremendous opportunities there, but it just takes a little of creativity and ingenuity and cooperation by operators. Those opportunities are there. I've had operators contact me personally and I just let them contact the Charlottetown Harbour Authority, because they can give them a lot of the details. The port authority and I have met and we both realize the need for greater excursion packages.

Another contributing factor is the whole bus issue that sometimes didn't get enough buses to transport people. It has become an issue. There's a bus system that almost follows the cruise ships at all the different ports, they drive over to Sydney and then drive over here and Halifax –

Mr. Aylward: That's Maritime Bus, isn't it?

Mr. Henderson: There are different bus lines that'll do that. You see sometimes they look like even older military buses just to try to get people moved around.

That's one of the challenges is to find enough seats to transport that volume of people if there are, say, three ships in the harbour at the same time. Once again, it's an

issue that we're working on. It's just that they're doing such a great job at the port authority. They're growing this thing at a very rapid rate that I'm concerned that the industry's not keeping up.

Mr. Aylward: I'm just wondering, has there been any talk or any communication with some of the other ports on PEI? Because at some point in time – I know myself, living in Stratford and looking out at the harbour and seeing the cruise ships there, coming across the Hillsborough early in the morning when I come to work and seeing two, three ships in the harbour, I can only appreciate the congestion that must be put upon the port authority.

Has there been any communication or any work done with other port authorities on PEI?

Mr. Henderson: Once again, one of the issues there is that these ships are getting bigger and bigger all the time. To get them in some ports is a challenge in itself, getting them under the bridge. There are all kinds of factors that come into play. The ships have a circuit that they like to go, and they like to go on fairly short junkets to get to another port.

There are smaller ships. It's the same with – we can dock two depending on the size of the ships here at one time. We can't do three. The port authority are looking at solutions to try to be able to get a second bigger ship docked maybe over by the convention centre.

Mr. Aylward: That was going to be my next question: Has there been any negotiations with the landowners of the old Coast Guard wharf to see if they could dock there?

Mr. Henderson: I don't know if I'll say negotiations, but there are inquiries. Once again, it depends on the size of the ship and whether we have to do more dredging, whether we have to do – there's some talk about portable docks that can sort of fold out. There are different solutions but from my discussions with the port authority, they're all very costly.

Chair: Just going over to the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park and then the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to thank the port authority. They're doing a wonderful job down there doing the cruise ships. I also want to recognize a few people who started the cruise ship program. I remember a number of years ago on city council, it was Mary Sage and Irene Rogers who proposed getting into the cruise ship business in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. They went away and worked very hard to get cruise ships. A lot of the time they were the people down at the wharf greeting people as they came in.

Mary got a committee together, got a little building together. I think a lot of gratitude should go to her and her memory because of what she's done there. She's done a tremendous job.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, member.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the city of Charlottetown is looking at the port to enhance it. I think it's great. Our city should have a nice port. I've been around ports all my life, and I love going to ports. I see what other ports have in the Maritimes or out in the west coast, beautiful ports. Is your department working with the city of Charlottetown for the enhancement of the port here in Charlottetown?

Mr. Henderson: We have an arrangement or a partnership with the Atlantic cruise ship industry partnership, I believe it's called, in working with them, and then with the port authority to make sure that it has all the amenities that these ships expect.

Once again, the biggest challenge is to have the dockings, the berthing situation. That comes to the situation where it's very expensive to handle these bigger ships to have another second spot the same size as the previous one.

Keep in mind that the process of tendering passengers in is very common in the cruise ship industry all across the globe. It's not to say that it can't be done here.

Mr. LaVie: How much water do these ships draw here?

Chair: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: I don't know if I'd know that, what the draft that they would have. I would say it would be significant.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Okay. Anything else?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) just (Indistinct).

Chair: I'm just going to go then – one at a time here, please.

Did you have something you wanted to add hon. Minister of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development?

Mr. MacKinley: Yes, they're talking about the cruise ships and that coming in.

Sarah Greenan's got that horse and buggy in the city. That's great for attracting tourists. He mightn't think it from Stratford, but they don't probably have horses in Stratford over there where the very rich elite live. But the average person like ourselves, tourism's important.

For instance, she's having trouble getting a building to house these horses. She's at the racetrack. She's never sure from year to year. If she doesn't soon get something within close vicinity to the cruise ships, she's going to have to leave.

You, Mr. Minister, will you look into trying to find an area close to the cruise ships so she can house her horses?

Mr. Henderson: Work with the carriage trails and (Indistinct). Yes, we'll do that.

Mr. MacKinley: Can you look into that and let me know as soon as you can find something out?

She phoned from Calgary the other day and she's got a problem with not knowing every year. I can see her point, and if she's too far out, it's too far to walk the horses back and forth.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Chair: Okay?

All right, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira –

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: – anything else?

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Chair: If you want – okay, go ahead.

Mr. LaVie: Anyway, just getting back to the Charlottetown harbour –

An Hon. Member: A great harbour.

Mr. LaVie: It is a great harbour and it's our capital city harbour and it has potential to grow, and I mean grow from the bridge right out to the point out there.

I hope your department and other departments do get on board with Charlottetown and make sure that this harbour is the harbour of the east coast.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, no, I appreciate that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Chair.

What I wanted to – I know we've had some great conversation, and the minister of fisheries there talked about stabling horses and things like that, and if he would like to come over to Stratford sometime I'd love to take him around and show him actually where we do have horses.

I know he comes over the odd time to visit his daughter and son-in-law –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: Okay, can we stick to the topic?

Mr. Aylward: Oh, certainly, no, I just wanted to share some information, some pertinent information, with him.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Aylward: Madam Chair, what I started out questioning on this is the great opportunity for tourism organizations and associations across PEI.

I mean, for example, Island East Tourism Group, the assets they have down there, the bird sanctuary, Buffaloland Provincial Park, Montague has a tremendous program in the summer with artisans. You've got Greenwich Village, Basin Head, I mean I could go on and on –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: I mean, in some ways I think the onus is on the department of tourism to bring these groups together. Not just to wait, but you have professionals in your department that know how to market, because that's what their paid to do –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, yeah and –

Mr. Aylward: – and to get out there and rather than just announcing a workshop and hoping that we will build it and they will come kind of thing, we need to go out. We need to work with these industry partners and bring them together, because quite often these are – well, not quite often, a majority of cases these are seasonal operations and they don't necessarily have the wherewithal or the daily communication back and forth with one another. Because when their season hits they're running when their feet hit the pavement, right?

Mr. Henderson: Which is why we had some of those courses in the off-season. Our department's Craig Sulis is responsible for the cruise ship industry and he's met with numerous operators and explained to them the processes, as well as Corryn Morrissey down at the port authority. I'd say there is a bit of a process to it, but if you put together a good business plan and put together good packages, you can certainly – there are opportunities there, there's no argument about that at all, and –

Kevin Jenkins Director: (Indistinct) tourism authorities.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. Then, like I said, we work with the regional tourism authorities all the time. I spoke at the North Cape Coastal Drive tourism authority and explained that this is opportunity. I've met with various operators, but it still has to be their initiative. They have to decide if this is a piece of the business that they want.

I don't think the season is an issue, per se, so we have a lot of cruise ships (Indistinct) the fall. My argument had been if you wanted to open your – you might have your business opened in August and may only get 10 or 15 people come in on a particular day, you could easily get 10 or 15 people on a minivan, take them to wherever the – a museum or location, open for two hours and get 10 or 15 people, so it's just about how you put together the strategy and business plan.

I share your concern that there's not, maybe, more taking that opportunity, but I can assure you that our department is – it's an open door policy. If anybody has an idea on how to put those packaged excursions together, we'd be more than willing to help them.

Mr. Aylward: I'm sure you would agree with the statement just from your (Indistinct) interviews that you received, particularly in the fall. Because, I mean, in all the years that I was in the industry I heard it over and over and over again. When we go out to outlying areas –

Mr. Henderson: They're not open.

Mr. Aylward: – they're shut down. But if we were working really closely with these regional associations and helping them to market, helping different industry partners to come together, I'm sure they would be willing. They might have to take a trial year to see the benefits –

Mr. Henderson: It is an issue and that's why we've tried to invest a lot in – like, the Fall Flavours has been to try to extend that season, and the same on the earlier part of the season with the Island Fusion Festival and things like that. But there's still a responsibility of the operator to sort of see

an opportunity. There are challenges in the fall season getting staff. A lot of tourism operators tend to have students that provide the labour for operations and that gets to be more difficult to get in the shoulder season, so there are lots of challenges there for sure.

Mr. Aylward: It's interesting, too, that you say that about the students, and I completely concur with your statement.

However, in a lot of the travels that I do it's typically in the off-season because I wasn't able to travel during our peak season, and a lot of the times what you'll see is retired or senior individuals working in the hospitality industry in the shoulder season –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: So I think maybe that's something we really need to start marketing on.

Mr. Henderson: We've been working with the department of innovation a bit too. The passport for employment is for older workers that provide training and job search skills to match those employers together. Yeah, no, there's – within the different departments we are trying to encourage that.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, okay.

Chair: Okay? I have a couple more people waiting.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, okay, you can go to the other people and then come back to me, Chair.

Chair: Okay, sure.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park and then the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. Brown: Just one point and two questions.

Just to update people on the wharf, the federal – or the wharf down there. It was divested to the port authority in Charlottetown, I think they got about \$22 million in divestiture money, and that money is set aside in a bank in a trust account and the interest on that trust account is used to upgrade the facilities –

Mr. Henderson: That's correct.

Mr. Brown: – and there's a good port manager down there, Les Parsons, I think he's doing a wonderful job down there.

An Hon. Member: Great job.

Mr. Brown: He just did a tender, I understand, to reface the wharf all around. It's about a \$3.5 million tender so they're going to reface the whole wharf and make sure that it's there.

An Hon. Member: Global warming (Indistinct).

Mr. Brown: No, no, and you know the extension of the wharf that was done there a few years ago, it was a fantastic job and it allowed a lot more cruise ships in.

Horse racing and the horse industry, I don't think – are we taking advantage of it from a tourism point of view? It's partly in my riding, and it's a great event. I go down there Saturdays –

Mr. Henderson: Harness racing (Indistinct), yeah.

Mr. Brown: – and sometimes during the week and there's a big crowd of people down there usually.

I think one of the best times of all, and people would probably disagree, was when the Gold Cup and Saucer was cancelled one Saturday night and it was held on a Sunday. It was a fantastic venue that day, the place was just packed, and it was a beautiful day.

Are we doing anything in terms of promoting that from a tourism point of view, to come to PEI? The racino is great, the facility out there is top-notch. A great number of people working out there from my area, the Charlottetown area, and I'm just wondering – I don't see a tourism marketing strategy for that. We have the Summerside racetrack also and then we have a bunch of matinee tracks I think that we should be using in terms of assets in order to draw people to Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, it's a good point, but I know the harness racing industry is under the department of finance and

municipal affairs and it's managed through the Atlantic Lottery Corporation. I don't know if we do specifically any funding to them for that and the promotion, but once again, I would say these matinee tracks – I think in Pinette they have some –

Mr. Brown: Yeah, it's great.

Mr. Henderson: – I think as a tourism operation. I think there was a bit of an event where you could go and jog a horse or whatever as part of an experiential tourism opportunity.

Mr. Brown: What I'm asking is: Do you put it in your overall package that you send out to various peoples and are we promoting it on – like, I know we promote our beaches, great. But I think there's a tremendous industry – there's a lot of people that work in the horse industry and it's rural PEI.

Mr. Henderson: You ask me because now I own a horse?

Mr. Brown: No, no. It's rural PEI and urban PEI coming together –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, it is.

Mr. Brown: – and any Saturday or any Saturday evening or any evenings you can see a tremendous amount of Islanders out there enjoying that wonderful product, so I think –

Mr. Henderson: But I would suggest, though, if you take the matinee tracks, it's really a little bit in coming upon them if they want to be involved in regional tourism association and look at putting together a part of an excursion package, or just a tourism operation itself, I think there does need to be a little more buying by the industry itself.

As an example, I know in my own riding we have a racetrack. and they always are part of the Potato Blossom Festival. As an example, as they sit on the Potato Blossom Festival committee and our department funds a lot of festivals and events across the Island, so we do give funding to them. It's just they do tend to be a little bit more local in the people that it attracts versus people from out-of-province.

Mr. Brown: I'm hoping that the racetrack and the horse owners association that has put money in for 2014 – because that is a big tradition here on Prince Edward Island. They weren't driving cars in 1864, they were driving horses.

Mr. Henderson: Good point. I'm not sure if they put an application in or not at this point.

Mr. Brown: I guess just one other question. At this time of year, just passed, a lot of people head south to get warm. I don't, but there's a lot of people head south to get warm in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Henderson: The opposite (Indistinct).

Mr. Brown: In the summertime, I guess in Texas and those places, it's 100 degrees. One of the main reason air-conditioning or automatic car starters were invented was not for cold weather, it was for hot weather . People wanting to have the air conditioner on in their car before they went to it. Everybody thought it was invented for Canada. It was invented for Texas more than Canada.

Are we doing anything in terms of: You're hot down there, you're boiling down here, come up to cool PEI and golf instead of (Indistinct) yourself –

Mr. Henderson: I think it's a very good idea. I do find that the further south you go the further away we are. We still tend to maybe market more in the New England states because we do have some direct flights and we have easier transportation, and it does get hot sometimes in those locations at periods of time. Sometimes we're still a little cold by the time they're hot.

Mr. Aylward: We actually tried that and it's called The Big Break. Unfortunately, when it was televised it showed (Indistinct) sitting on benches –

Mr. Henderson: With mitts.

Mr. Aylward: With toques on (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Mr. Aylward: They were getting cool, all right. Unfortunately we had a bad weather system that came through and made it really cold.

Mr. Brown: It's also important too. I know there's been some criticism of some infrastructure put in downtown Charlottetown, especially the east end of Charlottetown, and the event centre that was put there, the parking lot and that. But I can tell you from experience, last year there was the Shellfish Festival and the Beer Festival and that and it's a great – you need infrastructure in order to have these events.

Mr. Henderson: Those have been great investments and it's about trying to create a better tourism product, and you have to have the infrastructure. When we go back to Cavendish Beach Music Festival, we don't have the infrastructure that people expect when they do come to these events. They pay big money for tickets and whatnot. It's part of the business plan.

Mr. Brown: Not too many people would show up in Disneyland if they didn't have any.

Mr. Henderson: That's right.

Mr. Brown: Thanks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to pretty near repeat exactly what the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park said because the harbour authority did take over the harbour up in Souris from the feds pretty near to the exact dollar. The harbour authority there does put money back into the harbour. They spent 4.8 just on their breakwater alone.

When the cruise ships are coming, who's doing the advertisement? Is it your department or is the Charlottetown Harbour Authority?

Mr. Henderson: We market Prince Edward Island as a province. Each individual business or regional tourism operation, they receive funding, they market their region. So in this particular case it would be Discover

Charlottetown. But in this particular case, their issue is really – the Charlottetown Harbour Authority, they go out and attract the cruise ships into our port.

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Mr. Henderson: Once they're here, then it's really up to all the operators and businesses in the area to then try to promote to the people once they disembark from the cruise ship.

Mr. LaVie: Your department puts out promotion for the rest of the Island?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, we just promote PEI as a destination. Like I say, we are part of the Atlantic tourism partnership which markets Atlantic Canada as a destination globally, and then, like I say, the cruise ships really were part of the cruise ship partnership of Atlantic Canada as well.

Mr. LaVie: No, the harbour authority is doing good. They got 75 cruise ships coming.

Mr. Henderson: I think the number is expected to be much higher than that for 2014.

Mr. LaVie: Like the member here says, when you're advertising there's the Village Feast up home, which is a huge success. There's the fiddling association concert, there's the bluegrass concert and then when you're advertising there's the south side, you go right around the point of the Island and you come down the north side back in to Charlottetown. It's the same thing up west. When you leave Charlottetown you go up on the north side and come back down on the south side. Are we advertising that for these cruise ships?

Mr. Henderson: Once again, like I say, we have six regional tourism authorities across the province, and like I say, the province, we do our marketing. We strategically invest in based on what the Tourism Advisory Council recommends, and we try to market Prince Edward Island as the destination and it's then the responsibility – we get them here to the Island and then it's the responsibility of the regional tourism associations to use their own plans and strategy to market to get people to come to

those particular areas. It's up to them. We provide them money and they make their own decisions collectively as a tourism authority and they strategically decide how – like, if I use North Cape Coastal Drive. They decided they want to invest in the fish t.v. show, feeding the giants, and that's their choice and prerogative and they that do that.

Mr. LaVie: What would your budget be for that?

Mr. Henderson: On marketing? Marketing budget – I'll have to refer to my chief financial officer here on this one – 4.1 million.

Mr. LaVie: Four point one million.

Mr. Henderson: But that wouldn't include the regional tourism association?

Kevin Jenkins Director: No.

Mr. Henderson: Each of them received money as well, 60, 100,000 dollars for regional tourism associations, each one. But our marketing budget within our department is 4.1 million.

Chair: That's coming up.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park has one question.

Mr. Brown: Yeah.

Chair: Then I'll go to hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Brown: How much would you do in terms of – do we have a person in the ad agencies? Like Google is a major search engine in the world. Billions of dollars or transactions through that site at all times. Do we have a part of your marketing strategy, a Google strategy, in order to make ads and to make people come towards PEI? Because that is the search engine.

Mr. Henderson: YouTube is big, too.

Mr. Brown: Yeah, but do we have a thing where –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. Our department, we have people within our staff, but also we had a contract out with HERO Marketing to

develop some YouTube videos. In fact, I was passing one around here just recently and it just was a three-minute infomercial on Prince Edward Island, very attractive. We find that just keeps it going viral and spread around people look at it.

The big challenge we find in our whole commercials and advertising, the costs of these commercials. It's 30,000 for a 30-second hit. We try to decide how to either integrate our marketing strategy right into the t.v. show, like we did with *Bachelor Canada* and we did with *Come Dine With Me Canada* and some of those types of show, and then we try to go more viral just because our t.v. commercials and radio spots tend to be fairly expensive.

Mr. Brown: On YouTube there, if somebody calls up a song there's an ad before the song. Have we bought into that concept in terms of YouTube? That's a major – like, somebody brings up a song or –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) got to watch that ad before you (Indistinct) the video.

Mr. Brown: There's a whole industry developing around the YouTube and the Google.

Mr. Henderson: We do some of that but I'm not just sure the exact (Indistinct).

Mr. Brown: Can you bring back some stats on our Google ads and how many times it has (Indistinct)? There's Google analytical that the buyers – like, we must have an account there and we must be able to see how many people have hit our Google ads.

Mr. Henderson: We know how many hit our own website and that.

Mr. Brown: Yeah but no –

Mr. Henderson: But I know what you mean, you're talking Google and YouTube.

Mr. Brown: If you're not in Google you're not out there. I agree with you on YouTube, but there's episodes – like right now, *Friends* and that, they're 22 minute episodes and there's 13 episodes to a series.

Right now there's an industry being developed around YouTube and around that social media thing on three-minute episodes, over 13 episodes too. That's how small these episodes are going. Instead of a 22-minute episode, now you're getting a three-minute episode over 13 episodes. You could do sort of a series around that. That's where the industry is going. People are using their cell phones and things and that's how they're getting their communications. If we're not communicating through the cell phone or if we're not communicating through Google, we're not out there. Young people are not watching television.

Mr. Henderson: I agree with you there.

Mr. Brown: Especially with the new stuff that's coming out today. The cell phones are your television of that and we got to be on that, and we got to be on it through Google, we got to be on it through any search engine, we got to be on it through YouTube, and we got to be on it – we got to advertise through YouTube.

Mr. Henderson: I agree. The social media seems to be where the trends are heading. I know we're involved in it, but I just don't know to the exact extent, but we'll find that out. (Indistinct) take it under advisement (Indistinct).

Mr. Brown: My thing is there should be just a social media Google person that's in charge of that, in promoting PEI worldwide.

Mr. Henderson: We do have a social media – Isabel MacDougall's within our department and she works on social media in promoting Prince Edward Island, works with bloggers. I know she had lobster on the beach that was up in West Point. She had some Japanese bloggers come in and they were tweeting and all those kinds of things to people back in Japan that they were at lobster on the beach.

We have a person designated to work with that specifically. I might also add, if there's a tourism operator out there that's wanting to get a little more experience and expertise around that, she will work with them and try to help them work through that and how they can promote their own particular business.

Mr. Brown: Does she work for the department?

Mr. Henderson: Yes, she does.

Mr. Brown: Great. That's a great idea.

Mr. Henderson: Isabel MacDougall's her name.

Mr. Brown: You should advertise that to local businesses in order to say: Here's a YouTube ad you can put on or help promote (Indistinct) –

Mr. Henderson: I think we're working with Bruce Brothers, their deep-sea fishing up in the Souris-Elmira area.

Mr. Brown: If somebody says: Go on Google, deep-sea fishing PEI, we should be trying to get to the top of the list. There are functions and there's analogues that'll get you to the top of the list.

Mr. Henderson: We're doing that.

Chair: Thank you, member.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, with business development, and we're hearing a lot over the last couple of months about a new folk festival that's being planned here in Charlottetown.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: Would your department, under business development, be working with the folks that are putting this together?

Mr. Henderson: We've been working with Music PEI on that, or actually, it's the Malpeque Folk Festival, I guess is the actual title that they're under. But Music PEI and Rob Oakie are involved in that. We've met with them on numerous occasions. We're just going through the process of trying to find the right date.

We mentioned earlier that it's making sure that we don't duplicate the same demographic on the same day. We're working through that. They have to find

partners. It's not only our department that would fund such an event should it occur.

I've had a great admiration and respect for what Rob Oakie and Music PEI do down in promoting the music industry on the Island.

Mr. Aylward: I'd have to agree. I've known Rob for quite a few years and he is doing tremendous work within the music industry here on PEI.

Mr. Henderson: I've met with him on numerous occasions, and his partners who are involved in that.

Mr. Aylward: I guess my question on this one, though, minister, after your government has spent probably close to a couple million dollars on the new event centre right at the foot of the Hillsborough Bridge, why would a brand new festival that's going to be promoted in Charlottetown, why wouldn't they use that venue? Why would they be looking at going into Victoria Park?

Mr. Henderson: I can say that that was a question that was asked. We suggested that that seemed to make some sense in that regard. But I guess a folk festival is a little bit different of an audience, and they like to have a little more nature-oriented type of things, and smaller stages and different locales within a big concert site. It's their prerogative.

Originally, they were looking at the Cabot park location. Then they decided that they wanted to bring it more into the city. I suppose there's a potential for more funding partners. Then eventually, they started looking at Victoria Park.

But that's really their business decision as an organization and where they want to go. Believe me, we certainly identified that the event centre or concert site would be a good location for it. But they didn't feel that that was the case.

Mr. Aylward: I guess right from the get-go I questioned the viability of building an event centre. I know that not a lot can be done with that land presently, because of the level of contamination from the oil tanks that were previously there. But just with the traffic flow, and I know that they built fairly significant parking lots across the street

now. Still, Grafton Street is a main artery coming into Charlottetown from the eastern end of the Island.

I never really understood why your government was so adamant on funding that event centre there on that piece of property. Now this raises more questions as to whether or not it's actually feasible to have it there.

Mr. Henderson: I know they had concerts like the Festival of Lights that was down here. They wanted to take it a little more out of the residential area. I guess that was considered a decent location. It was land that was available. It is a good site for the shellfish festival for sure. I guess we'll have to wait and see how it works on concert events.

Once again, it's a certain size. It's not going to compete with Cavendish Beach Music Festival because it's far larger. For smaller types of events or more of a medium size than it's probably a good site for that.

I guess it doesn't seem to suit for a folk festival. I'm sure it does for other musical types of genres. Once again, that's really a business issue that Music PEI and the Malpeque Folk Festival committee would have to decide.

Mr. Aylward: Just one last question for me here on this section. Can you explain a little bit more, with regards to the in excess of 600,000, what exactly integrated tourism solution is?

Mr. Henderson: ITS, I'll refer to Mr. Jenkins here on that one.

Kevin Jenkins Director: That's the BookPEI system.

Mr. Henderson: Oh, yes. That's our BookPEI system. When people want to make reservations with an accommodation here on Prince Edward Island they can go onto that site and they can put together vacation planning packages. They can put together their actual booking of accommodations. It's all about trying to close the sale. It's not just about perusing a web site and taking a look at it. It's then actually being ready to book right there and then.

Mr. Aylward: Okay. In this category, then, the revenue that's coming in, 47, 45,000, is that revenue coming back in for operators paying back to BookPEI?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: For fees and such associated with it?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct. To help to try to make it sustainable.

Mr. Aylward: How has BookPEI been operating in the last couple of years? I know there were some major issues right from the get-go.

Mr. Henderson: We had some issues at the start, more some technical issues, but those issues have been resolved. We find that we're getting very favourable comments back on it.

Once again, way more people are booking online now than ever before. It's not the 1-800 numbers. People don't tend to do that stuff as much. We're finding it's been relatively successful. We're not getting much negativity on it at all.

Mr. Aylward: Is BookPEI also the organization that the tourism operators, the hotel/motel/campground operators, have to report every month their visitation, the number of rooms occupied versus the total number of rooms?

Kevin Jenkins Director: No, it's part of the system. That's through the regulation compliance section.

Mr. Henderson: I guess that's all part of the system itself, but it's not directly with that BookPEI.

Mr. Aylward: But when you –

Mr. Henderson: You have to keep our numbers current, so we know where people are booking for statistical purposes. I don't think it's directly in that, is it?

Kevin Jenkins Director: It is part of that system.

Mr. Henderson: I guess it's part of that, Kevin tells me.

Mr. Aylward: It's a condition of being licensed through the department of tourism that you have to report your occupancy numbers. You have to report where your travellers originated from, what country, province, state. How accurate would you say that those –

Mr. Henderson: We probably have the most accurate statistics of any jurisdiction in, I'll say, North America. Maybe I'm being a bit boastful of that. But we have limited entry points into the province and we have that particular system itself. We have a good compliance ratio for those who are doing the reporting.

Mr. Aylward: You'd feel very positive that the reports that are coming into your department are very accurate on that?

Mr. Henderson: I do. To a certain degree, sometimes as an industry we beat ourselves up on if we're up 1%, down 1%. The numbers, it doesn't take much to skew a percentage on Prince Edward Island. It seems to always be of interest in the media. Every month everybody's tracking starting in May: Are we up or down?

Mr. Aylward: I guess I'm not talking so much about as far as the level of occupancy goes. I'm questioning more so as far as where our visitors are originating from, especially when you get into breaking it out from provinces is one thing, but when you break it out into the various states and then you go out into the international, where you have to break it out and the number of nights –

Mr. Henderson: I'll tell you, from my opinion, there wouldn't be much reason to fudge those numbers, I guess. If the accommodation is saying that somebody's from Switzerland and the other room is from Alabama, I don't see why we would want to change that.

Mr. Aylward: Have you ever gone out to your industry partners and talked to them about that reporting? Back when I was in the industry, I heard from different operators saying how onerous it is to actually dig down in that information. Not every operator has a software program that they can just key in a couple of things, press a button and a report comes out. They actually

have to take the time and go through every stay. Actually it's almost like a tally sheet: Switzerland, there's one.

Mr. Henderson: My wife and I used to be tourism operators at one time. It's like anything. It's more paperwork that you have to do. It's a busy time of year. I empathize with any of these operators, but the reality is that it's important to know where our markets are, and that way we can target our marketing strategy towards that. If we know there's a lot of people from Alabama, like the member said, as the hotter weather, well then, maybe we'll target more ads at certain times of the year in that location.

Mr. Aylward: I remember back a couple of years ago I actually had somebody from your department call me and they questioned my occupancy level when I was at the university managing the conference department. I had to chuckle on the phone because they wanted – they said: Your numbers can't be right. You're more than double your occupancy for this particular month from last year. I said: Yes, have you heard about the Canada Games that were in town? Sort of thing, so –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, I can understand that, but obviously the system is working then that we noticed something that was a little different than normal. Following up and just confirming that would also verify that our stats are more accurate than many.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Visitor Services

Total Visitor Services: 680,000.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Under visitor information, how many information do you have for these visitors?

Mr. Henderson: VICs? I believe we have five: Mount Pleasant, Borden, Charlottetown Airport, Woods Islands, and Souris.

Mr. LaVie: Are they all leased?

Mr. Henderson: Leased, as in –

Mr. LaVie: Do you lease the building off of, say, the town of Souris?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, most of them would be. I think they're all – yeah, well, the airport would be in the airport authority's building, so I mean, we would be renting the space in that regard.

Mr. LaVie: So you have a contract there?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. Now I know in Mount Pleasant's case I'm pretty sure the province owns that. (Indistinct) TIR, yeah.

Kevin Jenkins Director: TIR leases some properties and owns some other properties.

Mr. Henderson: So TIR owns some and leases some.

Mr. LaVie: So you have contracts. Are they long-term? Are they a five-year contract, 10-year contract?

Kevin Jenkins Director: TIR has those contracts (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. TIR would be – those would be the ones that would be either owning the property or contracting with the respective owner of the property.

Mr. LaVie: TIR would?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: That wouldn't go through your department?

Mr. Henderson: They would what?

Mr. LaVie: They wouldn't go through your department?

Mr. Henderson: Not the buildings themselves. As I say, they are owned by TIR.

Mr. LaVie: Not the buildings, but the contracts.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Leases, no. TIR.

Mr. Henderson: Leases would be with TIR.

Mr. LaVie: So they set the contract, whether it's 10 year, five year, one year?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yeah.

Mr. LaVie: Oh, is that right? I thought that was through your department, that you leased that building off the town of Souris, or you fellows –

Mr. Henderson: We wouldn't, but we provide the service that's there.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: As an example, the VICs are – the staffing is paid for by our department.

Mr. LaVie: By your department?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct.

Mr. LaVie: They're not leased through your department?

Mr. Henderson: Not the leases, no.

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Chair: I have three people waiting.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville and the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to go back to the visitor centres again. So you say we have five, is it?

Mr. Henderson: Five.

Mr. Aylward: The one in Charlottetown is located at the Charlottetown Airport?

Mr. Henderson: At the airport, that's correct. Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: Okay. So the one that was at Founders' Hall previously –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) Discover Charlottetown or –

Mr. Aylward: Because originally, for many years, it was out at the – it's called the Oak Tree Plaza. Then it moved from there, which a lot of people really never understood why it moved from there, but it moved from there to where, I believe where the 2014 office is now, in the little stone building.

Mr. Henderson: Okay. Yeah. You're before my time in this, so –

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Chair: I think maybe –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, and then it was moved to Founders' Hall, which, I mean, with Founders' Hall operating as a tourism destination –

Mr. Henderson: It made sense.

Mr. Aylward: – it made total sense, and it was a very nice setup. There was parking and there was good flow, etc. But then just, what was it?, last year or two years ago it was decided that it wasn't going to operate as a VIC any longer. But then –

Mr. Henderson: It was probably at the welcome center, was it?

Mr. Aylward: I think the port authority then took it over, and operated it?

Mr. Henderson: The port authority has taken over Founders' Hall.

Kevin Jenkins Director: There'd be a number of VICs in Summerside and Charlottetown (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, like, we have other centres that are not run by us, but we provide grants. As an example, Summerside tourism, Summerside, the one we're putting into Harbourside Centre. Then we have welcome centres, which are all information access sources for tourists to find out locations of events and to get advice and whatnot for around the local area. But the VICs themselves, we operate five of them that we manage and put all the staffing in them and whatnot. I think there's another one I believe in St. Peters. There's one there, but those are operated through either the

tourism authorities or from another organization.

Mr. Aylward: Does the port authority receive a grant from your department to operate the one at Founders' Hall?

Mr. Henderson: Is there even one at – yeah, there would be.

Kevin Jenkins Director: There's money for Discover Charlottetown.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, because Discover Charlottetown is part of (Indistinct).

Mr. Aylward: What about in Wood Islands? Do you operate that one?

Mr. Henderson: That's one of ours.

Mr. Aylward: That is one of yours. I know there's talk about the liquor store because there's an agency store –

Mr. Henderson: Correct.

Mr. Aylward: – in Belfast now, and things like that. But is it the community that has actually taken over the liquor store there?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct. It's the Wood Islands Development Corporation.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) as an agency store?

Mr. Henderson: It's the Wood Islands and Area Development Corporation. They own that property and they are going to be the agent in operating the agency store.

Mr. Aylward: Okay. What about the VIC down there, then? Is there any –

Mr. Henderson: They receive a grant. It would be like a lease arrangement with TIR, but we would put the staff and operate –

Mr. Aylward: So it's business as usual –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: – down there? Okay.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Good.

Chair: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Just on the visitor information centres, are they just (Indistinct) –

Mr. Henderson: He's already got a welcome centre there, too.

Chair: Excuse me, again. Could you ask that question? I didn't hear it.

Mr. Murphy: Okay. I just thought the visitor information centres, the one in Mount Pleasant there, is its role just to give information, or is it to actually promote tourism, too?

Mr. Henderson: All of those, when a visitor stops in there, they should be able to access any information they want as far as promoting what events are going on in the region, promoting the pamphlets and whatnot that a particular business would provide there. Provide any information where to get amenities, where to get alcohol, where to get steak or –

Mr. Murphy: How to get to Alberton?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, how to get to Alberton is usually the first sign there.

Mr. Brown: Markers (Indistinct) kilometres.

Mr. Murphy: Wouldn't it be beneficial for, would there be any funding available, West Prince tourism, like, wanted to promote West Prince in, say, Borden. Like, when visitors get to Mount Pleasant they're already en route to West Prince so –

Mr. Henderson: We have those little kiosks or whatever where businesses can put their pamphlets and whatnot. Once again, I guess it would be up to the regional tourism association, if they felt it was better, strategically, to have somebody in a different location to promote people west. That would be up to them. But when people come across to Borden, at Gateway we're promoting all of Prince Edward Island equally.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Just talking about the visitor information centres. I know they kind of had a facelift over the years, and some of them have disappeared, and whatnot, and I know there is definitely a point in time that tourists used to – basically when you come into a province it was kind of like the first place you hit up to find everything that was going on. Now, there's a lot changed in the world and I know –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) declining rapidly.

Leader of the Opposition: Declines rapidly, but I know any time I happen to go to another province, which usually isn't that far, it's usually Nova Scotia or New Brunswick, but when I do I always kind of either use my phone to see what's close by, if I'm looking for a place to eat or looking for someone to go – or I might do some research in advance. Are there any tools we're not using? I'm thinking things like the iPhone maps. I don't have an iPhone and I don't really know how it works, but I think –

Mr. Henderson: We have tourism apps, yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Do you have them that have way points set up for the maps so that people can kind of plug them into their phone and say: Okay, I'm going here, here, and here, and they're on my map and where am I and where do I turn next, kind of thing?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, well, the whole GPS system has revolutionized the maps and just being able to get people from point A to point B or what have you. There are tourism maps that are there to do that as well as – so the visitor information centre situation has declined, but we've seen almost the same decline, we've seen invariably increases to our website and to our apps and whatnot, so it's –

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Mr. Henderson: – a different way people access information today.

Leader of the Opposition: So you are mapping? If I wanted to pull down a map on

my phone, do you have a map for Blackberrys that will –

Mr. Henderson: I'm sure we do.

Kevin Jenkins Director: There are apps.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, there are apps on that.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. How do you have a track on how many downloads you'd have on those mobile devices?

Mr. Henderson: We do, but I wouldn't know what it would be right off, but we could –

Kevin Jenkins Director: (Indistinct) stats.

Leader of the Opposition: Has it been a large –

Mr. Henderson: Just going straight out, yeah, the increases are dramatic on those signs of accessing of information for tourism in Prince Edward Island.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

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

Mr. Roach: Just a question.

Several years ago I did an extensive travel in a vehicle, and what I relied on was my GPS. Doesn't matter what model it is, but everywhere I went, if I wanted to find a restaurant, I found it on my GPS. If I wanted to find accommodations, I found it on my GPS. For me, it was like one-stop shopping. I never bothered stopping at a tourism operation anywhere that I went.

Do we have any kind of association with any of these companies that provide or put those maps, or put those businesses on their systems, where we can ensure that all of our hotels, all of our restaurants, where we're looking at that on an annual basis to make sure it's up to date? Because that for me is just a great way to go.

Mr. Henderson: We do, yeah. Through our department we make sure all of that stuff is updated and maybe my (Indistinct)

colleague here can give you more detail if you require that?

Mr. Roach: No, I was just curious if – you know, whether we did that.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Marketing

“Appropriations provided to market Prince Edward Island tourism in –”

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: Yes?

Mr. Aylward: Before we get into this category, just a question.

I know the minister is responsible for the PEI Liquor Control Commission.

Mr. Henderson: That’s correct, yeah.

Mr. Aylward: I’m just wondering, what section, while you’re doing your estimates, we’re going to be able to ask questions around the PEI LCC?

Mr. Henderson: I don’t believe that appears in our budget here –

Chair: It’s not in this – it’s not in this budget.

Mr. Henderson: It generates money, there’s – yeah, but I’m willing to take any questions you have on it.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, we’ll have some questions, then.

Chair: Maybe we’ll do that at the end if you want to have that discussion.

Mr. Henderson: I believe that’s what happened last year.

Mr. Aylward: Sure, that’d be great.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Chair: Total Marketing: 4,169,800.

Did you have some questions under that section?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Oh, I thought you said no.

Mr. Aylward: I wasn’t paying attention, sorry.

Chair: Okay, sorry.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, Chair, I’m just wondering if the minister could enlighten us on what the outcome or the response was of your latest initiative with television, *Come Dine with Me Canada*, in particular.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, well, it’s always hard to measure investments in that, but what we do look at a little bit is the web hits. We have always seen a spike in web hits for the following days after a show has been aired.

Same thing happened with *The Bachelor Canada* on CBC. I don’t know the exact percentages but we saw spikes in that, so that means that there’s people – at least they’re curious about Prince Edward Island. They’re checking it out. The same thing happened when they had Regis and Kelly here. The system crashed at that time, but – so there are projection models that will determine, once again, by exit surveys and some of the information and research we get back to determine what was the trigger that encouraged those people to book a trip on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Aylward: Currently there’s some court proceedings going on with Jungle Media and it’s tied to TIAPI which is, of course, the Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island and the Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership.

How is your department involved specifically in that, and how are those proceedings coming along? I know there was one judgment just within the last week or so –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. We’ve signed an arrangement with the Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership to be assigned, I think,

a 5%, I believe, of the risk is born by our department. Hopefully we'll win our case and it wouldn't be a factor, but if we lose our case we'll have to provide 5% of the lawsuit, so –

Mr. Aylward: So that's 5% of the 930,000?

Mr. Henderson: I think that's the number, yeah.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Mr. Henderson: Which is not bad from the perspective, but –

Mr. Aylward: Any time you lose taxpayers' money it's not great.

Mr. Henderson: It's just a dispute in front of the courts there at the moment and we don't think we're in the wrong, but (Indistinct) –

Mr. Aylward: I hate to bring it back but it's kind of like saying that: We tried but unfortunately we didn't dot our Is and cross our Ts. It's taxpayers' money at the end of the day.

Mr. Henderson: Well, for sure.

Mr. Aylward: So we've tried several different ventures –

Mr. Henderson: Tried this game (Indistinct) –

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, we've tried several different ventures with television. There's a camera crew in town right now, it was on the news the last couple of days, they were just down the street at the Big Orange Lunchbox, called *You Should Eat Here*. Was that an initiative of the department of tourism? Or did they just come in –

Mr. Henderson: I know I saw that but I'm not familiar that we're involved in that. To my knowledge we're not funding that one, but once again, if there was a request to come in – like, we will help organizations that are coming to film on Prince Edward Island to access different businesses in the area if they require certain equipment, expertise and staffing and things like that. That's probably the extent of our role on that one.

Mr. Aylward: Are you planning any future endeavours with television or with –

Mr. Henderson: We're always in constant communication with the TV networks and producers, but all that stuff becomes very top secret and if we are able to do something we have to be careful on our announcements. But at this point in time, nothing imminent.

Mr. Aylward: Minister, if you'd allow me to make a suggestion.

There's a show that I watch quite frequently on one of these channels and I think it would be a wonderful program to bring here to PEI. I think it's something that – actually, some of your ministers – it would be great if they could participate in it as well, the television show is called *Til Debt Do Us Part*. I think we could get that television program here probably fairly economically.

Mr. Henderson: I don't know about that.

Chair: Anything else?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Chair: Anything else?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Media Relations/ Editorial: 394,300.

Questions?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Yes, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

We're awful anxious just to move through this, I'm not really sure why.

Chair: No, you just have to get my attention.

Mr. Aylward: okay.

Chair: I'm not anxious, hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, you just have to get my attention.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: Go ahead, hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

The only thing is I'd try to keep it on topic.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, no that's fine, Chair, and I can assure you this will be very topical.

“Appropriations provided for editorial services and familiarization tour/hosting.” Commonly in the industry it's referred to as fam tours.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: How many fam tours would have been conducted last year and how many individuals would have participated in those?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, okay, how many? The *Globe and Mail Adventure, En Route, Japan Fam, Toronto Star, Toronto Sun, C'est Legislative Assembly Vie* – the list goes on, there's quite a few of them there. I'd say 25 to 30 as far as media relations fam tours that we've hosted here in Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Aylward: Okay, and quite regularly travel writers are involved in this as well?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yeah.

Mr. Aylward: Can you tell us how many articles and what articles were produced by hosting travel writers to Prince Edward Island?

Mr. Henderson: I'd probably have to get that for you and bring that back.

Mr. Aylward: If you could bring that back that would be great.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, probably get an exact number of them.

Mr. Aylward: And copies of the actual articles?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Chair: Is that everything, hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock?

Mr. Aylward: That would be it.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Fulfillment

“Appropriations provided for media distribution.”

Total Fulfillment: 486,300.

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Henderson: I was expecting the questions on that one.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Chair: Publications

“Appropriations provided for the production and printing of publications, management of photo library and audio-visual services.”

Total Publications: 554,900.

Questions?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister, would this be the category that would encompass the visitors guide that's produced every year?

Mr. Henderson: That's correct. Highway mapping, visitor guides, French guides –

Mr. Aylward: Okay. With the visitors guide in particular, I know with the Internet and so on and so forth the usage of the visitors guide, both in French and English, has been going down –

Mr. Henderson: Going down, the websites going up.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah. Where about are we with the production of the visitors guide now annually? Like, how many copies would you be producing?

Mr. Henderson: We'd have to bring that one back, but I do know the numbers are dropping fairly significantly, but our website hits are going up. Let's say we redid the website to be more user-friendly and put more pictures on and let the visitor guide –

Kevin Jenkins Director: Yeah, we adjust those numbers annually depending on what demand is.

Chair: Oh, really?

Mr. Aylward: Sorry, I didn't catch that, what Mr. Jenkins was saying –

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Chair: Actually we have a question over here.

Mr. Henderson: We just adjust the numbers, obviously, like I say. There'd be less printing going on all the time, so you know, you just kind of go from the previous year, how many you printed off and you don't get them all out and drop the number again for the next year.

Mr. Aylward: I know, for example, with the telephone books, there's a recycling program with them. Is there anything set up with the tourism operators around the visitors guides? Because I know for a fact, quite often whether it's a luggage room or bellman's room or back of the front desk or the marketing department, at the end of the year there's literally cases of visitors guides both in French and English that were never distributed. I'm just wondering if you had such a program in place where I know that –

Mr. Henderson: Not to my knowledge that we go and pick any of them up or anything that haven't been used.

Mr. Aylward: But it probably could be a good cost savings measure for your department, minister, if you implemented something like that at the end of the year, that you went around to the tourism operators that you delivered them to to see how many you could collect back. That

would just give you a gauge of how much waste there is and thus, you could reduce your publication printing costs again, even further.

Mr. Henderson: We could take a look at that. I'm thinking it would probably cost us more money in having to go and pick them up. Once they're with a particular operator, they are their responsibility. But it would give us something (Indistinct) idea of printing. We'll see if we can get a better handle on that.

Mr. Aylward: Definitely it would be an environmentally conscious thing to do, not only economically but –

Mr. Henderson: There's no doubt printing them and aren't being used, there's an environmental cost to that.

Mr. Aylward: Like I said, I can guarantee you there's cases upon cases of them out there.

Chair: I'll go over here and then if you have a question –

Mr. Aylward: Certainly.

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

Mr. Roach: I guess my question falls along the line of questioning that we just heard.

Do you do any kind of analysis with respect to we're getting more – a bigger bang for our buck in terms of advertising in other ways as opposed to producing the guide? Is there a point that you see where you're going – or are you looking at the possibility that maybe the guide needs to change or maybe we need to reduce it to such a degree that –

Mr. Henderson: We just did that recently. We've made significant changes to the visitor guide to make it more online friendly and to have it more on the grid system so we could make sure that we were promoting sites and events around Prince Edward Island and not specifically focusing on individual businesses. Individual businesses will focus way more on the web, where that way it's more cost effective. They can get way more bang for their buck, so to speak,

and get bigger pictures and more pictures of their sites. So we have done that.

I would say I don't ever necessarily see the visitors guide going out of existence, but I can see the circulation number dropping somewhat. I think there are still people like to have the organic – have a magazine in front of them and we'll still continue to do that.

Mr. Roach: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, did you have any further?

Mr. Aylward: Not anymore, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Travel/Trade Sales

“Appropriations provided for travel/trade promotions and international development.”

Total Travel/Trade Sales: 431,000.

Questions?

Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

I'm just wondering, as far as the trade promotions around the international development, what kind of work is being done there?

Mr. Henderson: International development. We've done some fan tours with motor coaches, travel agents. We've been to Japan, marketplace assessments for North America, Europe and Asian, done some advertising on consumer shows to try to promote Prince Edward Island.

Chair: Anything else?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Tourism Marketing Communications: 7,399,300.

Shall it carry? Carried.

We had one final question on the PEI Liquor Control Commission.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Just because it's relevant today – has your department been in contact or in communication with anybody from either a group of investors that may be looking to invest in the PEI Rocket or the PEI Rocket themselves, the current owners?

Mr. Henderson: This was all news to me what I heard today. We'd like to see the hockey team in the Quebec league remain on Prince Edward Island, and we'd be more than happy to discuss with any partners that were looking at doing that. But at this point I'm not aware of any discussions on that.

Leader of the Opposition: Is there any opportunity with the government if there are local investors to come aboard?

Mr. Henderson: I'm sure there would be. Once again, there's a tourism impact by having the Rocket here on Prince Edward Island. I'm sure there are other departments that would benefit from seeing the Rocket remain here.

Leader of the Opposition: I know I was involved with a draft that was here in 2006. I went to the draft in Chicoutimi with the Rocket in 2005. I know how much interest is drawn in some of these other communities because you have a team. Once your name is out there, you're known.

Mr. Henderson: It's a good marketing promotion for Prince Edward Island, for sure. We were looking forward to them being called the Prince Edward Islanders.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, did you have a final question before we carry this total?

Mr. Aylward: Yes, I have a couple of questions around the PEI Liquor Control Commission.

Chair: Okay.

If I may carry that Total Tourism Marketing Communications before we carry Tourism PEI.

Did we carry that? Okay. Sorry. I just didn't get a chance to mark it.

Go ahead, hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If the minister could enlighten us a little bit with regards to – we've got almost a year under our belt now with the introduction of five privately owned agency stores. I'm just wondering how that's operating.

Mr. Henderson: In fact, we don't really have a year under our belt. Even our first one that opened in Cavendish was about the middle of July.

But on a preliminary surface of it is that the sales were good. I can assure the hon. member that sales did not have much impact on the Rustico. Its sales at the same time from when the agency store had opened, I think I was out there in the fall. Sales were identical to what they were the previous year.

Once again, as we expected that sales may decrease in some stores down a few percentage points, but we'd be invariably double those sales increases at the agency store. There would be a net gain to the province. But some of the ones like Murray Harbour and Wood Islands – Wood Islands will be just starting this season, the one in East Royalty – some of them didn't start until the fall.

We want to try and get a good year under our belt to have really a better assessment on what impacts it might have had and what the net gains were. It looks promising, I guess.

Once again, it would be a limit to how many of these things you did and the impact it would have on your existing stores. That's not what we want to do. We want to try to have net gain here.

Mr. Aylward: Can you explain the rationale or the thinking around why, with the introduction of the HST, consumers didn't see a savings on beer, wine and spirits?

Mr. Henderson: It's the same as – our pricing is based on what our competitors in other provinces are, and also the optics of responsible – if you're lowering alcohol fees, is that encouraging more issues around drinking?

The hon. minister of transportation has done some great work in trying to deal with the abuse of drinking and driving. That was the premise behind it.

Mr. Aylward: Wasn't it your promise, essentially, or your assurance, your government's assurance, that with the implementation of the HST retailers would pass on those savings to consumers? Therefore your government should be leading by example?

Mr. Henderson: Once again, if you start lowering the prices, there are other impacts because of alcohol in the – we just didn't want to send the wrong signal to encourage more drinking –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Ms. Casey: Madam Chair?

Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point has the floor.

Ms. Casey: Madam Chair, I think we're almost finished this minister's budget, and I'm just wondering if we could extend the hour. I don't know if there are more questions from –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Ms. Casey: Sorry? But are you almost finished?

An Hon. Member: No.

Ms., Casey: Okay. Thank you. I just thought if we were finished.

Chair: Minister.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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 that 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 West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Thursday, April 18, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Good evening, everyone.

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