

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to our guests in the gallery and those viewing from home or online, and welcome back to all of our colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly. I hope you had a great weekend.

A special welcome to John and Jenet Clement and the work that you folks have done with the Singing Strings. I think we'll hear more about that later.

We had a fantastic weekend with the *Jeux de l'Acadie*, kicking off Saturday night with 1,100 to 1,200 athletes and probably two to three times that number of families and supporters. A great event for PEI and for our Acadian community in the region.

Terrific meetings with, first, the Maritime and then the Atlantic Premiers with some substantive achievements, and I'll speak later about the meetings with the southeastern US governors and Canadian premiers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back here on a Tuesday. I want to welcome everybody in the gallery here today. We have a big crowd and I'm sure there are lots tuned in at home and I want to welcome them, too.

As you know, tomorrow is Canada Day, and there are many great events going on right across Prince Edward Island in many wonderful communities across Prince Edward Island. I encourage everyone to get

out, enjoy an event, and celebrate Canada Day in your community. You should be very proud to be a Canadian and it's a great day to show it.

Also, just on a personal note, this morning I had the opportunity to drop my son off to his first job. He is gone to work down at the Rodd in Brudenell for the summer. He is 15 so he was pretty excited, and it certainly made me feel rather old dropping my son off this morning, but I want to wish him well at that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to welcome everybody to the Assembly this afternoon. I would also like to make special mention of John and Jen Clement and the wonderful contribution they make to our music community here on Prince Edward Island. My daughter is an alumnus of Singing Strings – just a wonderful organization – and Sue Irvine, of course, sitting beside them.

I would also like to wish all Islanders a Happy Canada Day. I, of course, am not only an Islander by choice, but I'm also a Canadian by choice, and through a sort of a series of happy accidents I stand here today as a Canadian citizen, married to a wonderful Canadian woman with four Canadian children, and I give blessings for that. I think it's important that we pause sometimes in our lives and give gratitude for the things that we have in this country compared to some of the turbulence and problems that exist in the rest of the world. I think we need to be grateful for the wonderful things we have on Prince Edward Island and in Canada, including perhaps the opportunity for a come-from-away to run for an upstart party and find themselves sitting in the Legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I want to wish all Islanders a Happy Canada Day.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise in the House today and acknowledge a very important milestone that took place this past weekend on June 28th. My incredibly wonderful parents, Bill and Elizabeth Aylward, celebrated 57 years of marriage and I'm very proud to state that they're probably more in love today than they were 57 years ago.

I would also like to thank the PEI Bait Fishers' Association for the excellent fishing derby that they held this past weekend in Stratford at Pondsides Park, also known as Kelly's Pond. I'm not sure of the exact title of the award that was given out, but there was one young gentleman, three-and-a-half years old, he actually reeled in a 19-inch trout out of the pond. He was pretty exhausted by the time he finished.

I would also just like to acknowledge a few guests here in the Legislature, in the gallery today: Bobby Gillis, Ronnie Nicholson, Jeff Matheson has joined us again today, and of course, long-time friends John and Jen Clement. It's wonderful to see you here.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to welcome everybody to the gallery today and everybody that's watching at home, especially Kensington-Malpeque.

I would like to wish Nancy Birt a happy birthday today. She's a big PC supporter, a life-long supporter. I just want to say happy birthday, and wish all families and children a great Canada Day tomorrow and be safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here in the gallery today, and especially John and Jenet Clement. I want him to know that I still have an album that we co-conspired together some – I won't mention how many years ago, John.

I'd also like to welcome everybody in the district to come out to Miltonvale Park for Canada Day celebrations.

I'd also like to wish happy birthday to my wife tomorrow. I always tell her that we always put a big splash of fireworks and everything on for her birthday, so anyway – thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Ms. Sherry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to rise this afternoon and welcome everyone to the public gallery, especially Eddie and Bob who are loyal followers every day, and also to the Clements. They were instrumental, if I can use the word in that state, to provide wonderful entertainment for my daughter's wedding six years ago and it certainly made their day more special.

I would also like to recognize a very dear friend who's sitting across the way, Marcia Matheson, who's also a great supporter.

To also say, happy 100th birthday to Margaret MacNeil who turned 100 years old yesterday and celebrated as such. Margaret still lives on her own and is very self-sufficient, and can probably talk me under the table today.

In closing, if I may, I would also like to wish my husband Steven a happy 32nd wedding anniversary which we will be celebrating tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche and also the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and welcome everyone to the gallery. I'd also like to mention that I had the distinguished pleasure to volunteer all day and attend the official opening of *Jeux de l'Acadie* on Saturday evening. It was wonderful to see all the youth in such excitement and see such a large crowd.

I regret that I could not make the closing this afternoon but I'm sure they'll have a wonderful afternoon, and I wish them safe travels home.

I'd also like to wish everyone a happy Canada Day tomorrow and I hope the weather's nice for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, member.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

I, too, would like to welcome everyone in to the gallery today. We have a very large crowd which is always a pleasure to see.

As well, I'd like to, in particular, welcome Mr. Kent McRae into our gallery today. Kent recently retired about a month ago after 36 years in the workforce and was a little unsure what he should do with his afternoons. I said suggested come down and watch the viewings of the House, and here he is, lo and behold, today. It's good to have Kent in as well.

Also, I, too, would like to wish Bill and Elizabeth Aylward a happy anniversary this weekend. Of course, Elizabeth's family and my family go way back from years ago in the Fort Augustus area so I hope everything went well with their anniversary on the weekend.

As well, Buddy and Ruby Quinn, neighbours of mine, celebrated 69 years together this weekend. They had a little meal event on Saturday, so I think everything went pretty well for Buddy and Ruby, and I wish them many more years together.

As well, as I close, as minister of communities, I certainly would like to invite all members of every community across Prince Edward Island to get out and enjoy Canada Day festivities in their neighbourhoods all across Prince Edward Island tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had a lovely day in Summerside yesterday. We had the launch of our Go Lobster campaign down at the Harbourfront Theatre and we're looking forward to it being bigger and better than last year. We have 22 restaurants involved, up from 18 last year. I'd like to thank the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for attending that opening yesterday and for his department's continued support to that vital industry.

I'd like to welcome everybody to Summerside for the month of July. Have a dish of lobster, or 22, and maybe take in a show at the College of Piping, Harbourfront Theatre, visit Spinnakers Landing, and just enjoy your stay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to rise and say hello to everyone in the gallery. It's good to see Bobby Gillis here. Bob and I have known each other since grade 3, I think it is.

I want to send out a shout out to all the farmers and fishers. A number of farmers I met on the way in today. I would like to say we need a little bit of warmth. The corn in

our field isn't getting very high yet, so we're hoping maybe we'll get some sunshine.

I'd also like to say hello to everyone at the Gillis lodge, all the residents there. I'll be speaking tomorrow for Canada Day celebrations, I'm looking forward to that. I'm not sure what words of wisdom I'll have to share with them, Wonderful seniors who have contributed a lot to our community and to actually everyone on the Island.

Just wishing everyone a happy Canada Day and look forward to the afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to everyone in the public gallery and everyone who's watching at home, either through EastLink or on the Internet.

I wanted to stand today and, because tomorrow is Canada Day, wanted to remind people of the celebrations in North Rustico that have been quite popular over the years. This year in particular there's been some renovations done. Sea Walk Park, which was Centennial Park, has been completely renovated. There's five new boutiques there and a new section of boardwalk. There's a new stage. It's quite the thing. Something I believe Island Community Fund helped with over the years. Definitely come down for a full day of events. There's a 5 km run in the morning, there's a pie eating contest, I mentioned the music on the stage. Yes, I think my group might even be singing "O Canada," if you can bear that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I invite everyone out to Canada Day at the creek.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's with pleasure that I rise to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Clement, as I know them as well,

to the gallery. Mrs. Clement was a music teacher of mine at a few different points in my schooling career, which I won't go on about any accolades that I had earned since then.

I'd also like to wish my sister Cassie Brown happy birthday tomorrow, and another long-time friend of mine, Alex MacLauchlan, who would be a cousin, I guess, to the Premier. Happy birthday tomorrow as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the indulgence of rising a second time.

When I rose the first time I didn't realize that Tarik Brahma, who is the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Saint-Jean which is the area of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu just south of Montreal, is with us in the gallery. Mr. Brahma was with us for the SEUS Conference.

Welcome, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everyone in the gallery and those who are watching on the Internet as well.

I just want to wish everyone a great big happy Canada Day tomorrow. There are big events in Stratford happening. The pancake breakfast tomorrow morning at the Town Hall between 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. and then the big event where they all gather at Tea Hill park. As I mentioned before, we're going to taste some of the great dishes from PEI with Out of the Sea and Over the Coals. It's the first time the demonstration will be held there and I'm sure there will be a massive lineup. But it's well worth the trouble coming down there and you meet all your neighbours.

Again, happy Canada Day to everyone across the Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to everyone and our visitors out-of-province, as well, here today with us. As we are noting, tomorrow, Canada Day, there's lots of great activities. I just want to highlight a few that are happening in the District of Tyne Valley-Linkletter; 11:00 a.m. Lot 16, 1:30 p.m. Green Park Heritage Site, and then there will be a big bash tomorrow evening in the city of Summerside. I hope everyone will stop by there for great events during the day, but the official ceremonies are at 8:00 p.m. I'm sure there will be lots of fireworks and great weather ahead. I just wish everyone a happy Canada Day and again, how lucky we are to be in Prince Edward Island in Canada.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome everyone to the gallery, too, especially Ronnie Nicholson. I see Ronnie sitting in the back row there. Everybody in District 1, at home and watching on EastLink.

The place to be tomorrow, if you're looking for a good time, is up at the Train Station in Elmira. They start their Canada Day celebrations at 10:00 a.m. and there's great entertainment. They always have great entertainment up there at the Elmira Train Station. The town of Souris starts theirs at 12:00 p.m. and there's great entertainment there for all. There's entertainment for kids, for adults, for seniors, everybody. They also have great entertainment. To finish the night off, the town of Souris has their fireworks starting at 10:00 p.m. If you're looking for

out with a bang, go to Souris at 10:00 p.m. and you'll be out with a bang.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I, too, just want to take the opportunity to welcome everybody here today and to wish everybody a great and joyous Canada Day.

I also want to say happy birthday to my son Stephen. It's his birthday today so I thought I better mention that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Singing Strings

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to make a statement in respect of Singing Strings today.

Today I rise in the House to extend well-wishes to the 18-member Senior Singing Strings orchestra leaving Prince Edward Island this afternoon and travelling to Vienna, Austria, to compete at the Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival. The orchestra is under the capable direction of Natalie Williams Calhoun.

The Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival is a prestigious competition that attracts over 1,000 youth from 17 countries. As part of this festival, the orchestra members will be participating in workshops and clinics offered by top professionals and faculty at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts. They will be playing in beautiful concert venues in and around Vienna and will have the wonderful opportunity to meet and network with peers from around the world.

We should be proud that our own Senior Singing Strings are representing not only Prince Edward Island but Canada on this trip.

This trip was made possible as a result of a lot of hard work on the part of the orchestra members. Acceptance into this competition is by audition only. Once accepted, the group was able to garner the support of many individuals, businesses and organizations who generously donated and support fundraising efforts for this adventure.

The orchestra consists of 18 Island youth aged 13 to 20 who reside in many communities. While in Europe, these talented Island youth will also visit and perform in venues in Germany and the Czech Republic.

A special thanks to John and Jen Clement, who are with us here today, who started the Singing Strings program 36 years ago. They have left an amazing legacy that has provided opportunities for thousands of youth to develop and hone their musical skills. That would include my sister Cassie, who I wish happy birthday to, and my wife Amy, who both participated in their programming.

Please join me in congratulating the Senior Singing Strings on being accepted into this international music festival and wishing them well in this competition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Summerside's Green Award

Ms. Sherry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Summerside is the second largest city in Prince Edward Island, the city that I've lived, worked, and raised a family in, and have had the privilege of representing for the past eight years in this House.

Summerside has a great track record. It has the distinction of being one of the greatest host cities for national and international events, a success that many cities can only marvel at.

Summerside has also received multiple recognitions for its overwhelming

volunteerism, a credit to its residents who roll up their sleeves for the greater good, whatever the cause may be.

Today I rise to recognize the city for yet another reason to consider the City of Summerside a step ahead of the rest.

Earlier this month, the city of Summerside received national recognition for its wind storage program called MyPowerNet or, simply put, Heat for Less.

The Jack Willis award is presented for exceptional innovation, administration excellence and meritorious initiatives. With 57 applications submitted from across the country, Summerside won in the 20,000 population category. Mayor Martin and council were proud to accept this award in Jasper, Alberta, on behalf of the big little city on June 3rd.

As the impact of climate change is evident in our world, green energy sustainability is paramount, especially here in Prince Edward Island and in coastal cities like Summerside.

I know that everyone in this House will join with me to sincerely congratulate the city of Summerside on receiving the Jack Willis award. We do see that Summerside is totally committed to providing a healthy, safe, and green future for all of its residents, and to maintain being a leader well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

STATS Charity Golf Tournament

Mr. Fox: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

This past weekend I had the privilege of being one of the more than 30 teams participating in the 12th annual STATS Charity Golf Tournament for Autism in Clyde River.

The STATS tournament, which stands for Swinging Together Always To Support, features a golf tournament and auction in raising much needed funds for the Autism Society of Prince Edward Island.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex development disorder affected by generic and environmental factors and characterized by problems in communication, social development, and behavior.

Autism directly impacts hundreds of Islanders from children to adults, over 200,000 Canadians, and more than 35 million people worldwide.

Research from the Centre of Disease Control shows that approximately one out of every 68 new children born will develop some form of autism and that new cases are diagnosed at a rate of one every 20 minutes.

Research also shows that effective early diagnosis, early intervention, and appropriate treatment and support services can have a significant positive impact on the quality of life of individuals with autism and their ability to contribute to society.

The tournament is made possible through the generous support of countless volunteers and many corporate partners, including Experience Hyundai, the Factory, Quartermaster Marine, MRSB, Kent Building Suppliers, CFCY, Fast Signs, WestJet, Cooper and Associates, Sobeys, and of course, the Clyde River Golf Course, to name a few.

In closing, I want to thank the many volunteers of the organizing committee for their hard work in making this year's tournament such a success, including tournament chair Mauro 'Stats' Corazza, tournament ambassador Reagan MacAulay, and Autism Society Executive Director, Nathalie Walsh.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Question Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: We'll begin with the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

French programs coordinator competition

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of education: When did the competition for the coordinator of French programs in your department close?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As that falls in my department, that job was advertised on the 24th day of March and it closed on the first of April with the successful candidate scheduled to start work on September 1st this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of education: When were the interviews held for this position?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's a regular process that takes place on these when it was advertised publicly, and the interviews would have taken place very shortly after the first of April, at the very first opportunity.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question again to the minister of education: Were the interviews held before, during or after the election?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The interviews were completed prior to the election.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of education. The interviews for this position were held while the PEITF was at the bargaining table with the government for a new contract. Can the minister of education confirm this?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot confirm when the negotiations were ongoing, but I can confirm that this competition was fully completed prior to the end of the election.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's a very curious timing around all this. Question to the minister of education: When did you offer this position to the successful candidate?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This job was verbally offered to the successful candidate. It was prior to the House sitting and prior to the end of the election.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question to the minister of education: Was a condition of this position being offered the cancelling of today's rally in support of Island teachers and students?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This job was offered long before any of this occurred.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Consequences of teacher rally

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've been told by teachers that they've been told that if they show up today here at 4:00 p.m. that there'd be consequences. Question to the Premier –

Mr. LaVie: Shame, shame!

Leader of the Opposition: Will you confirm that there'll be no consequences to teachers who show up on these grounds today at 4:00 p.m. for a rally?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'll confirm that anybody who shows up here at 4:00 p.m. today will be welcome.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Reversal of teacher cuts

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The damage control by this government has created a lot of confusion. Islanders would appreciate some answers so let's try and get some clarity today.

Question to the minister of education: Will you publicly confirm here today that all your cuts to the teaching positions will be reversed?

Mr. LaVie: Is that your department? Do you want to answer that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize the timing and the impact the latest budget has on allocations for the schools. We will review the 28 positions and we're going to work collaboratively with the principals to ensure that the necessary staff levels are –

Mr. LaVie: Admit you were wrong. Admit (Indistinct).

Mr. Perry: – reached this fall.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sorry minister, you didn't answer the question. Are you going to confirm that all the cuts to teaching positions will be reversed?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we're going to review – there's a process. We'll review the 28 positions –

Mr. LaVie: Admit you were wrong. (Indistinct).

Mr. Perry: – we will be working collaboratively with the principals to make the necessary staffing for the fall.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, what's the timeline for the reversal of these positions?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's a review process. We collaboratively will be working with the principals, with the school board and the PEI Teachers' Federation, and we hope to have the staffing levels allocated by the end of July.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Restart of negotiation process with teachers

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister had an op-ed today in the paper and he just spoke about having a collaborative relationship with the stakeholders. A good starting point would be going back to square one, reversing all the cuts and then negotiating.

Will the minister commit to going back to square one and start this negotiation process all over again?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that will work with –

Mr. LaVie: Firing teachers.

Mr. Perry: – the stakeholders, with collaboration –

Leader of the Opposition: After the fact.

Mr. Perry: – and again, what I said: We will meet with the principals to review the 28 positions and we will work with them collaboratively –

Mr. LaVie: You did that 30 days ago.

Mr. Perry: – to get the necessary staffing for the fall.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

School staffing process

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A month ago. Wouldn't it have been easy to talk to the principals, talk to the stakeholders then?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Was there a question?

Mr. Speaker, could you have the member please repeat the question?

Speaker: Yeah.

Would you please repeat the question, hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid?

Mr. MacEwen: Absolutely. Wouldn't it have been easier to meet and speak with all of the stakeholders, the principals and all this collaboration you speak of, wouldn't that have been easier a month ago?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Leader of the Opposition: Collaboration after the fact is not collaboration.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're very pleased to be able to sit down at the table with the principals and review the 28 positions and get their necessary staffing for the fall.

Mr. LaVie: After the fact.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, the principals have handed out their assignments in the past day or two. Teachers have cleaned out their desks, they've said their goodbyes. It's an emotional time for many of these teachers.

Can you understand what it must have been like the last two days? You've got principals going in, calling teachers in one at a time: I'm sorry you have to leave, I'm sorry you're going to be joining those two classes together. Do you understand the turmoil that these teachers and principals have been

under, and then to all of a sudden say: Oh, now we're going to reach out, we're going to talk to everybody? Do you understand the stress that this put on the teachers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we do recognize the timing impact of this latest Budget and we're doing what we can to work collaboratively with the principals for staffing allocations.

There's much more than that. There are structural issues that have to be addressed and we're very pleased, as I mentioned last week in the House, that the school board is now looking at zoning and transportation, class composition, overhead and time on task. We will work together without stakeholders on these. We will work with the school board, the PEI Teachers' Federation, with parents, with communities, because what we want to do is best support student learning.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Those things are great, they're absolutely great. They should have been done a month ago.

Mr. LaVie: That's right.

Grant increase to school board

Mr. MacEwen: We could have talked about that during the election. In fact, we did talk about putting resources back into the classrooms but no, we're not now, it's a reversal.

Minister, will you be increasing this year's grant to the school board to reflect the reversal of these cuts?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we will be meeting with the principals to review the 28 positions.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

School staffing re: 28 positions

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The outgoing president of the teachers' federation wrote the membership today and said, and I quote: Government has agreed to review the cuts made to the system and we believe that they are sincere in their intent to reinstate up to 28 teaching positions pending a review of classroom needs.

Minister, will these 28 positions be put back in or just some of them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At this time we are committed to collaboratively working with the principals –

Mr. LaVie: That's not what they want to hear. That's not what they want to hear!

Speaker: The minister has the floor. Let him answer the question.

Go ahead, minister.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are working collaboratively with the principals to ensure the necessary staffing for the fall.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It would have been so easy to do all these – it's easy to say those things now. It would have been so easy just to do it a month ago, to talk about it during the election. Yeah, we're going to put resources back in. Nobody talked about cuts to teachers, nobody.

Minister, will you please stand up for teachers and restore all these positions that were cut to Island classrooms? It's just easy, let's go back to square one. Let's start the negotiation process from square one. Let's not say review the 28, let's go back to square one and negotiate from there.

Will you commit to doing that minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we recognize the timing of this and we will meet with the principals, with the school board, with the teachers' federation, to review these 28 positions to ensure the staffing for the fall.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Amended provincial budget

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question's to the finance minister: Can the minister tell the House when he'll be tabling an amended budget to reflect a reversal of the teaching positions that this government cut?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture clearly pointed out, there are going to be meetings forthcoming in the very near future to have further discussions, and as with any budget that's tabled, budgets are based on assumptions, and we'll deal with it accordingly in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So we are making some changes, is what we're assuming, and what all Island teachers are expecting.

Minister, what is the timetable for changing the budget and reversing these teaching cuts?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my position I can't work on assumptions that other people are working on, only the assumptions that we have with respect to the Budget.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Financial analysis re: front-line investments (further)

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A new question for the education minister.

Last week the opposition asked the minister to table the financial analysis that justified these teacher cuts as improving efficiency. Does the minister have those documents to table today?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Education is a priority with this government. In the last –

Mr. LaVie: New talking points?

Mr. Perry: – year we increased our budget by \$3.7 million.

Mr. LaVie: One per cent.

Mr. Perry: This represents 1.6%. It's one of the largest increases in all departments across the board. In eight years, the funding for education has grown by 37%.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Mr. LaVie: He got new talking points.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Is the minister saying that there is no financial analysis justifying the efficiency of these cuts before they were made?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand there are many issues out there. One of the many issues is structural issues that that has to be addressed. We also need to address zoning, class composition, our overhead, and time on task. We are committed to working with our partners to help our students achieve.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

School cuts and impact on economy (further)

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try a different question.

Last week the opposition asked the minister to table the economic impact analysis that looked at the effect these teacher cuts would have to the economy. Does the minister have those documents to table today?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll have to say it again. Education is a priority with this government. We've increased the budget in education and early learning by \$3.76 million. Over the past several years, we've increased the budget for a total of 37%.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again I'll ask a question. I hope, as opposition, I deserve an answer for that.

Is the minister saying that there are no economic impact analyses for these cuts before they were made?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have declining enrollments that has been trending for the past 20 years on Prince Edward Island. We have fiscal responsibilities. We have budget targets that we want to meet. In the last 20 years the amount of teachers in the system was 22 more than what we have now, but the enrolment was up by 5,300.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Kings County nursing care bed waitlist

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

Question for the minister of health.

I wonder if the minister could tell us here today: How many people are currently on the wait list for nursing care beds in the Kings County area?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I don't have exact numbers, but would be more than prepared to bring that information back.

We've been very pleased in the investments that we have made over the last number of years, particularly in – currently today at the Prince County Hospital we've got no medically discharged seniors. At the Queen Elizabeth Hospital we would have 10 medically discharged seniors waiting for a long-term care bed. Approximately six of those 10 would be identified as individuals requiring safety units.

I don't have the exact information. I can bring that back. But am pleased that we have

made and are making progress in responding to the needs of long-term care.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

Currently there are actually 30 seniors in the Kings County area waiting for nursing care beds.

Question to the minister: Minister, will you call for an RFP now for these beds with a condition that states it is only 20 kilometres surrounding the Montague area?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

To respond to the Member from Stratford-Kinlock, no, I will not respond on a policy decision on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

But I will continue to work with Health PEI and to work with stakeholders. We had a very productive meeting with the seniors' secretariat as of yesterday talking about the needs of Island seniors.

Since coming into government since 2007 our investment in long-term care and seniors is unprecedented. We've added over 155 new long-term care beds. We've ramped up on homecare spending and investments by approximately 67%. We're responding to the needs of seniors not only by investing in long-term care beds, but by making sure that we have options for seniors, particularly those who do want and choose to stay in their own homes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, if you recall, there was an RFP done for nursing care beds about a year ago and they put a circle around Charlottetown of 35 kilometres.

This used to be 10 kilometres and it increased to take the beds away from Kings County, plain and simple. This put a lot of stress on people that now have to drive to Charlottetown to see their loved ones. This RFP also fell short of Gillis lodge by a mere half a kilometre.

Again to the minister: Minister, will you now call for an RFP for 30 new nursing care beds for the Kings County area to address this crisis?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

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

I do know that the demand for long-term care beds, the wait times, and the volumes are in the Charlottetown area. We do get lots of requests coming in from communities across Prince Edward Island where we do have Island seniors that do want to move and be placed in long-term care in the Charlottetown area because they have family members living in the greater Charlottetown area.

I will bring back more detailed information in respect to exact wait times, but will continue not only to make investments in long-term care, we'll continue to make sure we find balance in making sure that we improve in investments, particularly in home care, to make sure that we have options for seniors who do want to stay in their home.

I do know that we've been announcing new initiatives – the Seniors Safe @ Home Program, which is money designated to seniors who do want to stay at home. Obviously the Seniors' Home Repair Program which was launched in 2007 has seen 2,500 seniors receive benefits and to continue to allow them to put investments in their homes to stay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Teaching cuts and fiscal balance

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to start by acknowledging that a lot has happened, a lot has changed, in the last 24 hours and that I'm grateful that this government appears to have finally listened to opposition members and concerned Islanders and is reviewing some of its recent decisions.

I recognize that governing is not easy. While I have spoken strongly against any cuts to teaching positions, if even some of these positions are retained, the cost will have to be compensated for elsewhere in the Budget unless we want to further increase the deficit.

A question to the Minister of Finance. In the drive towards fiscal balance – which I absolutely support, by the way – will the minister find compensatory savings in order that we don't further delay fiscal balance?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As these meetings progress and we are able to see what takes place, I'll certainly have to take a look at our budget, depending on the outcome of those. We will remain, as much as possible, on balance to move towards a balanced budget in 2016-2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party for his first supplementary question.

Budget three-year plan

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If we are indeed going to move towards fiscal balance by 2016-2017, we are going to depend largely on federal transfers. Contained in the Budget right at the very end is a summary of a three year plan. In that plan are estimates for revenue in the form of federal transfers.

Can the minister tell this House if those projections are based on firm commitments or are they contingent upon further negotiations with the federal government?

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) a crystal ball.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We take a look at what those are now, of what those transfers are now, and we look forward to, again, having conversation with the federal government. We look towards increasing our own exports and increasing our line at the end of the day as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party for his second supplementary question.

Economic growth rate

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So they're just projections.

We're all aware of the current fiscal crisis in Greece and although, of course, our debt to GDP (Indistinct) ratio is much better than theirs, PEI continues to borrow money to pay for borrowed money. It's clear that this has to change and it will have to change soon.

In the Budget there are also projections for substantially increased provincial tax revenues. Since the historic rate of growth in the PEI economy over the last 10 years is somewhere between 1 and 2%, can the minister explain, especially in these turbulent economic times, why his three-year projections are based on average growth rates of 3%?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that if we look at the number of jobs that have been created, particularly over the past eight years, look at the types of jobs that were created, those are much better paying jobs than we had previously seen. We've seen tremendous growth in aerospace, in information technology and communications, and when we look at the growth that we've seen in the marine trade industries, certainly in the eastern end of the Island and the number of jobs that are there, these are very well-paying jobs.

We can go up to the area of Borden-Carleton. We see the companies that have expanded up there. These are much better-paying jobs –

Mr. LaVie: Fired 300 at Ocean Choice.

Mr. Roach: – than we've traditionally seen. We only look to –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) fish plant (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: – the announcement last week at Vector Aerospace, and the indications there that further jobs are being created there as well, and these are extremely well-paying jobs.

We look at a company in the heart of Downtown Charlottetown, Invesco, very well-paying jobs, and they've essentially doubled the size of that building.

As we see this great growth and we see our immigration and our population numbers growing –

Mr. LaVie: You're avoiding the question.

Mr. Roach: – I think that's a good estimate to look forward to and I think that's where we'll see an increase in tax revenues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: A question from the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Potato export importance

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. Recently your department announced support for the PEI food processing industry to purchase metal detection equipment. I have a number of potato growers in the riding of O'Leary-Inverness who export potatoes to WD Potato in Nova Scotia and they are a part of 15 Island growers who may be in jeopardy of losing their contracts if they cannot guarantee a safe product to export to this agent.

Minister, is 600,000 hundredweight of potato exports of approximately 3,000 acres

of potato production that these growers represent important to Canada's Food Island's reputation and the export of these potatoes would have in reducing the PEI trade deficit?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Our government's pretty proud of the fact that we came to the table to help the farmers, the potato producers, with regards to these malicious and criminal acts. We've come forward with the money from the Growing Forward 2 program of \$1.4 million under which a farmer as an individual can apply for funding and receive 35% up to \$30,000 to buy metal detecting equipment for his own farm, or in a bundle or a packer who is packing for at least five producers can apply for funding at 35% up to \$100,000 for metal detection equipment at that operation. These are big dollars that we've put forward to help with this criminal act.

We've also come forward since then with \$500,000 and the federal government has come forward with another \$1.5 million to help with this as well, and that money has gone to the potato board. The parameters of that funding at the present is not decided but we've put a lot of dollars on the program to help with the detection of metal in the potatoes in the province itself.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness for his first supplementary question.

Application from potato growers

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, these 15 potato growers on PEI through their agent, WD Potato, have applied for funding asking for fairness in comparison to other Island processing plants and the PEI Potato Board has supported their application. Would their application be eligible for support from the PEI Department of Agriculture and Fisheries program announced in the throne speech

recently as their application is on behalf of Island growers?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

If they had applied to get metal detection equipment for their own farms, they certainly do qualify under the Growing Forward 2. We cannot fund metal detection equipment to go into another province. The other provinces have Growing Forward programs as well. Nova Scotia, for example, has a Growing Forward program of around \$35 million. But our Growing Forward money does not qualify for the other provinces, as I'm sure their provinces' provincial money does not qualify for ours.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness for his second supplementary question.

Support for potato growers

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Minister. But the reality is that these producers, their productivity will be marginalized if they have to load their potatoes at the farm gate, unload their product somewhere on PEI, load up again, and then unload to a plant in Nova Scotia. Or all 15 growers would have to install these devices.

I'm sure the minister would agree that this logically makes no sense, especially with interprovincial trade cooperation, that something can be worked out between all levels of government between provinces that benefits these Island producers. More of the metal detection equipment was located off-Island where they unload. This request would guarantee safe Island potatoes meet the highest safety standards regardless of where these potatoes are processed and delivered.

Will the minister and his department work with these Island growers to find a way (Indistinct) support for these 15 growers

either through the Province of Prince Edward Island or through the Nova Scotia government?

Mr. LaVie: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is definitely a good question. Under the Growing Forward 2 program, the parameters of that program do not allow us to fund in other provinces, as I've said. Nova Scotia, they themselves may find this very applicable under their program and the filing for that may be possible. We're in touch with Nova Scotia from time to time and we could discuss that.

However, the other fund, the 1.5 million from the feds through Minister Shea and the point 5 million from ourselves that is going to the board, the board is going to decide the parameters of the funding from that program. There may be an eligibility there for this incident, I'm not sure. But we can speak with Nova Scotia and we'll look at the alternatives. But the Growing Forward 2 funding is only to be spent in the province here.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche and the Deputy Speaker.

Water act contents

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today my question is directed to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. We live in a province where our water plays a crucial role in all three of our Island economic drivers, agriculture, forestry, and tourism. There's been a lot of discussion over the past year about the controversial topic of deep-water wells which spark the notion of the water act. I know many other members of this House would have heard this at the door during the recent campaign.

Question to the minister: What can Islanders expect to be in this act?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

Of course, as a result of discussion with Islanders, not only from the industries, as mentioned by the hon. member, but from Islanders in general all across PEI last year, and as presenters to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry, it was determined and recommended from that committee that work begin on development of a new water act.

Our department was tasked with that and have been working diligently towards formation of this white paper which we will be presenting in the very near future regarding how this will move forward.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche and the Deputy Speaker with his first supplementary questions.

Consultation on water act (further)

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With water being so important to Prince Edward Island we must ensure we have feedback from all walks of life. Our farmers need water to grow their crops, our fishermen need to have our streams and lakes in the best condition possible to assure sustainability, and our tourist operators bank on the beautiful scenery that water provides across this province.

Supplementary question to the same minister: What steps are the minister and his department taking to assure every Islander gets their chance to speak on this important water act?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

As I alluded to on other occasions in this House, this is probably by and far foremost in most Islanders' minds because it is important for the protection of both our quality and quantity of water as we move forward on Prince Edward Island.

As part of this process of the water act, it will be about a five-part process beginning with the rollout of the white paper, which I mentioned early, progressing on then to public consultations. As alluded to earlier, there will be a couple of rounds of public consultations where Islanders, not only from those primary industries as mentioned by the hon. member, but every islander from all walks of life all across Prince Edward Island, will have ample opportunity to come, discuss, have their say. After that, the committee will form what will be a draft act going forward, and these people will have the opportunity to look at it and say: Yes, you got it right, or no, you got it wrong, will have another opportunity to bring their thoughts forward regarding this, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche and the Deputy Speaker for his second supplementary question.

Water act timeline

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know, and everyone in this House knows, that Islanders are eager right across this province from tip to tip around the details of this concept.

Could the minister – I know he alluded to soon – but could you give us a timeframe to which and when we can expect more details on this act?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

This white paper that we will be prepared to roll out is very near its end of formulation. I expect that within the next several weeks we will definitely see this rollout begin the process over the summer for Islanders to review it, to think about it, to talk about it,

and see where we can get going to a little later in the fall to develop this new act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Educational assistants allotment (further)

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A question to the minister of education.

Minister, last week you said you wouldn't confirm the EA complement for the upcoming year.

Can you confirm that today? I understand that the EAs have been given their assignments. Can you confirm that, please, if they've been cut?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As stated last week, I'll state it again today, there is no change in the allocations for EAs.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, is the need for EAs increasing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Could I have the member repeat that question, please?

Speaker: Hon. member, could you repeat the question?

Mr. MacEwen: I sure can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, is the need for EAs increasing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our EAs, our teachers, administrators, and our supports in our system are all very important to student learning and to student achievement.

Mr. LaVie: Not answering the question.

Mr. Perry: It's my job to make sure that our education system remains –

Mr. LaVie: Not answering the question.

Mr. Perry: – sustainable. At the end of the day, it's our job collectively –

Leader of the Opposition: Excellence should be your job, not sustainability. You're the education minister.

Speaker: The minister has the floor. Let him answer the question.

Go ahead, minister.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Collectively, with the school board, the Home and School and the teachers' federation, with parents, it's our job, again, collectively to foster engagement and achievement. What we want to do is give the best supports we can to help our children, our students, learn and to achieve.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, is the need for EAs increasing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, educator assistants are very valuable in our school system. They work with our teachers, they work with children within the schools, and they are a very valuable resource that we have. We appreciate everything that they do to help our students learn and to help our students achieve.

Leader of the Opposition: Not very good at this, are you?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, again, it's just an easy question. It's okay to say: Yes, the need is increasing, and then talk about budgets are tough and all that kind of stuff.

I'll ask the question again. Is the need for EAs increasing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say it again. Our EAs are very valuable to our education system. We appreciate everything they do for our students and to assist our educators within.

The allocations of staffing in the school system is the responsibility of the school board and I haven't received any information from them asking for more educator assistants.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay, now we're getting somewhere. We almost got an answer. I could ask you again but something you said, minister, intrigued me.

You haven't had a request from the school board for EAs. Are you saying that if they asked you for more funding for EAs, you'll give it to them?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is open to listening to anyone's concerns, and upon review we can make decisions appropriately.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, final question.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I'm sure you've talked to educational assistants in the past couple of months, I'm sure of it. You're the minister. It's just the easy question: Will you confirm that the need for educational assistants in our school system is increasing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All this is about maximizing the efficiencies in the system. We want to, at the end of the day, provide the best quality education that we can to our students on Prince Edward Island, and that's collectively with our administrators, with the teachers and the educator assistants. All have a very valuable role to play in our student learning in our school system.

Thank you.

Speaker: That's the end of Question Period.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

SEUS – CP Alliance

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The South Eastern United States Canadian Provinces Alliance is a strategic partnership of state and provincial delegations for the purpose of furthering trade between the six States of the United States that comprise the South Eastern US alliance.

Prince Edward Island played host to this year's conference which began on Sunday of this past weekend and concludes today. The event saw delegations from seven Canadian provinces and six southeastern states work together to enhance economic ties between our two regions.

The conference is a forum to share ideas on how we can strengthen those ties, expand trade and explore new opportunities.

One of the more significant ways that this is achieved is through a variety of networking opportunities provided to business leaders who attended the conference. These

businesses represent a wide range of sectors including manufacturing, aerospace, marine technologies, bioscience, value-added foods, wind and alternative energy, and business services. Prince Edward Island has achieved many successes in these sectors and the conference was an opportunity for Island businesses to expand their markets and increase sales.

I might add that since the year 2010, our trade from Prince Edward Island to those six states has increased by 65%.

The conference was a tremendous opportunity for Island businesses as they participated in meetings with companies from twelve different provinces and states.

Approximately 80 companies attended the conference and participated in 630 business-to-business meetings over the course of the event. Companies were matched with other participants in shared sectors or relevant business interests. Some of the Island businesses that attended were Prince Edward Island Culinary Alliance, Aspin Kemp and Associates, Portsmouth Atlantic, NorCan Marine Inc., Wind Energy Institute of Canada, Prince Edward Island BioAlliance, and Vector Aerospace.

Feedback from the participating businesses was very positive. Organizers, including employees of the Government of Prince Edward Island, did a tremendous job of highlighting Prince Edward Island products and ensuring our warm hospitality was on display.

To grow our economy in a strategic manner will require working with our trade partners to increase our exports. Strengthening our relationships with other governments through partnerships such as the South Eastern United States Canadian Provinces Alliance is an example of how we can work together to achieve this.

The six states that comprise this alliance now represent Prince Edward Island's seventh largest international trading partner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Responding to the Premier's statement – anybody?

No?

Okay.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

I'd just like to reiterate essentially what the Premier was saying, how important it is to engage our neighbors, our sister provinces and our neighboring states. We share so very much in common with our resources, our climate as well, and in many ways our economy. It is very important that these meetings take place.

Certainly it would have been an honour for our Premier to be hosting these delegates here on Prince Edward Island this year, especially being, I guess, the junior premier to the group. But I'm very happy to hear that there's progress being made and that we're moving forward on a united front.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Responding to the Premier's statement will be the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's really critical for the future of Prince Edward Island's economy, if we want to be sustainably prosperous, that we do develop relationships with our regional neighbours. We see all the time the unpredictability of the global economy and how ill-placed Prince Edward Island is to compete in a commodities market globally. It doesn't suit our personality.

I think these sorts of cooperative ventures with our regional neighbours, where we really can contribute, and compete as equal partners in a regional economy, are a really important way of boosting the Prince Edward Island's economy.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Minimum Wage Increase

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minimum wage in Prince Edward Island will increase by \$0.15 cents an hour tomorrow, July 1st.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: The new minimum wage will be \$10.50 per hour. This increase was made on the recommendation of the Employment Standards Board. Increasing the minimum wage is one way to help Islanders become more financially secure.

As outlined in the throne speech, our government is committed to providing the necessary supports for those struggling the most financially and to ensure that Islanders are given every opportunity to succeed. At the same time our government will place a priority on growing our economy and supporting the creation of well-paying jobs.

Islanders have the skills, the creativity, and the entrepreneurial drive to accelerate the economic growth and job creation our province needs.

We have seen many successes in recent years including a growing aerospace industry, thriving primary industries, innovative start-ups, and small businesses.

Our government will work with all businesses, tourism and cultural groups, post-secondary institutions, and capital sources to build on these successes and ensure Prince Edward Island's economy continues to grow, providing Islanders with more opportunities.

The creation of the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning signals government's commitment to this important task, and we will work diligently to identify and support opportunities for all Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, let's address the increase in the minimum wage. Way overdue, way too little. We have so many working poor on our Island. I've said it before in this House how going door to door, there are people – two-income families that are just struggling to get by. It's great to hear that there is an increase in minimum wage, but we have to do something more. Of course, developing our economy is the way to do that, especially through entrepreneurship and small business, and it's good to hear you talking about this.

Of course, the proof is in the pudding and I'm really looking forward to the budget estimates today when we can really get down with the Innovation PEI section to see exactly what programs are there and what happens.

We have a large communications arm of the government and sometimes I think the programs that are available – the message is not getting out there to Islanders that want to take advantage of them. I would want you to consider that and make sure that we do market our government programs to people as well.

Thank you for that statement. I don't know if on Canada Day tomorrow there are going to be a lot of people raising their glasses to the \$0.15 an hour raise in minimum wage, but at least it's something.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Also responding to the minister's statement will be the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome this, Of course, \$0.15 an hour is not a considerable amount, but for some people it will make a noticeable difference in their lives, I have no doubt.

One of the most important determinants of social cohesion and community health is limited inequality. Here on Prince Edward Island we do better at that than most jurisdictions. We tend to look after our neighbours and our brothers and sisters better, so I'm happy this is another step in that direction.

However, of course we know that we need to do more to eliminate poverty in Prince Edward Island. Poverty has all kinds of repercussions in terms of health care, in terms of career opportunities, in terms of law and order, so eliminating poverty is a much bigger problem than \$0.15 an hour is going to fix, and I'm sure the minister is aware of that.

It's little steps, but I welcome that little step, and of course we would like to see the move from a minimum wage to a livable wage, something that would really put substantial money back into the pockets of struggling Islanders.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: We must remember that that money is spent back into our economy. It's not a cost to our economy, it's an investment in our economy. That money is not siphoned off to buy yachts in the Bahamas, it's spent back into our economy here.

So while I welcome this, I think we all know that much more needs to be done.

Thank you, minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I

beg leave to table the Prince Edward Island Marketing Council Annual Report for the period ending December 31st, 2014 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the said document be now received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Pursuant to section 59 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, I hereby present the Annual Report of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the period ending December 31st, 2014 and I move that the report be received and do lie on the table.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Special Committee on Committees, I beg leave to introduce the report of the said committee, and I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the same be now received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the report of the committee be adopted.

As directed by the motion of this House on June 3rd, the Special Committee on Committees met to consider a list of hon. members to compose the Standing Committees of the Legislative Assembly.

Your committee is pleased to recommend that the hon. Leader of the Third Party be a member of each of the standing committees. Further, your committee advises this House that nominations for membership put forward by the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader have been agreed to by all members of your committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Speaker: Orders of the Day (Government).

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that Motion No. 30 be now called.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Yes, okay. That is a motion other than government. Do we have unanimous consent to proceed?

An Hon. Member: Absolutely, yes.

An Hon. Member: Sure.

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, this motion has been read and it has been adjourned by the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

I would now ask the hon. minister to continue speaking to the motion.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today and speak in support of this motion. This is a topic that I feel strongly about, as many other Islanders do. I don't want to take any more time away from this discussion except to say that it was never my intention to distract from the importance of this motion. I believe in this motion and I apologize for the mistake in the process last week.

I am pleased that we are now discussing it here today with the support of all parties, and I want to recognize the guests in the gallery today and commend them for their work they have done bringing this topic to attention. Prior to this election I worked to help people and businesses become more accessible and understand the importance of these issues. Through this work I saw the importance of providing the necessary

supports to children with complex physical needs, as well as dedication of family members advocating for those supports.

I agree with the hon. member opposite when he says that children with complex physical needs have unique health challenges that require an integrated suite of services.

Government recognizes the importance of early intervention and the positive differences this can make for children with complex needs and their families. Government made investments of \$750,000 this past year to enhance services for children with complex needs. These children benefit greatly from early intervention in terms of their health, development, and decreased use of the health care system in the short and long term.

We are making good progress on several fronts to expand access to services for children with complex physical needs and we need to continue with this progress. Some of the progress government has made includes hiring a provincial coordinator to work with staff on the continuum and integrated services, put a school therapy service advisory committee in place to prioritize demands and provide direction. It is led by health and wellness and education and early learning.

Hired one school occupational therapist and now hiring another. Filled two pediatric physiotherapy positions. With this new funding these new positions and a coordinated and integrated approach, we have much more opportunity to improve in a timely way and make a positive difference in the lives of these children and their families.

We continue to work with our partners within government and the community to ensure we are using the available resources to provide the best care we can for Islanders, and especially our children.

I am pleased to be supporting this motion today.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Also speaking to the motion will be the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly rise in total support of this motion. Having worked as an education assistant in the school board prior to being elected, and I worked, prior to that, with adults with disabilities, I know how important it is to have the proper supports.

Going door to door, and just in my day to day life in the community, I see a lot of the challenges that families who have children with disabilities, adults with disabilities still living at home, and the great need there for respite and other community supports that are needed.

One of the challenges I think that we have in the system or that has come to my attention is our children transitioning from the school system as an adult. When they come out of the system they're an adult, and then all of a sudden they don't qualify, once they turn 18, for a lot of the same supports that they had. I really think we need to look at that. A review of that I think would be very important because it is still a challenge.

Even the example I use is – one of my constituents who was 18 and still in the school system, because they can stay until they're 20, but they have had summer supports which are greatly needed for respite and programming. However, when they turn 18 those supports aren't always there. It's a real challenge for parents and transitioning.

Another area of great need is transitioning from older parents who need to find suitable and supported living accommodations for their child, their family member, so that they – as they approach their retirement years where they're not able to physically still support the person, to look at the transition there that we really need to put in place to support those individuals as well in a safe and quality care manor. When I say manor, I mean place, not place of living, but in a way that should be a quality service to them.

That brings up another topic. We have a lot of younger people still with disabilities under 60 living in our long-term care facilities, and I think that's another area that

we also need to review, but that comes back again to our living accommodations that we, I know, will continue to work on. We've done a lot of great work.

I want to commend the Community Connections Inc. in Summerside, PEI Association For Community Living, and Community Inclusions Ltd. for all the great work that they've done in Prince County with – and across Prince Edward Island. The other organizations who have really looked at living accommodations and supported living situations for individuals with disabilities. I think that communities can reach out. We have a great connection to our communities given that a little – actually, recently a young man from our area, the village of Tyne Valley, was just looking for somebody a couple of hours a week to clean the offices. We were able to work together as a community, myself and that family, to make connections so that this young man with autism, he has a little bit of a job every week.

I think those are more connections we can make to support our individuals with disabilities, and the more that we can do that really speaks to us as a whole community on Prince Edward Island supporting the families and those individuals.

I'm very happy to support this motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Is there anybody else that wants to speak to the motion?

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'll make this very brief. One of the great young people from my riding, Hannah MacLellan, is a great ambassador. She was an ambassador for Easter Seals. One of the finest ladies you will ever meet.

Some of the people who have taken on that position have gone on – we can learn so much from them. I know from Hannah,

Colton Matheson down east too, I mean, you see him out playing his guitar or whatever, entertaining at different things. We really need to support this motion because these people need our support, but we can learn so very much from them. I'm glad to see Hannah is with us here today. I think it shows great support if we could get unanimous consent from everyone here today to support this motion. That would be absolutely fantastic.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Is there anybody else who would like to speak to the motion?

If not, I will go back to the mover, the hon. Opposition House Leader to close debate on the motion.

Mr. Aylward: Can I have the podium?

Speaker: Yes, you can.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just before I begin with my closing statement, I'd also like to recognize Hannah, it's great to see you here. I know your mom and dad quite well, we went to school together, and I remember all the years I worked at the Confederation Centre of the Arts I'd see you and your sister coming in Saturday morning. Wonderful to have you in the gallery today.

Things happen for a reason. Things, I would essentially say, kind of went off the rail here last week. It was unfortunate, but I don't think there was any ill intent for that taking place, and I appreciate the hon. member and his comments today, as well as the hon. members that spoke here today on this very important motion.

I think, at the same time, it was a real wake-up call for all of the members here in the Legislative Assembly. We're all guilty of it. There are motions that come to the floor, there's discussion, there's debate. Quite often you look around the room, people are having private conversations with their seatmate, they might be going out of the Chamber for a few minutes and coming back in.

But essentially we have to remind ourselves that we are here to discuss government business, we are here to discuss very important motions, and in particular motions such as this where individuals such as Jeff Matheson and Lori Jollimore have put their heart and soul into this to bring positive change to Prince Edward Island, to bring the supports that are necessary, especially for our young children that are lacking the services that they essentially need.

I just want everybody to reflect, myself included, that when we are talking about a motion or anything in the Legislative Assembly that we must listen, hear what's being said, and hopefully be able to add some value to the conversation.

There was no doubt I believe that the intent of our motion, which was seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, it simply was calling attention to a prevailing problem in our province, and that is the lengthy and unacceptable amount of time that our children must wait to access physical services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physiotherapy here in our province.

It should be clear to everyone in this House that the physical recovery of these children is severely impaired if they do not have access to the treatment at an early age. Without prompt treatment many of these children will develop serious physical disabilities that could have been prevented or at least diminished with proper care and treatment.

We know that efforts have been underway to try and improve access to these services, and while there has been some improvement it simply is not enough. Some of our children will experience permanent physical impairment because of the lack of consistent treatment. We hear time and time again where a child should be receiving physiotherapy at least eight times a month. In fact, in some case, they're lucky if they're receiving it two times a month. Those are some of the things that we're speaking about here and what the petition is actually calling for.

We cannot allow that to happen to even one child. This is a very serious subject for the families of our children with complex needs.

They know the frustration of waiting for treatment when their child is in need. It is a battle that families across this province are dealing with every day.

Close to 1,000 people signed the petition that was tabled in this Legislative Assembly voicing their concerns. They need to know that all MLAs take their concerns seriously, they are not raising them for political reasons, they are raising concerns because they want the best treatment they can get for their children, and they will not be ignored.

Our motion asks simply that this government make a serious commitment to improving access to children's physical medicine services. We are asking that this government do more than pay lip services. We want a commitment. We want improved services for these individuals and their families. Since this petition was tabled there has been a soft commitment by government to address this issue and we have seen marginal progress achieved to date, but numerous issues remain unresolved.

Again, the intent of this motion is to call on government to officially respond to this petition as soon as possible and to commit to an aggressive timetable for these access improvements so that Island children whom require physical medicine services can receive these treatments and benefit from the positive outcomes.

I would ask that this Legislative Assembly unanimously support our motion and would ask that immediate action be taken.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

An Hon. Member: Standing vote.

Speaker: A recorded division has been requested.

Sergeant-at-Arms, would you ring the bell?

[The bells were rung]

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the government's members are present for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, opposition is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Speaker: All those voting against the motion, please stand.

All those voting in favour of the motion, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness, the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: The motion is carried and it is unanimous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Economic

Development and Tourism, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Consideration of the Estimates in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, 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 now call on the hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche, the Deputy Speaker, to please take the chair for the Committee of the Whole House.

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

Permission to bring someone on the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: We will begin. We are on page 42 to begin Innovation PEI.

Corporation Management

Corporation Management

“Appropriations provided for the administration of the corporation.”
Administration: 248,000. Equipment: 6,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 31,000. Professional Services: 51,000. Salaries: 769,800. Travel and Training: 40,000. Total Corporation Management: 1,145,800.

Shall it carry?

Question, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: On the salaries, what made the difference in the salary?

Shannon Burke Director: Two staff were previously reflected at the department level, but they're actually performing work for Innovation PEI, so we just moved the salary budgets.

Mr. MacKay: Say that again, sorry.

Shannon Burke Director: There are two staff that their salaries were formally reported up at the department level and we discussed that when we were in the department, but they've been moved to Innovation PEI to reflect the work that they're doing which is the red tape project.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thanks, Chair.

The two staff that were moved, were their jobs replaced in the (Indistinct)?

Shannon Burke Director: No. It's just a movement on the salary budget. Nothing has changed for those staff.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: I'm interested in the department's involvement with the SRDC. How much interaction is there between that department and the SRDC in their projects? What can you tell me about that?

Mr. MacDonald: Basically, the SRDC is a body that oversees the regional development of Summerside. I believe the board is appointed by the government. Is that what you're looking for? Is that –

Mr. Fox: Yeah. To my understanding, 75% of the shares in the SRDC are owned by the Province of Prince Edward Island?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, I believe so.

Mr. Fox: So how much reporting is done there by the SRDC to the province? Or how much reporting does the province require by the SRDC?

Mr. MacDonald: As Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, I chair that

board. It's no different than Charlottetown Area Development Corporation as far as they're an independent body.

Mr. Fox: With that, do we ensure that fair, equal tendering practices happen and occur where we're dealing with so much involvement of province money?

Mr. MacDonald: I certainly hope so.

Mr. Fox: Well –

Mr. MacDonald: As being a new minister, in fact, I'm not afraid to say we've been in discussions in regards to Crown corps and how they operate.

Mr. Fox: Okay. How do we get access to whatever reports have come out of that place in the last probably, say, two to three years to find out if fair tendering practices and so on has actually taken place?

Mr. MacDonald: Their statements would be part of the blue books of the Crown corp.

Mr. Fox: I'm interested in them.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. They're accessible.

Mr. Fox: I'll make it known now that, on this line, I object. Or on this question. I want information on what the documents are or their year-end reports or so on.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. You can access that yourself – is that online?

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Shannon Burke Director: You should be able to get the statements online.

Mr. MacDonald: You should be able to get them online, too.

Mr. Fox: Okay. Well, if you provide a link or something like that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) hand-outs with all the details in them.

Mr. MacDonald: Stop moving seats.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) and also I was wondering if you were able to get any of those items that you had on your list to return from previous. I don't know if this is a good time to ask for that, too.

Shannon Burke Director: We have –

Mr. MacDonald: We have them right here.

Mr. Trivers: So there were the ones I – board composition, the deliverables of some of the professional services, and the total number of ICF applications were the three I had on my list.

Chair: Total Corporation Management: 1,145,800.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Business Development

Prospecting and Innovation

“Appropriations provided” –

Mr. Trivers: Maybe we can just wait until we get our hand-outs before we continue the rest of the line items because some of the information in the hand-outs is pertinent to the line items themselves and the questions we want to ask.

Chair: Okay. Well, somebody ask a question. But if you're going to sit there and look through that –

Mr. Trivers: No –

Chair: It's going to take a few minutes. Correct?

Mr. Trivers: What we'd like to do is at least get them, though, so they can refer to them when answering the questions.

Chair: Hon. member, they're on their way.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: So we'll read the section –

Mr. Trivers: For example, I don't know – did anyone ask a question about the salaries line?

Chair: Yes, they did.

Mr. Trivers: You got that one all right?

Chair: It was done.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Chair: Okay?

Business Development

Prospecting and Innovation

“Appropriations provided for leading the attraction of new businesses and business partners to the Province which complement the provincial economy. In particular, firms are targeted in the aerospace, life science, food processing, information technology, bioscience and select manufacturing sectors.” Salaries: 1,328,700. Travel and Training: 142,000.

Total Prospecting and Innovation: 1,470,700.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Question.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. So I just wanted to know if the breakdown of the employees, the salaries, is in the hand-out.

Shannon Burke Director: It is. For this section it's hand-out number four. The hand-outs will go in order.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. Thank you very much. We'll look at those.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

A couple of things. The travel and training, who does the travelling? Is it the new businesses going to learn more about their business? Or is it government officials?

Shannon Burke Director: It's government.

Mr. MacDonald: It's government.

Shannon Burke Director: If you look at hand-out five, it has a list of all the travel that was incurred in this section.

Mr. MacKay: And second question, salaries have increased again in that. Has somebody else been moved in that department?

Shannon Burke Director: No. There's a vacant position right now for a research and program analyst that was created in that.

Mr. MacKay: There's a vacant position?

Shannon Burke Director: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: Why would the salary be increased if it's a vacant position?

Shannon Burke Director: Because it hasn't been filled yet. This would be part of the sales force.

Mr. MacKay: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Mr. Trivers: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. So I'm just looking at the list of positions here in the prospecting and innovation programs. I notice there's one called a game force instructor. I just was curious as to what that position is.

Shannon Burke Director: He actually works with youth. He goes out and he works with youth that are interested in the gaming sector.

Mr. Trivers: So you mean in developing video games?

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Is that it? You have, as well, a senior investment officer dedicated to IT and video game development.

Shannon Burke Director: Correct.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: How do you decide when to hire a senior investment officer when you're looking at a particular portfolio like that? Because IT is massive. I would think that it would be much bigger than video game development, which is just a subsection of IT. Right?

Mr. MacDonald: There is a difference. I think the game force instructor is more brought in because there was a demand over the past few years with building games and trying to increase the IT portfolio in that regard on PEI.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: The other, the senior investment officer, would be prospecting as well to bring companies here to PEI.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. And do –

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: The individuals that fill these positions, are they specialists in those area? Or, for example, if next year the government decides to focus on a different sector, would that same person be able to do that job, just with a different title?

Mr. MacDonald: I would think most of them would be specialists.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: But, assuming. I have no idea –

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: – for the future.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: How long do you expect that particular position to exist? Or how long are you going to focus on, for example, video game development? What's the plan?

Mr. MacDonald: I believe we've grown it in the past number of years. Until we see a reason to deter from that process, I think we stay forth the course.

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: There was a business called GetGifted that was given money by the government, a grant of some sort. Would it be under the prospecting and innovation programs that that grant was given?

Mr. MacDonald: I think, yeah. It could have been, even, the ignition fund, marketing funds. There could have been several such that GetGifted could have tapped into. I'm assuming they did.

Then I think there was one other fund, the community – I can't remember the exact name of it. But yes, she did, or GetGifted did. Yeah.

If you want to go to – yeah, all of the different programs are on section 10 and we're going to come to it if you want to see which –

Mr. Trivers: Okay. So section –

Shannon Burke Director: All of the grants are given out under one section.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. Section 10, grants. Thank you. I just wanted to make sure I didn't miss that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I just wondered if the department keeps metrics on this to track the effectiveness of these prospectors. I realize it's difficult. You can't say: They came here because of this particular visit. But –

Mr. MacDonald: I'll be quite honest with you. We have a CRM that we try to track the significance of these different programs and positions and how they relate to one another. It is hard, and especially in the IT and prospecting, because some of this stuff could be two years out prior to you signing on the dotted line. I think that's where it gets difficult. But you do the best you can with what you have.

If you know of any metric systems that could be – because it is hard to – I know we've tried it before just in another business, but –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I just wanted to ask a specific question about whether – and one of the other hon. members mentioned this – the economy is always evolving and changing, and we've had several announcements from this government about changing focus within the economy, one in particular being this move towards Canada's Food Island. I'm wondering if there's any funding within this department which is specifically targeted towards promotion of Canada's Food Island.

Mr. MacDonald: I don't believe there is in here, but what we anticipate and what we're working on – and you've heard it mentioned several times – is sales force. That's bringing all of the separate industries out of their silos and utilizing more resources from all of the sectors into one kind of vision, and we've been working on that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, just a final thought.

We struggle in terms of international competitiveness because of our size and geographic location, but I think perhaps the biggest competitive advantage that we have here in Prince Edward Island is the quality of life that we can offer new businesses to come here.

Is there any element of this business development planning which promotes that as something which is very particular about PEI?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, most certainly. Even when there's any prospecting done that is one of the selling features that we push out the door is the living. Our priority is to get them to PEI. We just did an aerospace individual in the last two weeks, I believe, and the only thing he talked about was the living and how we live here and the safety and that sort of thing. He was intrigued by that.

In their proposals there's nothing in there that you can actually concrete and that's why through SEUS and opportunities like this, to bring them here and show them what we have to offer, and our people, is very important, and you're exactly right. But to measure that – and the marketing side of it will continue and that will be part of the sales force.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Just a quick question in regards to this hand-out that we just received and it breaks down all of the out-of-province travel. Do we do any cost analysis of the benefit or what actually comes out of these trips or –

Mr. MacDonald: That was a similar question – he was talking about the metrics of this. I think there are 154 projects currently ongoing right now. So, it's pretty big, but you're right. It is something hard to measure. If someone can come up with something – because it's so far out. Basically you can look back but you can't look ahead so –

Mr. Fox: Is there one (Indistinct), think that it might be the best to go after compared to others?

Mr. MacDonald: In the past when we take a look at Vector Aerospace and what they have done, BioAlliance and what they have done, our food is likely our largest – we talked about (Indistinct) yesterday. Food is likely the largest material that we export into that region into the US so it's a variance. I mean, we're small but we're nimble and I think we've got some real opportunities for this sector if we work together.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So we've heard time and time again that there are tons of programs in Innovation PEI. I personally have gone in and tried to navigate my way through and I probably haven't taken the right approach because I have had difficulty finding any

program that the businesses I work with could actually qualify for.

I was wondering just if you could give an idea of the best way to approach Innovation PEI to find out whether your initiative actually qualifies for any program. I've gone to the website and I've looked at it and I've gone through the application: No, no. It doesn't work –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: I think the best way to do it is make an appointment and go in and sit down with a business development officer, because I know in my past experience I was exactly the same as you. I think you and I talked about this before. They'll just walk you through and they'll take your business and they'll adapt it to whatever is available that they can provide for you.

Mr. Trivers: How are the business development officers broken down? Is that by region or is it by –

Mr. MacDonald: I think there are some –

Mr. Trivers: Sector?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Sorry, it is by region?

Mr. MacDonald: They're more by sector, I think, than region.

Mr. Trivers: By sector?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah, but some are responsible for sector regions.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, some cross over.

Mr. Trivers: So it's a matter of just calling the Innovation PEI office saying: I need a business development officer, I need an appointment.

Mr. MacDonald: Right.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, that's great to get on record. Thank you very much.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

In the hand-out 10, development fund, the Mi'kmaq Confederacy was approved for \$250,000. The economic development agreement, can you spread some light on that?

Shannon Burke Director: That's the next section.

Mr. MacDonald: Is that this section we're dealing with?

Mr. MacKay: I was just looking through. I would assume it would go under this section. I don't know where else because we're going into tourism. Unless it's business development, the next section?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, it's business development and integration, isn't it?

Shannon Burke Director: It's under programs.

Mr. MacDonald: Programs? Oh yeah, okay. It's under the page 43.

Mr. MacKay: All right, so next round (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: It's the next round, yeah.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Trade and Export Development

"Appropriations provided for the development of trade and export opportunities for Island businesses." Salaries: 535,800; Travel and Training: 80,000.

Total Trade and Export Development: 615,800.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Business Development and Integration

"Appropriations provided for the delivery of information and assistance to businesses in Prince Edward Island. Specifically, assisting in the start up, expansion and diversification

of Island business and ensuring the long-term success of these companies." Salaries: 725,300; Travel and Training: 29,000.

Total Business Development and Integration: 754,300.

Shall it carry?

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. One of the areas that I've talked about again and again is the development of micro-business, and those are one- and two-person companies typically in a professional services type area or in a niche manufacturing area.

I was wondering if business development and integration, if this is where that would specifically fall under. Or if that's not where it falls, what area of Innovation PEI would be responsible for that sort of micro-business?

Mr. MacDonald: This is exactly where it could fall under.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah?

Mr. MacDonald: This is expansion for capital equipment –

Shannon Burke Director: Local companies looking to expand or start up.

Mr. MacDonald: So it could fit in there.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Going back to my question on the economic development agreement for \$250,000 to the Mi'kmaq Confederacy, just curious what that \$250,000 is for.

Mr. MacDonald: It's the next section but if you want to answer it (Indistinct).

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah, it's actually funding that was provided to the confederacy to carry out economic

development projects. They would distribute the money to the bands to carry out –

Mr. MacKay: Do they have to provide where the \$250,000 was spent?

Shannon Burke Director: I would have to look at the agreement to give you more details on that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: So in saying – thank you, Chair – in saying that there's \$250,000 and we don't know where it's at? Don't know what it was used for?

Mr. MacDonald: I mean, we can try to get the information back to you. It's a grant, so we'll take a look at the contract and see (Indistinct).

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm looking at the PEI tax incentive breakdown here on hand-out 10 and there's quite a lot of information there –

Chair: Hon. member, can we go back and carry the other section first and then I'll read that because we're not there yet?

Mr. Trivers: Oh, pardon me. Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the section.

Chair: Total Business Development and Integration: 754,300.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Programs

“Appropriations provided for the development of business.” P.E.I. Tax Incentives: 15,646,600; Business Expansion and Product Development: 5,669,900; Trade and Export Development: 600,000.

Total Programs: 21,916,500.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm looking at the hand-out 10, the PEI tax incentives, and I'm trying to understand the different types of rebates and tax incentives and tax credits and again, specifically, which ones might apply to micro-business.

I was wondering, for example, if I wanted – I'm looking at the Share Purchase Tax Credit. If there's a spot online where I can go to get the details about that, or is that something I need to ask here and –

Shannon Burke Director: It's all online and we actually have a list of all our programs here if you want a copy of that.

Mr. Trivers: Great. That would be excellent, thank you.

I was wondering, off the top of your head – and there are lots of them here, lots of businesses. None of them really seem to fit in that micro-business category at first glance. I was wondering if you have a case example of one that you might have helped over the last while. I know, minister, this is a new portfolio for you, so maybe I can refer that to your assistant there.

Mr. MacDonald: It could come under like a product improvement program, a product development program. There are one – I'll let you take a look at this if you want.

Mr. Trivers: I was just wondering if there was – just any example of a one- or two-person business that might have received those sorts of tax credits recently.

Mr. MacDonald: There may be an example here for – I don't want to say it if I'm unsure, but there could be a brew pub that received one.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: Close to you.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, good. Like the Barnone Brewery, okay, very good. All right, thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Business Development: 24,757,300.

Shall it carry? Carried.

BIOFOODTECH

General

“Appropriations support a portion of the infrastructure costs necessary to provide innovation and technical support to the food and bioscience industry. The infrastructure costs include the BioFoodTech facility, equipment, operational and maintenance costs and salaries for a core level of staffing. The facility enhances the level of services provided through fee-for-service, royalty and equity arrangements with private sector clients.” Operations: 500,000.

Total General: 500,000.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total BIOFOODTECH: 500,000.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Innovation PEI: 26,403,100.

Shall it carry? Carried.

On to page 45.

Tourism PEI

Corporate Services

General Administration

Mr. MacDonald: I’m going to switch out here.

Chair: Okay, excuse me. We’re just going to bring someone else on the floor.

Is it the wish of the committee to bring –

Ms. Biggar: Permission granted.

Chair: – assistance on the floor. Okay.

Mr. Jenkins, when you sit down can you please say your name for the Hansard?

Mr. LaVie: Quite the tie.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Kevin Jenkins, director of corporate services, Tourism PEI.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.

Corporate Services

General Administration

“Appropriations provided for records management, reception services and office administration.”

An Hon. Member: Hand-outs (Indistinct).

Chair: Any hand-outs? All right.

Administration: 16,400. Debt: 39,000. Equipment: 20,100. Materials, Supplies and Services: 24,200. Professional Services: 27,000. Salaries: 102,100. Travel and Training: 5,300.

Total General Administration: 234,100.

Shall it carry?

Question, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. I’m interested in the professional services. Of course, it’s cut almost in half from last year. I’m interested in looking at what professional services were awarded as well in the past and what the deliverables were. I was wondering if that’s part of the hand-outs or not.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Professional services hand-out is there, yes.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great. Thank you. The deliverables weren’t specified earlier, so probably not on this hand-out either I’m guessing. It would make things easier, maybe faster, if we did have the hand-outs ahead of time so we could look at them. I thought I’d throw that out there as well.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, this is probably not the right department or right area, but I just want to

know so I can look for it. Where do the cottage rentals fall under? The summer cottage rentals?

Kevin Jenkins Director: In regulation and compliance.

Mr. MacDonald: What are you looking – like, what's the –

Mr. MacKay: The fees that are going to be associated with tourism. Every cottage would have fees.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. MacKay: I want to look at that and I just didn't know if that fell under the general administration or not.

Mr. MacDonald: It falls under the tourism industry act and regulations, but it's basically an in-out for the department of tourism. So the department of tourism collects them and pays Quality Tourism Services and (Indistinct) inspection services.

Mr. MacKay: So can I ask a question on that as to this one?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, if you want.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: The fees have gone up drastically. I think they used to be \$100, now they're up to \$400-\$500 to rent your cottage or summer home out during the year. They've also gone as far now as there's staff hired on, from my understanding, that are looking on computers every day and trying to catch people that aren't registered.

How many people are hired on and what department does that fall under?

Mr. MacDonald: It falls under – right now we have two compliance officers in the department and those compliance officers seek out illegal properties. Under the *Tourism Industry Act* and regulations, it's no different than fishing – if you decided you wanted to go fishing and fish over Colin LaVie's traps. It's no different. There's a law there for that.

What we're trying to do is provide – we talk about water safety and so on and so forth for our industry. We want to ensure that everybody meets the minimal safety requirements, cleanliness, state of repair, in those cottages.

The fees haven't gone up to \$400-\$500, the fees are actually I believe \$175 for an inspection fee, and there is a final start-up fee of I believe \$200 – I think it's \$200 (Indistinct) –

Mr. MacKay: I'm pretty confident it totals \$400 for a new –

Mr. MacDonald: It's a new one, yeah. Yeah, and it's a one-time fee, right?

Mr. MacKay: Right, and if you take a year off it they won't allow you to go back to your \$100 a year fee, they make you start over from scratch.

Mr. MacDonald: That's correct because of the – I'll tell you what it is. It's the effect of doing business because you spend a lot of time (Indistinct) so if they're in one year and out the next there's a whole – every province in Canada suffers from this a little bit. I think, based on what we've done in our department, it's likely one of the leaders in Canada as far as unlicensed property and licensed properties.

If you check New Brunswick or Nova Scotia you'll see that their governments are trying to pursue what we do over here. We're pretty fortunate, and to get into business for \$175, that's pretty cheap business.

Mr. MacKay: Doesn't stop at the \$175, though. By the time you put your water test on it and go through the whole procedure –

Mr. MacDonald: It's less than \$500 for an average business to get into business, somewhere in that vicinity.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, thank you minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

Let's talk Gateway Village for a second. First of all, thanks very much, minister. The

minister is getting some work done for me and we're getting that back up to snuff. I think that's very important that the gateway is looking great.

Are we looking at any long-term goals or thing out there, minister, of how we can make sure that we put conditions in place or something that the gateway coming in and that complex going forward is kept up to –

Mr. MacDonald: I think it's owned by a private individual. We have to work accordingly with her and we will be in divisions, and we have been in discussions here as of late, so we'll continue to do that to try to –

Mr. Fox: Coming to the –

Mr. MacDonald: – get to a point of satisfaction that everybody –

Mr. Fox: Yeah, like I just (Indistinct) to make sure that we keep that down the road that it's a priority. That is the gateway and to keep that complex viable.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. Thank you for the hand-out for professional services from last year, the 2014-2015 forecast.

I'm going through there and some of the deliverables can be inferred by looking at the title, but some of them are a little trickier. Even for things like, for example, golf consulting contract and expenses. I've been wondering what the list of deliverables were for that sort of professional services.

The second thing I'm interested in learning for most of the professional services, if not along with deliverables, interested in whether the people contracted or the company or person are an Island company or whether off-Island, and I was wondering if that information's available.

Kevin Jenkins Director: For the section under question, Arsenault Best Cameron Ellis is a local auditing accounting firm and Hurrykane is also a Charlottetown based firm.

Mr. Trivers: So this is the golf consulting contract and expenses?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Were they deliverables on that one?

Kevin Jenkins Director: There is a report that we can table. Hurrykane tables an annual report each year of the activities they undertake. We can table that report if you like and bring that report back.

Mr. Trivers: Does it table the activities they undertake?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Yeah, we can bring that report back.

Mr. Trivers: That would be great, thank you.

Maybe you can just give me an overview what's involved in a golf consulting contract.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Hurrykane has assisted us over the last 15 years with a relationship with our main suppliers. It also assisted us in the expression of interest that it's undergone the last two or three years for the sale of the golf courses. Jack Kane has assisted us with those endeavours.

Mr. Trivers: Right. I was wondering about the golf course sales and how that applied. I noticed further on in professional services – so there's \$26,000 there, then in Mill River negotiations was 44,000, almost 478. Then in the Mill River negotiations part two there's another 26,000. We spent over \$70,000 in negotiations. There are Brudenell negotiations as well. Can you expand on what those negotiations would entail and why would it be so expensive?

Chair: (Indistinct) get it when we get to that section, hon. member.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, all right.

Chair: Total General Administration –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) have a commitment, then? Are you going to break down the deliverables and whether it's off-Island or on-Island for all of the professional

services then? Is that something you can provide on the table? Should be relatively easy to do, just that two columns. I'd love to see that.

Mr. MacKay: We should get a to-do list, there's a bunch of stuff (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: We can table the report from the consultant.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, I'm interested. Going through each professional service, I want to know what the deliverables were and whether it's an off-Island or on-Island company. Even better, who the company was and whether it's on-Island or off-Island.

The reason I say this is quite often – and again, talking with my constituents and watching government over the years, there's concerns about professional services and how they can fly under the radar and monies can go out in questionable ways. I just want to make sure everything is on the up and up.

Mr. MacDonald: Just in regards to that, that will take some time. That's not something you can pull off the shelf, you do understand that.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, all right. How much time do you estimate that taking?

Mr. MacDonald: Next week.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, that's a reasonable time frame. A week or two, yes, absolutely.

Chair: Okay, hon. member?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: Total General Administration: 234,100.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Parks Administration

“Appropriations provided for the management and regional administration of provincial parks.” Administration: 15,600. Materials, Supplies and Services: 42,100. Professional Services: Nil. Salaries: 281,300. Travel and Training: 16,400.

Total Parks Administration: 355,400.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was wondering again, looking back here, if there's any revenue associated with parks administration.

Kevin Jenkins Director: No, revenues and parks (Indistinct) next section.

Mr. Trivers: That's all under operations?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: So you've got it split on parks administration which is essentially the costs? I guess I'm having trouble understanding the difference between parks administration and parks operations and why they're split out in the two different areas. Wouldn't administration be just another facet of operating the park? Maybe I'm wrong or I'm misunderstanding something here.

Kevin Jenkins Director: I think it's a little more transparent to break out parks administration. That's the central office consisting of our parks manager, the operation supervisor. I think it's maybe a little more transparent to break out those costs separately from the direct operating costs of the parks.

Mr. Trivers: Parks administration is a central office that services all the different parks, whereas parks operation are expenses and revenue associated with individual parks?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Correct.

Chair: Okay, hon. member?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Parks Operations

“Appropriations provided for the operation, maintenance and upgrading of provincial parks.” Revenue: (957,900). Administration: 57,700.

Mr. Trivers: That's actually a negative number. You didn't indicate that when you read it.

Chair: Excuse me, that's a negative number.

Administration: 57,700. Equipment: 16,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 750,700. Professional Services: 22,800. Salaries: 2,072,300. Travel and Training: 56,000.

Total Parks Operations: 2,017,600.

Shall it carry?

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I brought it up there last week that it was a concern at Cabot Park Provincial Park that the park has notified the Fanningbrook School, which is also located in Cabot Park, that they'll be selling ice cream. Is that something you're aware of? Is every park going to be in the ice cream business now?

Mr. MacDonald: There are two questions. First off all, I believe I was aware of the ice cream for sale. Secondly, I don't believe that we're going to be in the ice cream business in every park.

Mr. MacKay: The concern, that one in the particular area, the Fanningbrook School, which is a restored school which is in Cabot Park, that's how they make their money, basically, to keep the operations going and renovated is by selling ice cream out of that. I'm wondering if there's something you can do to check into that now that we know it's not open for business as an ice cream spot that they might be able to pull back on that.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm looking at that big negative revenue number. Of course, you anticipated that and I'm trying to figure out what it means.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Those are campground revenues from our nine campgrounds.

Mr. Trivers: How do you get a negative revenue, I don't understand that. Maybe my accounting is weak but –

Premier MacLauchlan: The negative is in the expense column so it's actually a minus (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: All right, thank you. A very simple accounting question. Thank you, Mr. Premier. Now I feel a little silly.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, just on that same revenue line. Is it because you divested another park? Would that be why we've decreased the minus?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, new park.

Ms. Compton: So that would be in this budget estimate, the difference. Also, professional services, I see quite a decrease in the estimate for this coming year. I wonder: Can you shine a light on that?

Mr. MacDonald: I think that was part of the Lord Selkirk as well.

Ms. Compton: In what way, do you know?

Mr. MacDonald: What's that?

Ms. Compton: In what respect? Do you know what that –

Mr. MacDonald: I would assume, and Kevin, correct me if I'm wrong, but any time through the whole professional process as being lawyers' fees and things like that.

Ms. Compton: Consulting.

Mr. MacDonald: Consulting to make sure that it was –

Chair: Shall this section carry? Carried.

Brookvale

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the Brookvale Ski Park.” Revenue: (375,000). Administration: 22,500.

Equipment: 10,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 225,400. Professional Services: 3,200. Salaries: 481,700. Travel and Training: 13,100.

Total Brookvale: 380,900.

Shall it carry?

Question by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we know, Brookvale is primarily a ski park, but I'm assuming that the employees are year-round employees?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Kevin Jenkins Director: No.

Mr. Trivers: Those are seasonal numbers?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: Is the Brookvale Ski Park leveraged – and I believe it is leveraged in the summer time for bound biking and that sort of thing. Are the lifts put in service for that?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

Kevin Jenkins Director: No.

Mr. Trivers: No. Has there been consideration to expanding the season to include the summer to maybe get some additional revenue? I know it's a popular sport throughout the –

Kevin Jenkins Director: We did work with the site (Indistinct) one year and we did actually operate the lifts for a couple of days one season in connection with the cycling association. It didn't work out and we haven't offered it since.

Mr. Trivers: It didn't work out. There wasn't enough uptake you mean? There weren't enough people using it?

Kevin Jenkins Director: A substantial cost to operate the lifts.

Mr. MacDonald: I think it's the operating costs that defer any of that.

Mr. Trivers: The operating costs are very high, are they?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: Okay, hon. member?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Golf Courses

“Appropriations provided for operating the provincially-owned golf courses. Budget estimates include direct costs associated with the operation, maintenance and marketing of the courses.” Revenue: (4,041,000). Administration: 166,000. Debt: 62,500. Equipment: 65,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 1,648,600. Professional Services: 6,700. Salaries: 2,856,000. Travel and Training: 39,800.

Total Golf Courses: 803,800.

Total Corporate Services: 3,791,800.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Question, hon. Kensington-Malpeque

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

How many golf courses are in that section?

Mr. MacDonald: It would be four.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Four.

Mr. MacKay: So each one is, in fairness, losing \$1 million a year?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Can you repeat the question?

Mr. MacDonald: He asked if each one of them were losing \$1 million a year.

Kevin Jenkins Director: No. These are the cumulative numbers for the four golf courses.

Mr. MacKay: Right. And – okay. So there was \$4 million profit made on them golf courses?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Four million dollars in gross revenue.

Mr. MacKay: Gross revenue.

Mr. MacDonald: Gross revenue. Yeah.

Mr. MacKay: So – and forgive me if I’m asking a bad question here – I’m trying to find out, or look here: Are the golf courses making money or are they losing money?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Eight hundred thousand dollars net cost.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Bottom line is the net cost.

Mr. MacKay: Right.

Chair: Okay, hon. member?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah. That’s good.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: I’m just wondering. I know you’ve been trying to sell them. I’m just wondering how long we continue with it. Do we bite the bullet and basically get rid of them? Or do we continue year after year? I’m totally against government being in business against other private businesses. I don’t think it’s right. I have to wonder: Where do we draw the line and say: Enough’s enough, we’ve got to get clear of these things?

Mr. MacDonald: It’s a tougher decision than that. You’re talking about rural development. You’re talking about employment. You’re talking about our PST, what we get back out of those golf courses in (Indistinct).

It’s tough. You’re not selling used cars. You’re selling multi-million-dollar golf courses. If we have to work harder at trying to do that, then we will, but it’s got to fit the community too. There’s a lot of employment there from all of us in here as a member.

We have to be careful that – what works for the community too. But golf courses took a downturn the past number of years and

maybe it’s on an upswing. Pardon the pun. But I think there are a lot of variables in there. It’s not as simple as turning the tap off type of thing. It’s a very –

Mr. Fox: I know.

Mr. MacDonald: – complicated matter. We will definitely look into advancing our process on the sale.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry?

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Along those lines, there’s \$2.8 million in salaries going out and, of course, with a net cost of 803,000. Has anyone ever done the analysis to see if the spin-off effect of those salaries makes that loss worthwhile, that net cost? I mean, I’m assuming that wouldn’t be a really difficult calculation to do, but perhaps it is. I know I’ve seen those numbers, for example, in ICT, and they were looking at them and the net spin-off.

Kevin Jenkins Director: One could calculate the provincial income tax revenue associated with the salary number.

Mr. Trivers: That would be a good start. Right?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah. Okay.

Kevin Jenkins Director: You can take a marginal tax rate of 10 % that most of us are at. Ten percent provincial taxes would be \$280,000 on that salary expenditure.

Mr. Trivers: So the – right. Okay. That might be a great way to help justify the cost to our taxpayers. Right?

Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Strategy, Evaluation and Industry Investment

Strategy and Evaluation

“Appropriations provided for strategic planning, evaluation and research services:” Administration: 8,700. Materials, Supplies and Services: 6,200. Professional Services: 285,000. Salaries: 370,600. Travel and Training: 20,000.

Total Strategy and Evaluation: 690,500.

Shall it carry?

Question.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to be clear that earlier on when I asked for deliverables on on-Island versus off-Island, the names of the companies located here, did that apply to all the sections? Not just – okay. Because this is a big one as well.

Mr. MacDonald: That’s actually a tourism research centre.

Mr. Trivers: Oh, okay.

Mr. MacDonald: So it is an on-Island company, if that’s what you’re –

Mr. Trivers: So it’s a tourism research centre. Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: It’s housed in the Tourism Industry Association of PEI. That’s where it’s housed right now.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Chair: Okay, hon. member?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Industry Investment

“Appropriations provided for industry liaison and grant programs.” Administration: 9,900. Materials, Supplies and Services: 3,600. Professional Services: 6,800. Salaries: 201,700. Travel and Training: 11,200. Grants: 2,733,100.

Total Industry Investment: 2,966,300.

Shall it carry?

Question.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Just a quick question. Why \$30,000 less for professional services?

Mr. MacDonald: Say that again?

Mr. MacKay: There’s \$30,000, compared to last year, professional services under strategy evaluation. Or sorry, the budget forecast, 36,800 to 6,800.

Mr. MacDonald: So it was during the process of trying to sell Mill River.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: It was a one-time professional –

Mr. MacKay: Perfect.

Mr. MacDonald: I can see where you are now.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Regulation and Compliance

“Appropriations provided for the management and administration of licensing, signage, and compliance.” Revenue: (100,000). Administration: 3,300. Materials, Supplies and Services: 3,900. Professional Services: 75,000. Salaries: 142,500. Travel and Training: 4,300.

Total Regulation and Compliance: 129,000.

Shall it carry?

Question, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know this is one – being in District 18 Rustico-Emerald there are a lot of tourism operations. I know there are lots throughout the Island. But one thing that I’ve heard complaints from various operators is that it’s actually hard to comply with some of the regulations. Specifically when it comes to the Select rating. I’m not sure if that’s under this section or not. It’s not.

Mr. MacDonald: It's not part of government. It's actually a private –

Mr. Trivers: That's a separate one that the tourism association agrees to?

Mr. MacDonald: It's a voluntary system that operators can –

Mr. Trivers: Voluntary. Okay. So they want to opt into it so they have to comply, basically.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Canada Select. So what sort of regulations and compliance are we talking about here?

Tourism industry act and regulations that – that's the only regulations that's part of this body, is tourism –

Kevin Jenkins Director: Licensing.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, licensing requirements.

Mr. Trivers: So primary –

Mr. MacDonald: There's two separate. One's a rating, which you're talking about.

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: The licensing is a requirement. It's by law.

Mr. Trivers: So this is the licensing portion. Okay. That's what – it covers the basic licensing of tourism operations. Simple as that.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Kevin Jenkins Director: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: 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.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Strategy, Evaluation and Industry Investment: 4,039,700.

Shall it carry?

Question.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So rolling up into that number, the grants for French Services, are they listed on one of the hand-outs?

Kevin Jenkins Director: I have a hand-out here.

Mr. Trivers: Another hidden hand-out.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Tourism Marketing Communications

Business Development

“Appropriations provided for customer relationship management, sales, packaging and new product development.” Revenue: (45,000). Administration: 4,300. Materials, Supplies and Services: 1,500. Salaries: 170,400. Travel and Training: 4,200. Integrated Tourism Solution: 486,900.

Total Business Development: 622,300.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Again, a question about what the Integrated Tourism Solution is and what sort of items would make up that half million-dollar cost. Because it's not salaries, I'm assuming. It's not materials and supplies. Are they external fees?

Mr. MacDonald: It's basically BookPEI. It's a reservation system for (Indistinct) accommodations. Yeah. We subsidize it, obviously, fairly heavily for –

Mr. Trivers: Wow.

Mr. MacDonald: - (Indistinct) accommodations PEI.

Mr. Trivers: As a web developer I've actually developed a reservation system, myself, that's used at Marco Polo Land campground. I looked into getting into the business but decided not to because the expenses were too much. Now I understand how BookPEI is able to make things go.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Visitor Services

"Appropriations provided for tourism information, travel counselling and visitor information centre activities."
Administration: 57,300; Materials, Supplies and Services: 12,600; Professional Services: 2,000; Salaries: 602,400; Travel and Training: 28,900.

Total Visitor Services: 703,200.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Marketing

"Appropriations provided to market Prince Edward Island tourism in the areas of advertising-creative, advertising-buy and production, web marketing and consumer promotion." Revenue: (775,000); Administration: 11,000; Materials, Supplies and Services: 2,779,900; Professional Services: 1,023,100; Salaries: 437,600; Travel and Training: 43,200; Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership: 279,300.

Total Marketing: 3,799,100.

Shall it carry?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. This is another area that's been brought up to me on the campaign trail by different constituents. Their concern was that we're losing share to the US market. Obviously over the last number of years the Canadian dollar has been changing in value compared to the US dollar and that definitely played a role in the incentive of US citizens to come and vacation on PEI.

I was wondering in terms of – well, again, I'm going to assume that materials, supplies

and services includes things like print advertising –

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: That's correct? Okay, so that's a yes. What is the split of that that's done to the United States? What percentage? Maybe you have a hand-out.

Mr. MacDonald: Basically what we've done and we have just signed, actually, another contract is Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership. The four Atlantic Provinces combine their effort to leverage funding for marketing for Atlantic Canada, through ACOA as well. So it's a contribution, so there's a bit of a –

Kevin Jenkins Director: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: So if you look – yeah, see the ATCP line there or the Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership, it's right before your total marketing –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah?

Mr. MacDonald: – \$279,000, that's our contribution.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, so we're spending \$2.8 million, approximately, on various materials, supplies and services.

I guess my question is: What percentage of that is spent on US marketing?

Kevin Jenkins Director: Almost none.

Mr. Trivers: Again, I want to bring this back to my constituents because they're worried we're not spending enough on US marketing and that's why we're seeing declining market share in the US as a tourism destination.

Mr. Roach: The dollar does that.

Mr. Trivers: Well, the dollar – well, with the dollar actually – we should see an increase, yes, so they want to make sure we take advantage of that low Canadian dollar and we see the increase, but if we're not advertising then we won't bring back that market share.

Mr. MacDonald: The advertising, just to remind you too, the marketing, was done and completed likely in September of 2014 for 2015 so we're always working a year in advance. Like in the actual marketing itself. Very low percentage is directed to the US, to be quite honest. It's usually Ontario, Quebec –

Kevin Jenkins Director: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, which – but in regards to, keep in mind, the Atlantic Canada partnership, the majority of theirs is Europe, Asia, and the US, so Atlantic Canada combines their effort –

Mr. Trivers: Right, so there's US advertising (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Exactly, but we're talking PEI as singularly what we do so –

Mr. Trivers: So you're focused primarily on Canadian advertising. What percentage is broken down, like, print ads versus Internet ads and that sort of thing? Because again, the concern is that we're spending too much money on print ads and not enough on Internet ads, is what I'm hearing from constituents.

Mr. MacDonald: General advertising, we believe, is around \$470,000 approximately on general advertising. That would be your hard print copies.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, so it is a lower percentage on print advertising at this point?

Mr. MacDonald: It's getting lower each year.

Mr. Trivers: If it's not too much to ask, just take that \$2.8 million number and just break it down by the type of advertising, that would be really great.

Chair: Is that it, hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Media Relations/Editorial

“Appropriations provided for editorial services and familiarization tour/hosting.” Administration: 6,200; Materials, Supplies and Services: 106,600; Professional Services: 19,000; Salaries: 195,900; Travel and Training: 42,000.

Total Media Relations/Editorial: 369,700.

Shall it carry?

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. I think this would come out of this section, but one method of advertising that has gained a lot of traction is personal blogging and blogging within different areas. For example, you could have a blog that covers the north shore of PEI, one in the west or south shore, or you could split it up based on the different tourist areas, and then you of course are getting new material, you're allowing different tourism operators within those areas to get their news out there, but you can leverage it from a central location as opposed to having 500 different websites all trying to get the same traffic.

I know we have a Tourism PEI website but as far as I can tell it doesn't have a large blog portion to it, especially in these areas. I was wondering if this is a strategy that's been considered at all, like sort of paid bloggers.

Mr. MacDonald: I believe blogging has been and just a most recent new program was Ask an Islander.

Mr. Trivers: Right.

Mr. MacDonald: There are some avenues that they're investigating and blogging has been around for quite a while. I'm almost positive that it has been tried from my experience in the past.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, is it under the media relations/editorial or would that be under marketing? Probably.

Mr. MacDonald: Marketing, likely. Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: So what are the responsibilities of the people working in media relations/editorial?

Mr. MacDonald: They may have more than one responsibility, but under this heading they would be looking after the writers that come to PEI to write about Prince Edward Island, whether it be from Boston or Europe or someplace like that, journalists that come here to talk about Prince Edward Island. So

Mr. Trivers: I'm just trying to get to my hand-out here on media relations/editorial to see if I can find out – there we go. We've got a manager, an editorial marketing officer and information officer employed full time to manage the people who are coming here to write. Maybe I'm naïve but I would suggest if those people actually all wrote their own blog and got it out there they would have a relatively huge impact as opposed to spending all of that money just having other people come to write about us.

Mr. MacDonald: If you take National Geographic, for example –

Mr. Trivers: Yes, yes.

Mr. MacDonald: – millions of readers. They come here to get a story on Prince Edward Island, it's got to be done properly, and that's the type of stuff that –

Mr. Trivers: That's the sort of thing (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: – it's not that easy, yeah (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: All right, and –

Mr. MacDonald: It's a big item, but very important.

Mr. Trivers: Apologies for my naivety, I understand how this works, but thank you for that.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Fulfillment

“Appropriations provided for media distribution.” Administration: 272,400; Materials, Supplies and Services: 3,600;

Professional Services: 36,300; Salaries: 127,600; Travel and Training: 3,800.

Total Fulfillment: 443,700.

Shall it carry?

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So I'm just looking at that description, “Appropriations provided for media distribution.” I'm not sure I quite understand what that means, to tell you the truth.

Mr. MacDonald: It's basically a department that distributes brochures, flyers I guess they call it, magazines out at –

Kevin Jenkins Director: Visitor guides.

Mr. MacDonald: Visitors' guides as well, across the Island, and updates that distribution on pretty near a weekly basis, I guess it is.

Kevin Jenkins Director: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Then your large ticket item, which is the top there, is basically most of that is eaten up by postage to send out your visitor guides. You can see there's a decrease because as we move forward there's going to be less and less visitors' guides printed, obviously.

Mr. Trivers: Make them available online (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Exactly.

Mr. Trivers: Great to hear.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Publications

“Appropriations provided for the production and printing of publications, management of photo library and audio-visual services.” Administration: 2,200; Materials, Supplies and Services: 270,900; Professional Services: 54,300; Salaries: 145,700; Travel and Training: 4,800.

Total Publications: 477,900.

Shall it carry?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so this is where we pay photographers to get good stock photography, or not – create the stock photography for Prince Edward Island. Is that used in the marketing section, then? You broke that out again for clarity, that's why it's separate in publications?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Are those available to the businesses on the Island to use them in their marketing and is that –

Kevin Jenkins Director: They're copyrights.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, they're copyrights.

Mr. Trivers: There are copyrights.

Mr. MacDonald: If a business calls from PEI and requests access to one of the pictures, if that's what they want, we're granted them before.

Mr. Trivers: But there's no access to the library of pictures so you can go through and pick ones that might be available. That would be very useful. Again, in my job as a web developer that would be really nice to have access to that library of – actually the full – I'm talking about images, but videos, audio to use in various projects, even if there was a licensing fee associated. Might even be a revenue generator.

Right now I take it those are all kept under wraps in the government, not publicly accessible.

Okay, thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Travel/Trade Sales

“Appropriations provided for travel/trade promotions and international development.” Administration: 17,500. Materials, Supplies

and Services: 205,300. Salaries: 153,900. Travel and Training: 50,500.

Total Travel/Trade Sales: 427,200.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Tourism Marketing Communications: 6,843,100.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Tourism PEI: 14,674,600.

Shall it carry? Carried.

I invite the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning to come on the floor, please.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Carried!

Mr. R. Brown: No way, I've got questions for myself.

An Hon. Member: Four years of this.

Chair: Would the minister like to bring anyone out on the floor?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Could the guest please introduce themselves for the Hansard, please?

Brad Colwill Director: Brad Colwill, director of student financial assistance and finance.

Chair: Welcome, Brad. Are there any hand-outs, minister?

All right. We'll read the first section while the hand-outs are being handed out.

Departmental Management

Administration

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the offices of the Minister and Deputy Minister.” Administration: 13,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 3,600. Professional Services: 1,000. Salaries: 270,000. Travel and Training: 7,700.

Total Administration: 295,300.

Total Departmental Management: 295,300.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Labour Research; and Immigrant
Recruitment, Settlement and Retention

Administration

“Appropriations provided for the research,
recruitment, settlement and retention.”

Administration: 14,500. Equipment: 7,000.
Materials, Supplies and Services: 153,000.
Professional Services: 100,000. Salaries:
413,400. Travel and Training: 31,500.
Grants: 963,600.

Total Administration: 1,683,000.

Shall it carry?

Question. The hon. Member from Morell-
Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, just if you could explain the
increase in grants?

Mr. R. Brown: They're in your hand-out,
are they? The PEI Newcomers Association,
(Indistinct) PEI. Oh, the increase is the FQR,
Foreign Qualifications Recognition. That's a
federal/provincial agreement to speed up the
process of processing people's qualifications
for coming –

Leader of the Opposition: Didn't we do
this already?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Labour Research; and Immigrant
Recruitment, Settlement and Retention:
1,683,000.

Shall it carry? Carried.

SKILLSPEI

SkillsPEI

“Appropriations provided for the
administration and delivery of programs

targeted at improving the Prince Edward
Island labour market.” Administration:
482,400. Equipment: 6,000. Materials,
Supplies and Services: 37,900. Professional
Services: 132,300. Salaries: 3,246,700.
Travel and Training: 55,000. Canada Job
Fund: 1,744,100. Labour Market
Development Agreement: 16,342,000.
Forum of Labour Market Ministers: Nil.
Targeted Initiative for Older Workers:
240,000. Federal Programs: 708,000.
Provincial Programs: 1,346,200.

Total SkillsPEI: 24,340,600.

Shall it carry?

Leader of the Opposition: Question.

Chair: Question. The hon. Leader of the
Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Your salaries
took a jump there. Can you explain what
that is?

Brad Colwill Director: In the prior year we
had some positions which would have been
vacant and they're projected to be filled this
year.

Leader of the Opposition: How many
positions would that be?

Mr. R. Brown: Eight.

Brad Colwill Director: No, it would just be
a couple – should be here one second. About
eight.

Leader of the Opposition: About eight?

Brad Colwill Director: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. The
Labour Market Development Agreement has
gone down substantially. Can you tell us
what impacts that will have for people
accessing that fund?

Mr. R. Brown: First of all, the Labour
Market Development Agreement is a federal
agreement administered under the
Employment Insurance Act and it's
unemployment insurance money that funds
the Labour Market Development
Agreement.

In 2008 we negotiated to transfer the Labour Market Development Agreement from Ottawa – before that Ottawa administered the program, it was federally administered, and it was transferred to the Province of Prince Edward Island at that time. We got it at about 30-32 million which was a good revenue, or a good input into the Province of Prince Edward Island.

I guess the reason the revenue is going down is because of the success of the program. As the program's successful you get less money. I guess one of the reasons we're reviewing the whole thing with the feds – every year it's reviewed with the feds and this year we could have had a \$3 million cut, but there's a 10% ceiling on the cuts you're allowed.

This is one of the reasons the EDA was combined with the department. A lot of our indicators were showing less clients, but now that you throw in the EDA clients into the mix I think we'll be able to re-negotiate a better deal with Ottawa.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The Forum of Labour Market Ministers that disappeared. Can you explain what that was?

Mr. R. Brown: I think there was a forum on it. There's still a FDP on labour ministers across the country. I think one of the things when the EI changes or when the federal government announced changes to the Labour Market Development Agreement, especially in the LMA and LMDA, is unemployed – LMA is employed people. When changes were coming about in that area there was a forum set up to review it across the country and go back to the federal government and ask for changes to it. Those negotiations are still taking place. Ontario and some of the other provinces are not signing until they get a better deal.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Just for clarification. The Forum of Labour Market Ministers, the secretariat was transferred to PEI and Prince Edward Island was the co-chair for two years. That was money that was directed to the province of PEI, in essence, to run the secretariat for two years. That ran out on

April 1st and it's now gone to the Province of Quebec. PEI co-hosted with the federal minister on that particular secretariat. Every two years it changes.

Chair: The hon. Member from O'Leary-Inverness.

Mr. Henderson: Minister, just a quick question.

The Work Experience PEI program is a program through Skills PEI where workers worked for their EI, their EI was topped up a little bit, and they gained meaningful work skills. Is there any update on the status of that program moving forward? It was a good program for rural areas, especially where some workers just got minimal unemployment insurance benefits, so it was a way to gain skills and get more money into the households. It was non-insurable earnings, too.

Mr. R. Brown: We're reviewing the programs over the next couple of months and we're combining EDA and Skills into one unit and we're reviewing all programs under that area.

The most important thing that we want to do and what Ottawa wants to do – and we agree with Ottawa – is to use this program to develop people's skills in order to get a permanent full-time job instead of just a cycle of 14, 15 weeks each and every year. Ottawa has made it quite clear, and we agree with Ottawa, that the cycle of just your unemployment insurance each year, to work for unemployment insurance, Ottawa is not happy with that or neither are we, really. We should be creating long-term jobs, and if there is a skill gap there, educate, and then the innovation minister works on getting companies here and we have the programs in place for that.

Mr. Henderson: But wouldn't it make more sense though, I mean, to have people working for their unemployment insurance and gaining skills and building their resumé along the way? I'd certainly readily admit that not everybody that goes on to a Work Experience PEI program gets a job the next day or anything. But I've known lots of them that did gain valuable work experience and they gained new skills, mostly in construction. It was also very good for

organizations as well to get some of these projects done in community development. To me, I always felt that that was a pretty good program. It's been around for a long time.

What criteria are you looking for as far as to determine whether these projects move forward?

Mr. R. Brown: In terms of the work force?

Mr. Henderson: If I use Work Experience PEI as an example, what's the criteria you're going to judge your decision on? Is this decision judged with the federal government as well?

Mr. R. Brown: As you know, the Work Experience PEI program was mostly an add-on to the ICF funding. So with the ICF funding decreasing this funding is decreased also because most of the work experience jobs were under the ICF project. ICF would put up some money and we'd put up the rest of the money for the Skills Development in that area. Now the money is just going to be redirected in making sure that we get long-term trainable jobs for these people instead of just the cycle of unemployment insurance.

Mr. Henderson: But the issue I sort of see in the rural area, just like my own riding, is that there isn't a lot of year-round full-time jobs to go to right afterwards. A lot of those people were working in the construction industry. They were working in – whether it's tourism stream cleanup. I mean, they were transitioning into the workforce, but it takes time and it's just another way to add and build a resumé for individuals.

I just want to caution and say that it always has to be a full-time job or they have to transition into the private sector workforce right away. In rural communities like the riding of O'Leary-Inverness, it just takes a little longer to transition. You think you have to have a little bit of an understanding of that little difference, that's all

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Skills PEI: 24,340,600.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Post-Secondary and Continuing Education

General

“Appropriations provided for post-secondary coordination, the regulation of private training businesses and the administration of the division.”

Administration: 15,600. Equipment: 900. Materials, Supplies and Services: 4,000. Professional Services: 25,600. Salaries: 912,500. Travel and Training: 9,700.

Total General: 968,300.

Shall it carry?

Question.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Just same question on salary, the difference in the salary, where's that coming from? (Indistinct) different.

Mr. R. Brown: It was some staff that were into Skills, now we're putting into higher education just to administer that area.

Brad Colwill Director: We just transferred some people.

Chair: Okay, hon. member?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Apprenticeship and Training

“Appropriations provided for the administration of apprenticeship training and certification of tradespersons.”

Administration: 1,900. Equipment: 7,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 300. Professional Services: 66,000. Salaries: 309,900. Travel and Training: 10,400. Grants: 3,500.

Total Apprenticeship and Training, 399,000.

Shall it carry?

Question.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Getting new immigrants approved for their training or their qualifications, has that been an issue at all?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: Does that come under this area?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: Do you feel that the budget needs to be – is it an okay budget to deal with it if it's an issue?

Mr. R. Brown: For the time being.

Mr. MacEwen: For the time being? Can you give me an example of how that issue is stressing the department?

Mr. R. Brown: You're talking doctors and people like that getting their credentials and –

Mr. MacEwen: I'm thinking more of the Holland College-type trades.

Mr. R. Brown: And –

Mr. MacEwen: Maybe it's not an issue.

Mr. R. Brown: I don't get your question.

Mr. MacEwen: The “[a]ppropriations provided for the administration of apprenticeship training and certification of tradespersons.” The certification of the trades people – are we having new Islanders come, immigrants come, that can't get certified?

Mr. R. Brown: In the apprenticeship program, it's run at Holland College and there are two streams. Either you have an employer that will sponsor you or you'll go through the two-year program and then challenge an exam and then get your hours afterwards.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: If an immigrant comes to PEI and they are associated with a company, and that immigrant wants to get a trade – they're qualified for it, too – as long as the

company sponsors them into the – and the new federal program, the LMDA, which is the cost funding, they contribute 10,000, the feds. The company contributes 5,000 towards trades development.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: And it's a great project.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay.

Chair: Okay?

Shall it carry? Carried.

Post-Secondary Grants

“Appropriations provided for post-secondary educational institutions, student assistance, adult basic education, literacy training and the community service bursary program.” *Collège Acadie Î.-P.-É.* Core Operating Grant: 279,900. Student Tuition Subsidy: 69,200. Official Languages Education: 60,000. Restricted Funding: 545,000.

For a total of 954,100.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Holland College. Core Operating Grant: 17,902,400. Student Tuition Subsidy: 6,155,800. Restricted Funding: 5,792,700.

For a total of 29,850,900.

Shall it carry?

Mr. Trivers: Question.

Chair: Question?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: With a core operating grant, are there restrictions on how that is to be used?

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. Trivers: So it's just basically we write a cheque to Holland College for \$17.9

million and say: Use this to provide post-secondary education.

Mr. R. Brown: We review the budgets with the institutions each year and we would challenge them in their numbers.

The next number, the restricted funding, that is the LMDA money also. That money is contingent upon –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. 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.

This House will recess until 7:00 this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: You may be seated.

Motions Other than Government

Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

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

At this time, opposition would like to call Motion No. 31.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Debate was adjourned by the Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Would the hon. member please continue on?

Mr. Trivers: Podium, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to continue the debate as seconder today on our motion that addresses the very serious issue of what's happening with our education system in our province. I, too, want to express my support for our teachers and to voice my objection to the direction in which this government is taking us, if anyone can actually figure out what direction we're going in, because at present it is not clear.

I would suggest that day by day Islanders are becoming more and more confused about where we are going. The only thing I know that I'm really sure of is that nothing has changed. This government has met with the PEI Teachers' Federation and the message is that there is no necessity for a rally because the president is confident that up to 55 teaching positions will not disappear out of our classrooms. Fifty-five, at least that's the figure that was talked about by the English Language School Board. Is it 55, 41, 28, 31? Who knows? I do not believe that our minister knows and I'm not sure if the PEITF knows. I'm not even sure if the school boards know. So for now we'll just go with the latest figure I've heard, and that is 55 teachers that are being taken out of the classroom.

I believe government is stalling. They want to deflect the conversation to something new. Well, that isn't going to happen. We do not see anything that has changed. A review is not a reverse. The late Monday evening announcement that the PEI Teachers' Federation had met with government and was calling off today's rally, as far as I'm concerned, changes nothing. To me it's at best a stalling tactic. The government has not promised to reverse their decision. They have simply stated that they will review the status of these positions.

Have we not seen enough of this double talk? I mean, government is flip-flopping all over the place and the minister doesn't appear to have a clue about what he's really sure of and what direction he's taking the state of education in this province.

The government went behind the backs of Islanders to announce the initial cuts. I see no reason why they would not do so again. All the big announcement on the so-called review did was create a culture of fear amongst our teachers, and I've talked to

many of them, as I'm sure many of my esteemed colleagues have who are now afraid to speak out.

We hear that they were warned not to take part in the rally today, and there was a rally today. It was quite shocking to hear that the public was not allowed to speak at a public meeting of our school board last night. That was made aware ahead of time, but at the same time, I think on an issue of this importance the board should have let people get up and express their opinions. That's part of being an open and transparent government.

The point is that I'm losing trust in this government. They have not given us any reason to believe that we should trust them. Teachers were told not to show up today, that the rally was off, the English Language School Board didn't allow public discussion. All that has happened is that our teachers are now too scared to show up for a rally, they are too scared to say anything against government because they're afraid their jobs are on the line. Really, the bottom line is we need teachers working in our classrooms. We don't need a review. The government should already know this.

In fact, by forcing a review that just takes the exact budget we've seen put forward that has the cuts in place and allows it to pass because when the House closes that budget must be passed, and that means there's yet another excuse to say we can't actually even make the changes that might be negotiated because that'll have to be deferred to a fall sitting of the Legislature. Yet the government persists in ignoring this fact.

My question is: Why is government ignoring teachers? Why do they not believe or trust in our teachers and principals? While there may be some areas where school populations have declined there are many that have really just remained steady. There are some schools where enrollments have increased over the past decade yet they've still lost teaching positions.

I do not believe that split classes are a good thing for students, but they are becoming a part of the education reality for our Island children. We're moving backwards, not forwards. I believe that cutting out teachers has nothing to do with improving our

education outcomes, about boosting student achievement, it's all about balancing budgets, and what a place to put a priority when it comes to fiscal responsibility.

When it comes to priorities you'd think that education would be at the top of the heap, not at the top of the heap for cutting. But again, there was no consultation.

Our teachers' federation suggested a couple years ago that government cut the common assessments that were developed by the province. Our teachers' federation suggested this. These assessments were put in place to make sure that student test scores were improved. So again, put forward by the teachers' federation, the provincial common assessments cut would save the government almost \$2 million annually.

We have been paying attention and listening to teachers. That's why as part of our Progressive Conservative platform we specifically included the removal of the provincial common assessments and the redeployment of 55 teachers back into our classrooms. That's right, not a cut of 55 teachers, but 55 teachers back into our classroom in a fiscally prudent and responsible way, by taking money that was spent on the provincial common assessments.

Assessment resources are better directed at the classroom. Teachers tell me the common assessments duplicate what they are already assessing and frankly I trust our school teachers to do their job. They say these assessments do nothing to improve the educational achievement of our students and indeed take additional time from teaching in the classrooms. Teachers have to come out of the classrooms to prepare the assessments, to administer the assessments, to mark the assessments, and although there is some value in learning for the teachers there, the students also lose instructional time when they're writing the assessments.

Do we really want to spend money on a redundant process to tell us something we already know or do we want to solve the problem? Why are our teachers constantly being ignored? They know what's going on. They know what can be cut and, frankly, I believe they know what is best for their

students, and more importantly, they want what is best for their students.

So why is government sneaking around behind their backs and taking actions that simply make no sense? It is really our students who are paying the ultimate price for the wasteful years of a government that squandered millions of dollars on parties, liquor stores, and gambling.

I also question the minister's statement that he is committed to putting the resources in place, both human and financial, and directing them toward front-line services. Are teachers not front line? How is cutting their positions and their teacher aids and supports providing resources toward front-line services?

This government is desperately trying to sell these teacher reductions as something that is good for the province and our education system. Islanders are not buying it. We're not buying it. Teachers are not buying it and parents aren't buying it. I believe we know from our own experience and the experiences of our children that our teachers do much more than teach. They encourage and inspire and influence our children. They help boost self-esteem and to identify problems. They make sure our children are not bullied. They work with them when they are struggling and they show through their compassion that someone cares. They develop in our children the desire for lifelong learning and curiosity about our world, our communities, and our people.

The English Language School Board serves over 19,000 students in kindergarten through to grade 12. Over 800 students attend our French language schools and there are over 4,000 students in French Immersion. We have over 1,700 teachers, or we did. Now there are over 147 fewer teachers in our classrooms. An additional 55 cut in our current budget and there is no guarantee that any of them will be reinstated. In fact, what is guaranteed is that they're definitely not going to be reinstated as part of this budget. At best we can hope they're reinstated at some point in the future, possibly the fall sitting of the Legislature at the earliest.

The president of the PEI Teachers' Federation has said: People should be concerned about what is happening in the

school system. Well, people are concerned. My question is: Why isn't this government? He says we are back to the bare bones of operation and I quote his quote on CBC: It's very hard for teachers and principals to try and operate under these circumstances. In fact, once again putting another delay in place to further discuss these cuts when no action can even be taken until some unknown point in the future is just making our administrators' job more difficult. The principals and vice principals that are responsible for allocating these teachers' positions are now going back to what was going to be their summer break and they are going to be working to try and figure out how to allocate teachers in an uncertain environment because they don't know what's going to happen with these talks.

Really, they're going to live a day-to-day bit of uncertainty, not to mention the teachers that were already cut and given their notice. These are people that went home, some of them in tears. There were staff parties where teachers didn't attend because they were so uncertain of their future. They thought they were cut and now they really don't know what's going on.

The minister said he was asked for find efficiencies. I think there are a plethora of places within our government that we can find efficiencies other than education. I suggest he look a little harder. He says: We want to do it with a minimal impact on the classroom. That's not happening either. As for the quote that nobody will be losing any jobs, the fact is that there are 147 fewer positions and we are already hearing of plenty of teachers who are losing their jobs.

The president of the PEI Teachers' Federation said, prior to the non-agreement and the supposed review, that failing to fill vacancies quote: Are still cuts to the system. He said it is, quote unquote: alarming. The policy of the day – when these statements were being made government's policy was to cut 28 classroom teachers along with seven positions at the board level and six in the education department. These changes would mean there will be more split classes and larger class sizes. Those are simply the facts. That's what happened. But to tell the truth, it's difficult to decipher the figures right now.

I believe there will be cuts amid all the confusion and chaos and I really hope somebody will figure it all out. I would like the government to step up to the plate and clarify for us now. I would like to know what the plan is and why we've headed down this path. Because as was asked in Question Period today, we still don't know what sort of financial evaluations were done, even what sort of dollar savings we would get from these teacher cuts, not to mention the cost-benefit analysis as to the cost of these cuts to our education system based on the benefit that they would provide, if any.

The bottom line is we do not believe that we should be cutting any teacher positions so that means there should be no need for a review. The announcement yesterday says only that government will consider reinstating some positions that were cut. They will consider reinstating some positions that were cut. There is no commitment. If the government is serious they will reinstate the positions and then determine where cuts can be made that would make cutting teachers in the classroom unnecessary. Let's start from square one. Let's go back to the beginning. Let's go put all of the teachers that were cut back in the classroom. This is the teachers that were there before this budget came down. Start from there and negotiate in good faith and then decide, based on the negotiations, which teachers should come out of the classrooms.

I know these cuts will be affecting many MLAs in this Assembly because their schools in their districts are going to lose teaching positions. As I look around here today, I see many MLAs that have schools that are going to be losing teachers. I would ask that they support our motion and condemn these cuts. I would ask the Premier to allow all members to vote openly and freely on behalf of their constituents.

We recently went through an election campaign and we all knocked on our constituents' doors, and we had very intimate conversations with them about the details of their lives. One of those conversations that I had at many doors was about the education system. So please remember what your constituents said and vote your conscience. I would ask that the Premier not whip this vote.

I ask all members to support our motion and encourage the government to reverse these cuts and engage in a broader public engagement to identify less disruptive measures to support Island teachers and improve student achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I start, may I have a moment just for recognition, please?

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to welcome to the gallery today the president of the PEI Home and School Association, Peter Rukavina.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Perry: First off, it's great to see this Assembly once again having a passionate discussion about supporting Island students and recognizing the value of our teachers.

Our government values the vital contributions teachers make to the lives of our Island students. As a father of a student, I recognize the importance of the work they do each and every day, as well as their commitment. Our Island teachers prepare lessons in classrooms for students. They teach students a variety of subjects and they evaluate the work of students through grading assignments and tests. Even when the students go home a teacher's day is not over.

Teachers must also continually adapt to the changing needs of students. I thank Island teachers for all their hard work and their dedication. Our government is committed to meeting the needs of students and working with Island teachers on our shared priority of student learning. Education is a priority for our government. The most recent budget

included an increase of \$3.76 million for education and early learning.

Over the past eight years government has increased education funding by 37%. We have made investments to help address classroom composition and will continue to work with teachers to best support students in learning. We are listening to teachers, talking with teachers, and working to understand their concerns and act to address their issues. My department is focused on providing a quality education system while ensuring front-line employees have the resources they need to provide students the best learning opportunities.

Government and the PEI Teachers' Federation have had the opportunity to engage in open dialogue. I have heard the concerns of teachers, and we recognize the impact of the timing of the changes announced in the latest budget. Government has committed to engaging our partners and reviewing all 28 positions. We will work collaboratively with principals to ensure schools have the necessary staff levels this fall.

Like any system, education must continue to evolve to provide the best learning opportunities for students now and into the future. There are a number of structural issues that must be addressed: classroom composition, transportation, zoning, and time to task. We are committed to working together with our partners on these important policies. This work will allow us to best invest our budgets to support student learning and to address the concerns teachers have raised.

We will work with teachers, the board, parents and community partners, such as the Home and School federation, on how the system can best support student learning. Our government has put in place a number of positive initiatives to improve our education system and student learning.

The key school related factors that support student achievement according to the research are: high quality teaching, strong school leadership, valid assessments, responding to assessments with targeted interventions, effective embedded professional learning to support all of the above.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, this –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Perry: Do I have the floor, Mr. Speaker?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. Perry: Mr. Speaker, this is an evidence-based approach to improving student achievement and we are investing in all of these factors.

We will continue to engage all partners. Parents move issues forward, promote the highest standards for our children, and engage government in important dialogues on student achievement. The efforts of parents make our schools a better place to learn and grow, and the work you do ensures parents are aware and involved in their children's learning.

The leadership of the Home and School federation has created meaningful parent engagement which is essential to supporting student achievement. The PEI Home and School Federation continues to play an essential role in our school communities, making valuable contributions to Island classrooms, they support teachers and school staff. This government sees it as a priority to ensure all partners are engaged and all stakeholders are working towards our common goals to improve student learning.

We are all here to support our students and teachers and our government is pleased to recognize the value of our Island teachers. However, this motion is a partisan document and purely political. While the title is admirable and something I absolutely support, the content of the motion is partisan. Additionally, it does not reflect the developments that have occurred over the past several days which have included a more collaborative open dialogue. The content of this motion is not reflective of the current situation.

While I absolutely value our teachers, Mr. Speaker, I am unable to support this motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Speaking next to the motion will be the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and speak on this motion, one whose title I fully support. But you know what? If we think back to when this legislative session opened, we collaborated on a motion with regards to the potato. It was great when I met with the hon. Opposition House Leader and we talked about the issue in the potato industry and the fact that we had criminal acts going on. We said among the group of us here and we had a great discussion in the fact that we would unanimously support the direction that we were taking with regards to that issue. It was great.

You know what? On this issue here we should try and be unanimous as well that we actually recognize the value of our teachers and education. A fantastic title and a fantastic motion. I think if we stop there I think everyone of us could agree, and it's great this we have this discussion. But the partisan aspect of this is, I think is, in my opinion, absolutely ridiculous. But some of it as well in the resolution has already been acted on yesterday, but I want to go back and talk about education.

What really disappoints me is the fact that we have not heard a whole lot about how great our teachers are doing there. They have done absolutely fantastic.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: I hear comments like we are finishing last in PISA. We finished last in PISA since PISA started, until, actually if you go back to when the previous Conservative government was in place. They recognized we were in the basement and the hon. Mildred Dover decided we had to do something about it. She commissioned a report that looked at what do we need to do to improve our situation. It talked about PD, it talked about kindergarten in our system and quite a few other changes such

as that, that she did not get the opportunity to put in place even though the study was done in 2005-2006. Our government came in in 2007. We looked at the situation as it was at the present time and we said: We don't want to be last in PISA either so we have to make the changes. But remember, PISA is written by 15- year-old students.

One of the main things we had to do was put in early years in kindergarten. We didn't have those in our system. We now have kindergarten in our system. Our kids are up to now grade 6, going in to grade 7.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: It has been absolutely fantastic. We did not have an early years program in place. We put that in place and it is now recognized nationally as number one in the country with Quebec.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: Absolutely fantastic.

It is our teachers that have done this. We as politicians may have voted and passed the budget to put the dollars in place for that, but we had to add to our system 37% increase in our budget in order to get there. These were fantastic moves and if you talked to anyone, they'll tell you that.

Actually, I had the opportunity as minister of education to travel twice internationally to conferences. They talked there about: What does it really take, what do we really need to do to improve the education across the world? You know what? A lot of the debates in a lot of places were very similar and it came down to five things. I remember it because I turned it into words called EQUAL. E was for the early years in kindergarten, that was crucial; the Q was quality teaching, that comes from when we do our assessments we find out where our gaps are, we put the professional development in place to improve upon those things; the U was unity, and it is absolutely great to see the president of our Home and School Association here – Peter Rukavina has been a jewel with regards to our education system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: He does not take on a partisan role and it was fantastic to work with him when I was in that role. He has done great things and the non-partisanship, which we should be talking about here too, to improve our educational system. The A was assessments. They said assessments are crucial. Everyone does assessments if you want to improve your situation.

Mr. Trivers: And progress monitoring.

Mr. McIsaac: When I owned a farm in the dairy industry we did assessments. It's called milk recording and classification. You cannot improve your herd unless you know where the weaknesses are and you have to improve upon those. That's all assessments are, and we've put them in place for grade 3, grade 6, grade 9. We're using some in the higher grades now as well, but we need to find out where are the checks and balances. That's what we're looking for, the weak spots. We will improve our system by matching our weak points that we find through assessments with our professional development and professional learning, which everyone does that.

If you go to Fair Isle Ford down here, they have professional development for their mechanics. If you put a mechanic that's graduated 25 years ago, working on one of today's cars and you've never upgraded it, never done any professional development with him, he won't even know what he's looking at. We have to do that and that's crucial and we have gone along to do that.

The PISA thing, the last time we were still tenth. But as our kids or as our students are improving, we continue to follow the assessments and we continue to improve the teaching. In our PCAP tests, which were done by the grade 8s, that's the same group that wrote the PISA this time and we'll have the results within a year. We were fourth, I believe, in math, we were sixth in literacy, we were two points above the Canadian average for science. We have the highest growth of any province in Canada. After the reports came out from PCAP, the Province of Manitoba and the Province of New Brunswick both came to us and said: What are you doing in PEI to have such growth? They invited our people from the assessments to go –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: – and meet with their departments to improve upon them. It is absolutely fantastic.

It's almost criminal to say that we're not advancing, to keep coming back to the fact that we're last in PISA. It's absolutely ridiculous. The improvement in our education system is terrific and we will see that once we get the results back from the PISA. As the students continue to go through the kindergarten and through our school system, we will have our children at the point where we need them to be when they graduate from high school, when they go to university, or they go to Holland College, they go to the trades or whatever –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. McIsaac: Whatever that may be.

Speaker: When the minister is speaking, be quiet. Have some respect in this House.

Mr. McIsaac: I come from a family of teachers where my mom was a teacher, my wife's a teacher. I have a brother in the school system. I have a sister in the school system. I have two sisters retired from there. I have two daughters-in-law that are teachers and a son that's a teacher and a son that's a prof at university.

There's a lot of – and a lot of great educators on this Island. We're turning out more all the time and we want to do that. But we have to have the system in place to do that, and we have made that an investment along the way to do that.

If you want to talk numbers, there was a study done by Gar Andrew a while ago looking at a reduction in students. The minister has said that already. We had, back 20 years ago, 6,300 more students in the system than we have now. We had 22 more teachers. But we have a structural program that we have to deal with. Last year we had five classes in grade 5 that had 30 students. Shouldn't have that. But we had 63 classes with 16 students or fewer.

We have a school with four kids in grade 1, four kids in grade 2. This year there were seven kids in kindergarten. Then we have schools around the doughnut area of Charlottetown and Summerside where they are busting at the seams. It's absolutely unfair. But we also –

Leader of the Opposition: You want to close schools?

Mr. McIsaac: We also look at the fact –

Leader of the Opposition: You want to close schools?

Mr. McIsaac: We also look at the fact –

Leader of the Opposition: You want to close the schools?

Mr. McIsaac: You have the floor? You have the floor. Okay. Good.

Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Mr. McIsaac: We have a structural program we have to look at. We need to do a rezoning and we need to look at the whole structure so we can get a better balance on this idea.

The other part of it is if the students right now – we built a new school in Spring Park. We said: It'll likely fill up before too long. In two years, it was overfull because everyone wanted to go to the new school. We can't have everybody in Spring Park. We have other schools that were empty. We have structural problems around the province that we need to look at.

We have a busing situation we need to look at because we have – just out my way, there are three buses going up and down the same road. If we want to get financially secure in this we need to do a bussing strategy as well. There are only X amount of dollars in this province to deal with. We need to use them as wisely as possible, and that's what we're looking at doing.

We want to look at other provinces. They're going through a very similar situation as this. There are cuts going on. I know it's unfortunate there are cuts, but we have the resources in place. We have a structural problem we have to work on.

But I think what we really need to do, first and foremost, is talk about the great things that our teachers are doing and how the improvement has happened. Right back from Mildred Dover's report where she said: Go out and find out what we can do to fix our system here.

Like I said, she didn't get the opportunity to put it in place. When we came in we said: You know what? We're not being partisan on this. Just like Peter Rukavina and the home and school don't want us to be. We said: Those were good recommendations, we're taking them, we're putting them in place. We are seeing the benefit of those today. It's absolutely phenomenal.

We had a press conference after I think it was the last common assessments came out while I was a minister. Elizabeth Costa and Linda MacDonald came from our department, the ones who had done the assessments, the CBC showed up, did a fantastic job. The *Guardian* showed up, did a fantastic report on it as well.

We had no other media show up for that. No, the French media did. We had no one from the opposition show up to that either. We were really disappointed. Except the former leader who had been kicked out of your party.

Unfortunately, we had –

Leader of the Opposition: I'm disappointed you don't come to our announcements.

Mr. McIsaac: We had a fantastic report. Then you would see right there the results of what happened because of our assessments. We cannot cancel our assessments. They are way too important and we won't do it. They're recognized internationally as one of the greatest things that we have.

But we need to look at the positives. We need to come together and we need to – as your motion said, recognize the value of the teachers in education. They are doing such a fantastic job. The rest of it, unfortunately, is very disappointing. I wish you had come and said: Hey, can we collaborate on this motion because we want to show that we all, in this House, value our teachers in our system? I think you would have gotten unanimous

support for that. But when we get into the political side, the Progressive Conservative party says this, the Liberal party says that, and then we go through the rest of it, which is very partisan.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. McIsaac: And then we get to the bottom – we're actually starting to work on it anyway.

But anyway, just wanted to put that forward that we, at least on our side of the House, and I hope over there too, have a great value for our teachers in our education system. They're doing terrific things. They're improving our students' education immensely. They will continue to do that.

If you stop the resolution after the title you would get, I'm sure, unanimous support for this (Indistinct).

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture before him, I am fully supportive of the title of this motion and of the spirit behind the title which is to recognize the value of teachers in education.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) book you wrote.

Premier MacLauchlan: I might say, as I've said earlier in this House in response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition, that dedicated, well trained, and talented teachers are the most important single element in student achievement and the success of our school system. Then our minister of education built on that with the related elements, the first of which is a principal who can lead the school in a way that there's a strong team there and that they can implement a program, and beyond that you have to have a program that's based on

evidence and evaluations that in turn lead into practices of school improvement.

Let me speak from my own experience. I started out in a school that the year before I was there was 10 grades in one room and we upgraded to 5 grades in each of two rooms the year I started. Between grade 1 and grade 8 I had three teachers and they were all excellent teachers, dedicated people, in some cases they were teaching five grades in one room. In some cases they were teaching more than 40 students in one room. From that you can come through to what was really the key ingredient, which was the dedicated teacher, and a dedicated teacher in turn supported by a community that believes in and actively supports public education.

That's what we stand for in terms of our values in education on this side of the House, and I believe that's the case on both sides of the House and in this province. I don't think we're nearly as close to the bottom of the pile as we sometimes hear said, notably from the other side of the House.

But I'll say that my teacher in grade 5 through 8 taught four grades in that room. We had a lot of opportunities to learn from each other. We learned a lot of things outside of the schoolhouse and the teacher was responsible for that too, but there was a complete dedication, and by the time we got through to grade 8 there was a certain element of teaching to the test. I admit that, and I think there was a little bit of something that we learned from that that was valuable because it wasn't the only thing we learned. Through all of that there was an element of expectations and standards and discipline, and I mean discipline in terms of academic excellence. It was right through the system, and frankly I think it had a lot to do with my own success in later studies, and I had good teachers there, too.

One of them has been mentioned here, Mildred Dover. I sometimes have told Mildred Dover that she kept me out of Dorchester. I'm not sure it was quite to that extent, but she taught me in grade 10, and I'm sure that we all had grade 10 teachers who kept us on the straight and narrow, and she was certainly capable of that. But she also inspired us to read and to love language and to be rigorous about language.

That takes me really to my view on the – and I could mention lots of others. Mention one because she may be watching, Micky Cannon, who taught us in our grade 9 homeroom. She was coming back to teach math after having been away to raise a family. She was an excellent teacher in what she taught us in terms of the classroom, and what she set by way of an example, and what she was prepared to tell us when we needed correcting, too. I think that's all part of what we're supporting when we say that we value teachers and we prize public education.

Let me say then to come back to the rigour on language that I learned from a lot of those teachers. This motion starts to head off in a different direction with the first whereas, or maybe the first whereas is fine, but when you get to the second one and then the third, it starts to get into a pretty partisan – I might use the word screed, but I'll use document, which was the minister of education's language. Then you go down further and there are specific references to the Liberal Party and so.

To my mind, if we're looking to put something before this House that we can stand together and support, and support in the spirit in which it is brought, and with the shared belief that we have in a good, strong, improving, excellent public education system led by excellent teachers, supported by principals who are implementing a program, then I think we could very well produce such a resolution.

I hope that whatever is the fate of this motion that we will, as a Legislature, between now and when we get through the next period, stand together, and for the people to know that we support teachers and we support public education in this Legislature and in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: I want to say a word about what's been said about the assessments. It's often the case that we go from assessments to saying: We're the bottom of the pack, we're the bottom of the pile, or whatever it is.

I know I'm going to mention two comments from the Leader of the Opposition, one in

last fall in November when he spoke about assessments and then went on to say: It's shameful. I'm ashamed for this education system.

For my part, I don't think that's the way we want the people, and in particular our teachers, to hear members of this Legislature speaking about them or about our public education system.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Premier MacLauchlan: More recently, in response to the Speech From the Throne, the Leader of the Opposition said: Our education system is in last place. Canada's in the middle of the pack of the whole world and we're in last place. If we took our system and ranked us just in the world alone, not under Canada, where do you think we would be? Pretty low. Not – and we'd be pretty bad.

I think we really have to raise our own language and our own standards and our own ability to aim for excellence, to talk about excellence, to praise our teachers and to encourage them and to support them. That's exactly what we stand for on this side of the House.

Let me say about the references that have been made to where we are in various assessments. We have come ahead on common assessments, as the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries has said, and as the minister of education has said.

In this province our students have shown more improvement in math and reading than any other province in the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: One of the proudest moments I've had since I've become Premier was a day I had a conversation with the minister of Manitoba who – we had lined up to talk about something else and he changed the – after we did our business he moved to another topic. He said: I want you to know that we're doing our best to learn how Prince Edward Island has acted on its assessments to improve its education system and the

practices that its teachers are implementing in the classroom.

He knew about that. He went on to say: We have a team from Prince Edward Island that's here right now working with our department of education and their educators so that we can learn from Prince Edward Island.

Now, I was proud of that, and I think our teachers and our people who are leading our education system need to hear that more from the floor of this Legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: The strategic plan you almost –

Premier MacLauchlan: But let me speak about where we are right now.

We presented a budget a week ago Friday. It had increased funding for education, increased funding of 1.6%. Not 1%, as I've heard from time to time from the other side of the House. We have to work on math, too. That was \$3.7 million. But education is a big system and you learn how far \$3.76 million goes, and that people want the impact or the assessment or the economics or whatever – you don't have to go very far to figure that out.

But the point is that where we are as of today, and as of the discussions that took place yesterday, building on the call for collaboration that we heard from the president of the Home and School federation or read about in the weekend in the op-ed piece, is that the parties who are responsible for our education system are now seized with this issue. We all have this on our minds, and that's a great thing.

Frankly, it's the nature of bringing forward a budget, is people start to say: Is there enough money to do the job that we want done?

So now we have the English Language School Board and the department of education and the principals, and the teachers' federation, and the Home and School federation all focused on this question. Over the next month precisely the points that are raised in the subsequent

phrases of this motion are being addressed: the question of not just teachers in the classroom but the larger issues that really affect how well our teachers can do their job.

I'm delighted that the school board has indicated that it is going to look at the question of classroom composition because I think of all of the issues that is the one, particularly in the middle years, that is leading the frustration on the part of the teachers. I recognize that and it's an important question, and it's one that we really should devote some attention to. The questions of zoning and transportation, which lead to all kinds of imbalances in our education system, and in the composition and the numbers of students in schools.

It's not just between the urban and the rural. There are issues right here with schools a few blocks from here that have got a different situation than schools a few blocks further along. That all comes down to the question of zoning and sticking to the policies for zoning.

But now that we're focused on these issues of zoning, transportation, classroom composition, one that we've put on the table and want to keep putting on the table is – let me call it overhead. But in any event, it's the commitment that we've made that the human and financial resources that are available to government in both health and education should be devoted to the front line until they're free of service. We've said that and we're prepared to stick to it.

But that's not something that you can stand here on the floor of the Legislature and start running an education system. We have systems that are set up for an education system, starting with the school board working with the principals, working with the schools, working in collaboration with the department of education.

One of the things that I think that is coming out of this, and I'm very pleased to see it, is that there will be a more explicit collaboration between the department of education and the school board. Then, in turn, the school board and the department of education can communicate more effectively and with a mutual voice to the principals in the schools. If we can gain that ground, that

may be more important than whether we're talking about 14 or 16 or 18 teachers. Because, ultimately, we're running a very big system and we want it to be as effective as possible.

I think that's exactly where we are as of Tuesday, the 30th of June. It's late in the cycle, as the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture said, which is another important reason to be aiming to get a collaborative process under way where we may, in fact, gain a lot more ground than we would have otherwise.

Sometimes a teachable moment comes along – I've been through a few of them myself in the classroom – and then there's an important part of the learning process. I believe it's a collaborative moment and I believe it's something that we'll all benefit from.

I hope that on both sides of this House – let me say on all sides of this House – we will collaborate ourselves and stand together in the way that we have on other motions that have come before this House, and send a message to our teachers, to our schools, to our school leaders, and to our community, that we value public education and there's no part of that that we value more than the role of an effective, talented, dedicated teacher.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) three weeks ago.

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to make some comments on this having worked in the system as an education assistant, actually for 10 years prior to my election here, and also on some other perspectives having been involved as a community person.

This particular motion, I'd like to point out a number of things. As we say, once we get past the title, which is a great title and certainly bodes the best support that we can

for teachers, but within the context of the whole motion, there's a few points – and especially in regard to the assessments that's mentioned in it.

During the election, which was noted in this motion, I, myself, sat on a panel of candidates who sat before 500 teachers at Three Oaks on the Friday before the provincial election. We talked about a number of things. The assessment topic did come up. When we talk about assessments it seems like it's a foreign concept to the opposition because the teachers themselves help develop these assessments. That particular day those teachers stood up and said: We need these assessments because it helps them move forward.

When we look at this particular motion it says the teachers are struggling to advance student achievement. The teachers in our system need these assessments so they can take that as a tool to advance the student achievement in the classroom. Assessments like this or exams like this are not a new concept. When I was in grade 8 I was raised in a one-room schoolhouse as well. Before I could go on to grade 9 I had to write the provincial exam, every one of us. Those of us who went through that system perhaps remember, but it's not a new concept that students are assessed on where they are at a particular stage in their education, and it didn't hurt us.

I'm a mother of two who went through the school system in the 1980s and 1990s. They had split classes then. That's not a new concept. I'm a grandmother of two children in the early childhood learning centres, an 18-month-old and a five-year-old who will be going to kindergarten this fall. They learn from each other as well. So if you're with a different aged student, they can learn from each other. I saw with my own children – they went through the split classes. Those children are grouped together so they can learn from each other as well as – the teachers teach that to both those classroom – it is a struggle, I know, with some classes and that was recognized here.

There is still a lot of work to do in some particular areas in regard to the rezoning because that will help alleviate it. When I look back, and all of us have just gone to the graduations at the high schools, and we look

at the students that excelled and the graduation and the scholarships at prestigious universities right across Canada, really.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: I think if we can take from that that something must be going right in our education system, that those levels of universities across Canada recognize that our students are excelling.

I have a nephew who is – we are talking about the value of education in our province, is what we're talking about tonight –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: – and how we can support that –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – and we will support that, Mr. Speaker.

We will support that motion in regard to the great work the teachers are doing in this province and how we can continue to work together and to move that forward. Tonight the opposition wants to make it political –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: We are going to support students and teachers. We talk also about Home and School. I was a founding member of the Home and School at Eilerslie Elementary School. That Home and School association works hand in hand with the teachers and the principals and the rest of this education system. We are a community that does work together for the benefit of our students.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) people that were coming today (Indistinct).

Mr. Trivers: That's why they were coming, to support you.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: We can yell back and forth here, Mr. Speaker –

Leader of the Opposition: Speaking to the motion.

Ms. Biggar: If people do not want to hear what's being said, that's fine. We're here to talk about –

Leader of the Opposition: You're not saying anything. Speak to the motion.

Ms. Biggar: – teachers –

Mr. Speaker: The minister has the floor.

Ms. Biggar: – and I will talk about the teachers because I have worked hand in hand with the teachers –

Leader of the Opposition: Speak to the motion. Speak to the motion.

Ms. Biggar: – and see teachers in the classroom on how they do do their work on a day-to-day basis.

Because of that, I cannot support the motion that is a political motion. I will support it any day of the week, any hour of the day, if that opposition wants to join together with us and put a great motion –

Leader of the Opposition: Never.

Ms. Biggar: – on the floor –

Leader of the Opposition: Speaking to the motion.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Leader of the Opposition: How do you feel (Indistinct)? How do you feel?

Ms. Biggar: Doesn't bother me.

Leader of the Opposition: It's fun, isn't it?

Speaker: Okay.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) sat down pretty quick. You sat down pretty quick.

Ms. Biggar: I must be really getting under your skin tonight.

Leader of the Opposition: You sat down pretty quick, didn't you?

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. —

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are we going to have some order in this House?

It's high time that we had some order. Stop shouting and roaring back and forth. If there's any shouting to be done, I'll do it.

Ms. Biggar: Sorry (Indistinct).

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we can all agree that we support our teachers. It doesn't matter what side of the fence we sit on or what colour we are. At the end of the day we support our teachers, I believe that. I think the teachers are — they're like the nurses. They're one of the most important groups in our society that work for the common good of our kids and our families and to make our province better. I believe in that.

We have families and we have members in the House that feel very passionate about what they talk about and what they feel. I believe in that. I think the kids want to grow up and become the best kids they can and in the best educated place so they can better their province and their families and their lifestyles and lead a prosperous life, as we all have. I think that's a fact.

But what I have constantly seen over the years is that when hard decisions have to be made when it comes to budgets and the spending of the money, we seem to always look at the bottom line first. We look at the bottom people that are delivering these services.

I dealt with it for years. This is your budget for the police department. You need to shave some off. You need to take some off the fire

department. We would see firemen go out and they would try to raise money and stand on the street corner begging. People would drive by and throw money in the boots to help fund fire departments to get equipment. I can remember days in the police department when they came to me and said: Jamie, you've got to shave 2% off. Getting to the end of the year I can remember going into the fire department and putting the police car up on blocks and changing the brakes myself on a police car because there wasn't money in the budget.

We see it in the education system and we see it in the nurses. We have hospitals go out and they raise drastic amounts of money to put the best equipment we can in the hospitals. We have teachers doing the same thing through Home and School and we have families donating to classes so the kids that don't have enough money, they can have good equipment at their desk or paper or pens or whatever.

There's a point when you've got to stop and you've got to think: Should we not be looking at the middle and senior management or the way we're delivering this service in the upper echelon? I have to wonder if this is not what this is about.

We have a province that has troubling times. We've had hard economic times in the last five or six or eight years. We have a deficit that's growing, but we make cuts at the bottom end, whether it be on roads or teachers or hospitals. I think we need to really look at what some companies did several years ago. I'll take Imperial Oil, for example. Back a number of years ago I remember getting a memo from Imperial Oil saying that there were major cuts coming to the way we deliver services. The first thing I thought was credit card fees were going up. We were at 2%, 1.8%, and I thought we're going to go up higher than 2%. My credit card bills for fees, the last year I had both service stations, New Brunswick and PEI, hit close to \$140,000. I was totally thinking when Imperial Oil came back and said we're going to — we've got tough times here — that the bottom level we were going to cut. I was braced. At the end of the day Imperial Oil didn't cut the bottom line. They cut senior and middle management in that bureaucracy.

I have to wonder: Should we not, as a government, whether it be in opposition or in government, look at that before we cut the bottom-line teachers and the services below? You can say you're not going to cut teachers, but at the end of the day – I had a principal at one school tell me they were losing 1.25 positions. I had another school tell me they were losing 1.8. The school that said 1.8 said: We can't understand it, Jamie. We're only actually losing four kids but we're going to be up the next year, but we're losing 1.8 positions.

You've got people that go home and they hear this information and they go into panic because they're being cut or they don't know their job is certain, but we never cut management.

I'll go back to Borden-Kinkora. I lost McCains. It's a great facility. Hopefully someday it'll come back. I lost Rol-Land mushrooms, another 133 jobs. I lost a disinfecting station, I lost the GST centre, now I'm losing a few teachers. People are discouraged, they're worried. They're scared. I went to a fundraiser on the weekend where two ladies whose job they lost at Rol-Land mushrooms both have cancer. There are two families that are drastically impacted.

I've got phone calls from teachers, I've got phone calls from students, saying: Jamie, how are we supposed to survive? We can talk prosperity and we need prosperity but we need to look at the bottom line and we need to look at administration. Do we need a school board for the French, for the English, and a department of education? Can we not do it with one group? We're 140,000 people, Mr. Premier. Can not one department or one group manage the amount of kids that we have in this province and keep the teachers at the bottom?

We talk about change, we talk about bringing in a budget, but did anybody really talk to the teachers? I have to laugh. Back a number of years ago Imperial Oil came out with a – and they came out with this thing and I just blew up, I lost it, and I threw stuff, and I said the heck with this. I was in a tractor driving for Dale Murray and I just couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I made a phone call to Debbie and I said: Debbie, give me the phone call – I want the president, Mr. Marchbank's – the number out in Calgary. Debbie went into: What are you going to do now? I called the president of Imperial Oil in Calgary. I was in one of these moments. Of course I would never get the president but I got the secretary. I was fuming, Mr. Premier, because I was seeing little people hurt and I took it passionately, so I called his secretary and I got ahold of this woman and she said: Mr. Marchbank is not in, I can take your name and number, and I said: Yeah, have him call me. I never thought he would. The next morning I was in the same tractor and all of a sudden the phone rang, it was 7:30 in the morning. It was a guy by the name of Simon Smith. I didn't know who he was, I just thought he was a – just an ordinary manager. He and I got talking and he said: What's the problem? I said: I'll you what the problem is. You guys keep on thinking that everything's a-okay down on the front line, but I'm telling you it's not a-okay at the front line and whoever's telling you the difference is full of crap.

He said: Tell me what's wrong, so I told him what the problem is and the situation. I said there's nothing wrong with the front-line service, you've got great people in the front-line service, they're trying to deliver the best service they can. I stand behind the Imperial Oil motto, but you keep on doing these things and it's affecting us.

Now, simply over a newspaper. It was a newspaper that told us what was going on in the company, what the plan was, what the vision was going forward. Anyway, he and I had a great chat, about two hours. Mr. Murray didn't like it because his tractor was sitting there in the middle of the field parked and I was in the tractor holding him up.

The next morning, phone rang, a guy by the name of Langlois. Do you realize who you were talking to on the phone? Wouldn't have a clue, I was in a moment. Vice-president of ExxonMobil for all of North America. Didn't have a clue. Anyway, he said: You've got an awful lot of people very much upset at you because you went and told him all of this stuff. I said: It's the truth, it's the truth what's going on, we cannot cut bottom line anymore, we need to know what the plan is going forward.

He was upset and I said: I'm sorry Jamie, Jamie Langlois, this guy's name. I said: This is the way it he. He said: Well, you've got people's attention because my phone's been ringing all morning.

Two weeks later I got a personal invite, Debbie and I, and we drove to Toronto, a nice trip across the lower states there and up into Toronto. I met with Mr. Simon Smith and a couple of other guys. Peter Brawn was another senior vice-president, and some other guy, and we had a one-on-one conversation in Toronto, downtown, down the street, I think it was Downsview Street or something like that. Went over what the problem is.

He said: You know, Jamie, I'm glad you did this because we listen to our managers and I – the minister and I had a good meeting on Friday, and it was very constructive and the minister made a statement. In the meeting she said that I trust my chief engineer and she has to, right? But I think there's something – going back to Simon – that we don't have to listen to everything they say as gospel. I think we need to look back at sometimes the front line in as simple as you walk into the store and you talk to somebody or you walk in the classroom and you talk to a teacher and he tells you the way it really is. I'm sort of wondering if we don't do that enough.

I think we must agree that teachers are of the upmost importance. Front-line services are of the upmost importance because they support our children, our families, and the people on the bottom level. I think the government should really take a close look at – it's all right to admit that we made a mistake, it's all right to admit that. We need to correct it so it doesn't happen again. I think the government needs to really look at this motion and maybe look at the middle and senior. Are there ways we can cut money there, okay?

I wrote a couple of notes here and I – we talk growth and economics and we need well-educated children to move this province forward. We talk about prosperity and we talk about moving the province forward. It doesn't matter what side of the fence we're on, we still talk about that, and I think we need to do that.

If we have the best educated children they will grow into young adults with great ideas in ways to move us as a province forward. I noted that down quick and I believe in it.

The teachers are providing the base, same as the nurses. The teachers need the support of the government. The minister just spoke of working together. Did we really work together in the last month and a half with what's taken place up to today?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Fox: Never heard you. I think we got it, right?

I want to end with two letters I want to read. This one here's on class sizes. This is a letter from a grade 5 student:

The hot topic in education right now is all about putting Wi-Fi in our Island schools. Wi-Fi is not important right now. What is important is the increase in class sizes on PEI. What our government should be focusing on is the class sizes. All four grade 5 English classes here at Stratford Elementary School have more than 25 students. This is not okay.

The more advanced students in these classes will slowly go down to average because the teacher will be mainly focusing on helping the kids who struggle. In my math class – now this is being written, as I say, by a grade 5 year old child.

In my math class there are 29 kids. I know that our teacher spends most of her time with the kids who need more help because this is where she is needed the most. I see reasons why. But I believe there should be more support in classrooms challenging the stronger students to help them improve at their own speed. Class sizes are becoming a serious problem in some schools. At Stratford Elementary the average class size in grade 5 the past year was 27.6 students.

What Premier MacLauchlan needs to do is to get more teaching jobs in our Island schools. Wi-Fi will cost a lot. Invest that money in teachers. What do we need more, Mr. MacLauchlan? Mr. MacLauchlan has to prioritize.

Class sizes will slowly increase –

Speaker: Hon. member, can I interrupt you there for a minute?

Mr. Fox: Sure.

Speaker: If you don't mind, you should refrain from using people's names, even using your own name, hon. member.

Okay, thank you.

Mr. Fox: I'll try to remember that, Mr. Speaker.

Class size will slowly increase over the years to come. In kindergarten there are a maximum number of 18 students per class. I think there should be a maximum number of students in every class at every grade. I believe a reasonable amount at every grade, kindergarten as an exception, would be around 21 students. Most kindergarten classes at Glen Stewart Primary are at that 18 student limit. When class sizes are smaller in primary and elementary schools, students are most successful in the long term.

Class sizes grow by two or more students between primary and secondary schools. If classes in elementary schools have around 30 students, growing by two or more students going into secondary school is a crazy thought. The average amount of students in classes in Finland, highly regarded as the number one school system in the world, has an average of 20 students per class. Smaller class sizes will benefit everyone. That is why our government should reconsider Wi-Fi and rethink cutting teaching jobs.

This was written by Molly Doyle, May 2015, submitted June 2015. Grade 5, Stratford Elementary School, completed my class for the unit on persuasive writing. That's a grade 5 coming out and saying this stuff.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: It is. She's passionate about it.

An Hon. Member: Let's keep it, let's push them.

Mr. Fox: Dear hon. Premier:

In the recent election my Liberal roots continued strong as I cast my first ever ballot in favour of you and your party. Please allow me to explain my regret in this decision.

This is from a Brenna, from a lady.

An Hon. Member: Brenna Ching.

Mr. Fox: Brenna Ching. Don't want to use names.

I'm a recent graduate of Montague Regional High School. From the first day I transferred to MRHS to my graduation night, my teachers have been there for me. In particular, last year in grade 11 I struggled with severe mental health problems. My teachers were in tune enough to see that something was wrong and had time to help me, listen to me, and collaborate with other staff to strategize a plan to get me back on track.

Now, a year later, I am happy to say that I've overcome the clinical depression and anxiety I was diagnosed with. Smile not. However, without the help of my teachers, their support was a saving grace.

So what happens when teachers become too stressed, too tired, and too overworked to notice when a student begins to flounder? What happens when the class size becomes so large that the teachers don't have the time to get to know their students personally and listen to their struggles? Will they fall between the cracks? I was lucky. But I am writing this on behalf of every student who comes after who will need the same support. They, too, deserve a physics teacher who will walk them up to the guidance counsellor during a panic attack and a chemist teacher who can give hours of extra help to them after missing days of school.

Teachers change us, they shape us, they encourage us and get us through. We need them. By cutting guidance counsellor positions also I'm going to ensure you have my – no idea what high school students go through these days. You will never take away a teacher's caring heart, but you are hindering the ability and resources to use it.

Sincerely,
Brenna Ching.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to do the right thing here. I think we need to go back to square one. We made a mistake. Let's stop now, back up, take a look forward and take a better approach.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was going to read these notes here but since changed my mind. I just want to talk more on a personal note here and see if we can't try and see eye-to-eye on this motion.

When I decided to run in politics everybody asked me: Why would you ever want to do that? I'm sure you guys all had the same question when you first started. I said: I truly want to make a difference. You saw what was going on in people's lives, how people are struggling. Every one over there probably had kids that are all grown up now where my little girl and future kids are just starting to grow up, and I wanted to make sure there was something left on PEI for them, that they weren't moving to Alberta like every other person on PEI. That's why I entered politics.

When I started I was going door to door and I was listening to people's concerns. I made a commitment to myself that I was going to do what was right. It didn't matter what my party would say, it was how I felt and it was the right thing I was going to stand up for. That's how I feel here today. I've been getting calls for days from my teachers in the district and we're both on the same page when we say our teachers are important, we need to support our teachers. We all agree on that. But when you've got teachers themselves calling, how can government and opposition decide the fate of those teachers? The problems that they're going through, they're coming from the front line telling us directly. Every one of us in this room is getting calls. They're concerned. They see the day-to-day struggles.

To cut these positions without doing a little more homework on it, I think we need to go

back to the drawing board. What Mr. Premier has discussed, it's great, but it's going to take months and months. It's not something that's going to be able to be fixed in a month. Go back to square one, give the teachers some time, sit down with them and work with them.

Going to the kids too – we'll use my daughter for an example – she's in grade 1 French Immersion. I went to the parent-teacher interview and the teacher is quite upset. She's saying: Matt, I don't know if I can keep doing this. There are 26 kids in my class, French Immersion, grade 1 class, 26 kids. I'm trying to teach these kids to write and print and speak French. Some of them are being neglected. Kennedy is my daughter's name. She said: Can you help her with her printing? I said: No problem. We'll help her out at home. But there's a lot of single mothers and fathers in that classroom that the kids don't have that when they get home. A lot of the kids are falling behind. That's a grade 1 French class. That's just one class. There's so many of those issues.

Until we can figure out where the problems are I can't see how the decisions to cut are to be made. Before, today at the rally, there was over 1,500 people scheduled to come here today, and they would have been here. That's saying something. Everyone is speaking out to us.

The only thing I ask, and it doesn't matter what party, or what side of the floor you're on, listen to what your constituents are saying in your district. They voted you in, stand up for what you feel is right and let's see if we can work this out with the teachers and hopefully bring some positive steps forward and maybe work together for a change instead of working against each other.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel compelled to rise to speak to this motion tonight, probably as much because of the way it was presented, and what I felt

to be a lack of respect for government MLAs in that presentation as anything else. I went back through the Hansard before having stood up tonight. I don't think I wish to go back through all the comments that were made in support of the motion.

But the clear intent that I took from the comments made moving and seconding the motion were that basically government had no respect for teachers, period. They were a personal attack against our Premier and his thoughts in relation to teachers, a personal attack against the minister in his relationship with teachers, and so on and so forth.

As a member whose spouse is a teacher, and standing across from members that have been involved in the education system over the years and have family that continue to be involved in the education system over the years, I wanted to point out to this Assembly, and to those that are watching in the gallery and at home, that this is not how this is supposed to work. We don't try to advance our point by running others down. That's exactly how things are not supposed to work in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: We learn that, Mr. Speaker, in kindergarten and probably before.

In moving the motion, the hon. Leader of the Opposition went through and addressed government's position in respect of the board and called that into question. Addressed the department and called government's level of respect – and when I say government, I mean the executive branch of it – for the department and the employees there into question. Looked at the necessity of tests and testing and test scores and called them into question.

Basically we look at the whole education system – or the hon. Leader of the Opposition did – and called it all into question.

The moving of this motion had zero factual support to back anything that was said in it. Perhaps that's one of the most unfortunate things in the whole motion, is that – I think we can – based on the discussion that I heard last Thursday evening and again here tonight, there's no doubt in my mind

whatsoever that every single member of this Assembly very much values and respects what teachers do for us, and every other member of the education system for that matter.

However, when you go back and you look at what was said, you wouldn't necessarily garner that from what was said and the way that it was said. The fact that in order to advance what I would say is a political point, we're really running down every other person that's involved in the education system other than perhaps the teachers.

There's no need for it. Everybody here – a number of members have said it tonight – everybody here comes to work looking to get the best results for the students, which is what really matters in this system. Nobody is here to cut teachers. Nobody is here to make cuts. Period. Nobody wants to see anybody do worse than they are now or see any harm come to anybody. The reality is we need to do the best with what we have. I think that's all anybody here is trying to do.

Coming in and calling down government or other institutions that play vital roles in the education system is not the way to point out that a decision is perhaps not being made correctly.

I think it's disrespectful for the system, period, to put a motion forward with a title on it such as this motion has. With the timing that goes along with all this and within the context within which we're dealing with things, again, to try and advance a political interest – and really, that's what it is. I mean, to call a spade a spade, it is one party trying to move themselves ahead by putting down the way another party has proceeded to govern.

It has nothing to do with teachers. You look at it, we're not even –

Mr. Trivers: It has to do with the cuts.

Mr. J. Brown: We're not even one recital in and you're talking about the election campaign and how one party's platform had something in it and another party's platform had something else in it. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the substance of the motion.

Leader of the Opposition: You don't understand the Legislature (Indistinct) –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) teachers on the frontline at the same time.

Mr. J. Brown: Perhaps I don't. I thought we were all here to get the best results for everybody in the province, not just the few people sitting over there on that side of the floor.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct). That's why we're debating.

Speaker: Hon. members!

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, you have the floor.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think, in summary, I went through the motion. If there is an honest will to put forward a non-partisan motion I think there are probably about three clauses in there that would stand and would do the job.

Certainly if anybody on the opposition side wishes to discuss my views on what clauses would work and would not work to maintain the –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: Well, it's not my motion.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: If you want to have a talk to me, we can talk about what I would support in that motion. I have no problems doing that.

An Hon. Member: Sure.

Mr. J. Brown: But the reality of it is there's a bunch of extra verbiage that's in there that has no relevance to the motion whatsoever and was put in there for purely political gain.

For that reason I'm not going to stand up here and say: Give it, I guess, the attention that the opposition party is looking to garner through doing it this way, but saying I am or I'm not going to support it.

I think the motion was put forward for a reason that's not honourable, not becoming of this House, and for that reason I think it is what it is. I'll say in the end that I'm going to vote against it for that reason.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and Family and Human Services.

Mr. Currie: Thank you very much.

I rise to my commentary on the motion as well and I want to acknowledge the discussion and the debate to date.

It seems that there are a lot of interesting perspectives and interesting points from all MLAs because of the interest. We have children who are actively in the school system. Whether it be children who have been in the school system and left the school system and some of our own personal experiences.

I want to acknowledge Peter Rukavina who is with us tonight. I've had the opportunity, during my time at Birchwood, to work with Peter, and recently read his *Guardian* editorial which I was very impressed with, and his thoughts and his views on the next steps.

We all bring interesting perspectives to public education. With my own experiences in the public school system. I must say, growing up in Parkdale, attending Stonepark and then Colonel Gray, I had some very interesting experiences, some wonderful teachers and experiences in that time of my life that shaped me as I grew up. And going off to the University of Prince Edward Island.

Looking at public education, I was fortunate. I spent 19 years in public education prior to moving into public life. During that time I worked in rural schools, I worked in urban schools. I worked in schools with strong social economic bases, I worked in schools with low social economic bases. I was a classroom teacher. I worked and taught in combined classes, I like to call them, not split. Combined. I was an elementary vice-

principal, I was a junior high vice-principal, and, at the back end of my career, was a school principal at Birchwood Intermediate.

I bring some interesting perspectives and always have been very interested in public education, not only when I was an educator. But I also had the opportunity to be elected as an MLA in Charlottetown-Parkdale and to also have the opportunity to be the minister of education, early childhood development and Attorney General.

I think I bring some interesting perspectives and I think, most importantly, I currently have two daughters in the public school system. I have my youngest daughter Casey, who is turning 14, who is going into grade 9 at Stonepark late immersion, and my oldest girl Hallie who is going into grade 11 at Charlottetown Rural in the French immersion program.

As a teacher, as an administrator, and as a parent, I see and have seen the value in the contributions that teachers make in our classrooms. Not only what they do in the classrooms, but what they do to help shape and influence school climate and school culture. Whether it be coaching – both my girls had some very positive athletic experiences. My oldest girl won a gold medal playing basketball at Charlottetown Rural as a grade 10, and rugby.

The commentary from her about those experiences, and the bonds and the friendships that she made through those experiences, were just add-ons to her academic experience in the public school system. Those are experiences that help shape her, and those opportunities are led and provided by teachers and other community volunteers.

Tonight's debate, if we look, if we take a reflection back on where we've been in public education, I think we can talk about a lot of positive things. If we look at the introduction – I was the minister when kindergarten was brought into the public school system. I was also the minister that was involved with the reshaping and the rebuilding of the early childhood sector which was after the five-year-olds were taken out of that sector and moved into the public school system.

That was a very interesting experience, to see it start from basically the ground up, to rebuild a system that now is profiled as a system that's extremely strong in this country.

I was very involved in investments in early literacy, numeracy, and the gains that we made. If you look at the inroads that we've made in test scores, particularly PCAP, with our 15-year-olds, we're showing signs that we're moving in the right direction.

The reality of it is whether it's – in every other part of the country, all provinces are striving to continue to strengthen the public school systems. I believe that we're at a very interesting crossroads. I've shared this with the Premier, I've shared it with my colleagues, and I have an opportunity tonight to share it with other MLAs and the Leader of the Third Party.

This issue and this discussion over the last number of weeks have really profiled public education in the Province of Prince Edward Island. I see that as a positive thing even though the debate may not always have been positive. I see it as a debate that has sort of brought a whole new awareness to the importance of public education.

I think the issue needs to go beyond teachers. I think there's a lot of moving pieces to continue to strengthen our public school system. I know firsthand, as a city MLA and with some of my fellow MLAs, we were in a meeting two weeks ago on class composition and rezoning. Currently, right now – and I'll use the example at Birchwood Intermediate School. The enrollment in that facility right now is under 200. The school has capacity to hold over 500 children between the ages of 12 to 15. Knowing the population at Stonepark Intermediate School, I believe we're exceeding 875 students.

I know that my youngest daughter is in class sizes that are substantially large. I know that there's – probably in September we'll see probably over 200 children driving by the front doors at Birchwood Intermediate School and will be going to school at Stonepark Intermediate School to attend their formal intermediate school education. I think that we've got a very interesting opportunity to discuss and to look at the

distribution of students in our entire province, not just from community to community. I think we've got an opportunity to take a real focused look at that.

That would fall under the rezoning responsibility of the board. I think that's a very important discussion. I know there was commentary and discussions had about transportation, but I really think that there's an opportunity here in this Assembly, and I've shared it as early as Tuesday morning with my colleagues, that we have a window of opportunity to really embrace something that is really unique in a province of 145,000 people with approximately 18,500 students. We've got the ability to mobilize, we've got the ability to access, we've got the ability to partner with our boards, our department, and all MLAs. We've got the ability to work very closely with communities and the Home and School federation. I think that we owe it to the constituents and the families that we represent that we need to take a real serious look and start a real formal discussion on how we can continue to strengthen our public school system, and not necessarily strengthen it because it's a weak system, but continue to build on the successes.

We would all recognize that it's a very important area of our province. If you look at students that are competing and graduating today from grade 12, 25 years ago they were competing against Westisle and Souris high and Montague. Today they are competing with students graduating from high schools in downtown Toronto, Calgary, the Koreans, the Chinese, the Finns. It's the 21st century and the global economy, and the reality and the pressures and the challenges facing our youth – we owe it to them to look and to continue to build on the successes in the public school system. I think that we have a very unique opportunity that's in front of us.

We talk about teachable moments. I think that we can reflect back and look at sort of what has transpired over the last number of weeks and the conversations that had – and I think we've got an opportunity to really put our best foot forward as a group of MLAs in this Assembly and to do what is the right thing, and that is to continue to focus on – which is a discussion that has to have a

priority. Teachers are a part of that discussion, and communities are a part of that discussion, parents are part of that discussion, but there's an element to this discussion that is getting lost and that's the students, and that's the ability to continue to improve the achievements.

The Member from Borden-Kinkora struck on some extremely important points about the whole oversight and the administrative delivery, whether it be in the eastern school district, whether it be in the department. I think we need to step back and take a look at how we're running our public system, how efficient we are, how we're utilizing the resources and the dollars that we do have. We're doing it in health care. We're talking about regional collaboration. We're talking about procurement.

Why aren't we having conversations about curriculum engagement with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick? We are currently using the grade 9 math assessment that was designed and built in Alberta, so why can't we start looking, from a regional perspective, to start working together to start looking at ways that we can reinvest back in classrooms, whether it be in human resources, teachers, counsellors or whether it be in technology?

I can't support the motion as it sits, but I will support a motion that is in the best interest of achievement and strengthening and building our public school system. I would welcome that opportunity to work with everybody in the Legislative Assembly, all the MLAs, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party. I think we've got an opportunity to do some very unique, special things and to continue to strengthen our public school system here in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Excuse me, could I have the podium, please?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand here conflicted. I am distraught at the thought of teacher cuts, but I am also distraught at the mechanics of this House. I believe we all want the same thing and I wish that we could find a way that we could work together rather than pretending that we are mortal enemies and that we could not be more in disagreement. I wish that were not the way that this House operated, and every House. I realize it's not just this House.

I come from a family of educators. My mother and father were both teachers. I was taught by both of them, actually, which was an interesting experience. I learned very early the importance of education and I learned very early the dedication that teachers have to their jobs. I won't call it a job, I'd call it a vocation. Vocation comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which is to call. Teaching is a calling. It's more than just a job, and I know very few teachers who do not regard their profession as a calling, a vocation.

That job has changed. When my mom and dad taught – and by the way, two of my four sisters are also teachers – when my mom and dad taught the world was a simpler place. We didn't have the social and the emotional and perhaps the economic disparities that we have in our world just now.

The classroom of 20 children 30 years ago was a very different animal from a class of 20 children today. Teachers are now not just educators, they have become social workers, they have become nurses, they have become law enforcement officers, they have become counsellors, and they have become bank machines, in some instances, in order to help some children just to survive from one day to the next. It's a far more complicated job, it's a far more stressful job, than it ever was. I've talked to many teachers who are suffering from acute anxiety but they don't complain about that. In fact, I was having an in-depth discussion with a principal two days ago who said: Adults are more resilient than children, I look around my staff room and I see teachers who are struggling and who are anxious and I wonder how many of the children are struggling and anxious. Of course, some kids will wear that on their sleeves, other ones it's hidden, and that's an even more dangerous situation.

I recognize deep down the value of teaching and what a difficult job it is, and I think the most critical aspect of allowing teachers to perform to the best of their ability, to do the job they all want to do, is to make sure that class sizes and composition – we can't do an awful lot about class composition, it is what it is. We can do something about class size. I personally would love to see hard caps on class sizes up to at least grade 4 in all Prince Edward Island schools.

I don't think that matching the number of teachers to enrollment in our schools is a simple math exercise. I don't think you can divide x by y and get z . I just don't think that's the way this has to be done. I think if we were to develop a truly collaborative process where each and every one of the MLAs in this Assembly were to spend a day or two in a classroom looking at the daily struggles, the daily challenges, and the delights – let's not be too negative about this – but let's understand that there are some real challenges in every school classroom that you would go into in Prince Edward Island. I think if we were to see that we would recognize that in some classes we need more staff. We need more front-line workers, whether they be more teachers, more educational assistants.

We have to recognize that a class of 20 high school physics students doing higher physics does not demand the same sort of attention as a class of 20 grades 3-4 split kids in an elementary school with all of the range of emotional health and academic challenges that are present. It's not just a math exercise, and I think we have to stop using that as an argument for cutting teachers.

I have lots of philosophical stuff here about the nature of what education should be and I think I'm just going to miss all that. What I want to skip down to is the fact that I sent a letter last evening to the Premier and to the Leader of the Opposition asking that we sit together – this was before, by the way, the events of last evening and day unfolded – and I asked that we sit together and find a collaborative solution to this problem, not make it the political football. Not let it descend into what we have seen from some members today.

Of course, with the events of today I withdrew – or withdraw, but that no longer

became necessary – but as I look at this motion, the spirit of which I absolutely support – and I don't think there's anybody in this room who does not support the spirit of this motion – I would like to suggest some amendments.

I would like to strike – are these called conditional clauses? Am I right? The whereases?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, okay.

I suggest that we strike conditional clauses number two, three and seven and also the first operative clause. In the second operative clause, I suggest it read like this – and I don't have my paper in front of me, so I hope I get this approximately right:

Therefore be it resolved that this Assembly review the decision on cuts – I have written here and basically as it's written from thereon – and encourage the government to engage in a broader public engagement, and so on.

I'd like to suggest that amendment in the spirit of collaboration. I understand it's a watering down of some – particularly of the operative clause – but I would love to see this House united not only in its intension, but also to demonstrate to teachers and to Islanders that we can work together and we can produce a document here, a motion which the whole House can stand behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. member, do you have a seconder for the –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Speaker: Okay, so it's moved by the hon. Leader of the Third Party and seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Speaking to the amendment. Okay.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, I guess if the motion is being amended, I would request a

copy of the amended motion for all members before we proceed.

Speaker: Before we proceed?

An Hon. Member: Can we take a recess while (Indistinct)?

Speaker: Of course, we can take a recess while that's being done. While there are copies being printed we'll –

Ms. Biggar: Are there copies printing already?

Speaker: No, but can we – clerks, can we print the copies?

Mr. Aylward: Want me to just call everyone out?

Speaker: Okay, we'll take a brief recess while there are copies being made of the amendment.

[Recess]

Speaker: You may be seated.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Speaker: Yeah, there is a seconder.

I will ask the Clerk to read the amendment to the motion.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, it's been moved by the Leader of the Third Party, seconded by the Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, the following amendment – and members now have a copy of what the amended version would look like in the event that this were to pass:

To delete the second, third and seventh whereas clauses and the first operative clause;

And in the final operative clause delete the word "reverse" and substitute the word "review".

Speaker: You've all heard the amendment.

The Opposition House Leader has indicated he wants to speak to the amendment.

Mr. Aylward: Mr. Speaker, what I was asking for earlier was a copy of the amendment so that we could have it factually in front of us at that time.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, you're the seconder, would you like to speak to the amendment?

Mr. J. Brown: I would like to speak to the amendment. Perhaps before doing so, though, if I could move for a further adjournment, just 30 seconds.

An Hon. Member: Recess.

Mr. J. Brown: Recess, sorry.

Speaker: Recess. Very short recess?

Mr. J. Brown: Very short.

Speaker: Granted.

[Recess]

Speaker: You may be seated.

Leader of the Opposition: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Go ahead.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When the member from Brighton was speaking earlier he called into question the honour of the intentions of the opposition over here, and I take great exception to that. I think I'm going to ask him to not only withdraw his remarks but apologize.

Also, I think by doing so he called into question your authority in the House because you were the one who allowed the motion on the floor, and I think it does a great injustice to you and the work that you do in the House.

The job of opposition is quite simple. We oppose the government. Sometimes we bring things to government that government doesn't necessarily want to hear. The motion tonight, granted, may be contentious and I'm

okay with the motion being contentious. But to call in the honour of the entire official opposition here because a member over here thought it was too political for his liking certainly flies in the face of what should be happening in this very Legislature.

Talk about the tenor of the debate and talk about how you want to do things different, and then say that the intentions of the official opposition of Prince Edward Island aren't honourable, that our intentions weren't honourable, that by fighting for teachers in this province wasn't honourable, by fighting for an education system wasn't honourable?

It's okay that you don't like the wording. It's okay that you don't agree with the motion. It's okay that you want an amendment. It's okay that you want it defeated. But I certainly take exception to the fact that the member from Brighton would call into question the honour of myself, the Member from Rustico-Emerald who seconded the motion, the entire opposition team who stood behind the motion. I think that's completely unacceptable, and I do believe that the hon. member owes the House an apology, and I think he needs to withdraw his remarks, apologize to the Speaker, and the entire House.

I would ask for a ruling on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I thank you for that, hon. Leader of the Opposition. I will certainly take that under consideration and I will get back to you.

In the meantime, we will carry on.

I will call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton to speak to the motion as the seconder. Speak to the amendment as the seconder.

The motion has already been moved, now it's up to the seconder to speak to the motion.

Mr. J. Brown: In any event, Mr. Speaker –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until July 2nd at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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