

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Second Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Tuesday, 29 November 2016

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS .....	1844
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS .....	1849
WEST ROYALTY-SPRINGVALE (Cows).....	1849
EVANGELINE-MISCOUCHE (Miscouche Consolidated School) .....	1849
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Stratford Community School).....	1850
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN AS NOTICE.....	1850
FAMILY AND HUMAN SERVICES (Low-income Housing Waitlist-further).....	1850
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM (Internet Contract-further) .....	1850
ORAL QUESTIONS.....	1851
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (School Review Consultations-further) .....	1851
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (School Supports and Excellence) .....	1851
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Education Administration and EELC Department Review) .....	1852
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Size of EELC School Administration) .....	1852
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (School Closure).....	1854
SOURIS-ELMIRA (School Closure-further).....	1855
SOURIS-ELMIRA (School Promises in Eastern Kings).....	1855
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Economic Development in Rural Communities Update).....	1856
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Economic Development Assessments) .....	1856
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Cornwall Bypass Original Plan Changes) .....	1856
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Cornwall Highway Studies-further).....	1857
CHARLOTTETOWN-BRIGHTON (Federal Recognition of Charlottetown as Birthplace of Confederation) .....	1858
ALBERTON-ROSEVILLE (Alberton Intersection).....	1858
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Economic Development Assessments and Rural School Closure).....	1859
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Future of PEI).....	1860
MORELL-MERMAID (Population Strategy).....	1860
MORELL-MERMAID (School Change and Population Growth) .....	1861
MORELL-MERMAID (Population Strategy and Minimum Teaching Allocation) .....	1862
MORELL-MERMAID (Deleted Government Email Accounts-further) .....	1862
POINT OF ORDER (Georgetown-St. Peters) .....	1863

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS .....	1863
PREMIER (Response to Nov. 27 <sup>th</sup> Storm) .....	1864
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY (Prince Edward Island Antique Car Club) .....	1865
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (Hillsborough Hospital) .....	1866
PRESENTING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS .....	1868
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Groundwater) .....	1868
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS .....	1869
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT) .....	1869
COMMITTEE .....	1869
CAPITAL ESTIMATES .....	1869
MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT .....	1892
MOTION 72 (Calling for the elimination of the five year provincial requirement for a school review process) .....	1892
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS .....	1893
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION .....	1895
RUSTICO-EMERALD .....	1899
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER .....	1900
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE .....	1901
SOURIS-ELMIRA .....	1902
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY .....	1904
STRATFORD-KINLOCK .....	1906
MORELL-MERMAID .....	1908
EDUCATION, EARLY LEARNING AND CULTURE .....	1910
CHARLOTTETOWN-BRIGHTON .....	1914
ALBERTON-ROSEVILLE .....	1915
WORKFORCE AND ADVANCED LEARNING .....	1916
COMMUNITIES, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT .....	1917
ADJOURNED .....	1917

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 everyone, colleagues, you and staff back to our Assembly and another great week, and a special greeting to those who are watching on the Internet or from home.

I want to recognize the good turnout in the gallery today. I will mention in particular Kenneth Murnaghan of the Brain Injury Association, Sharon Labchuk, the former leader of the Green Party, and someone who has been here quite a bit this season, almost in competition now with Eddie Lund, is Carol Carragher. Great to see you taking such an interest in things, Carol.

I had the opportunity, as did many members over the weekend, to sit in on part of the proceedings of the Rotary Youth Parliament and that was edifying, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for your part in assisting in their proceedings.

I had an opportunity on Saturday night to attend The Huron Carole by Tom Jackson and team at Indian River, an event sponsored jointly by the Friends of St. Mary's and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI. It was a very fine evening. It was a great – got an early start to the events of Advent in the Christmas season.

I will congratulate the Charlottetown artist, Becka Viau, on receiving a meritorious service award from Governor General Johnson for her work in promoting the arts here in Prince Edward Island. I will make a statement on this later.

I, as I'm sure other members, want to recognize the efforts of the response teams and the community groups and the welcoming centres that were put in place to respond to Sunday's storm.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I will welcome everybody back to the gallery this week, or today, and I hope everyone had a great weekend.

I want to give a shout-out to – on Saturday night Debbie and I and a bunch of our friends went out to Brothers 2 and we saw the play *Christmas in New York*. These young entertainers did a great job and I want to give a shout-out to them: Mitchell O'Blenis, Kristena McCormack, Aaron Ellis, Ben Aitken, and Jessica Faith Lewis – it was her first performance with the dinner and she did a fabulous job.

I would also like to take the time to – I just noticed in the back corner there – say hello to Mr. MacKay. Mr. MacKay, of course, has a Car Life Museum in Bonshaw, and he had a great event this summer with the 50 years of the Car Life Museum and it was a good event. I was glad to see everybody found it a success.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to welcome everybody back to the House and everybody in the gallery today. I would also like to make mention particularly of Sharon Labchuk, my predecessor as leader of the Green Party of Prince Edward Island, and Ken Murnaghan I see here.

As the Premier pointed out, if we had a loyalty card program here the people who would have accumulated more miles than anybody else would be Carol Carragher and Eddie Lund. Nice to see you again.

I would also like to make mention of Becka Viau's award that she received from the Governor General: an amazing woman who is doing fantastic things to support the

community here, particularly when it comes to the arts.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise, too, to welcome all of our guests in the gallery.

I want to acknowledge all of the viewers from District 11 Charlottetown-Parkdale who are watching today.

I want to acknowledge Kenny Murnaghan, a constituent of mine, and just a reminder that the calendar campaign for the Brain Injury Association has started and hopefully all of the Members of the Legislative Assembly will support the initiative and the great work that Kenny does.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody to the gallery today. It almost looks like we've got the antique car club here today with us. I noticed Paul Jenkins is a good Rotarian and friend of mine and Barry McWilliams is a good constituent of mine, and I know he loves antique cars. I'll probably soon be joining these gentlemen, Premier, because the only car I own is an antique, so I'll soon be there.

I'd be remiss not to mention our media friends, Teresa and Kerry over there, welcome. (Indistinct) left you guys out but it's great to get some good ink from you guys.

Thank you very much.

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

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

It is a pleasure to rise and welcome everyone in the gallery today. Of course, as it was mentioned, Ken Murnaghan is with us today, and Ken does some great work for those with brain injury. I'm always pleased to support when he's selling tickets for that shed draw. Haven't won yet, Ken, but we'll continue to support, for certain. It's great. Keep up the great work.

As well, Kevin MacKay. I see Kevin's in the gallery today. It's great to have him in. On the weekend a friend of mine and constituent Roy Mills had mentioned about the antique car enthusiasts that would be with us today. He gave me some great reading on them, so congratulations to you all for the great job that you've been doing over the last number of years, and continue on with that great work.

Also, I'd like to commend and congratulate the members that put on another great seniors dinner on Sunday. Over 350 meals served on what was a terrible afternoon, but people made the trek to come in to the Lions Club senior dinner and everybody went away very happily.

Just as I close, I would like to also commend and congratulate members that are on the floor of the Legislature as clerks that were part of the youth parliament on Friday and Saturday, and did a fantastic job. Mr. Kerley I know probably definitely has some political aspirations in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Indistinct) too, as well, a good relation of mine through my grandmother.

I'd like to wish best wishes to all our friends and neighbours that are gone fishing today in Sou'West Nova. It's a dangerous job, but they'll do well, and hopefully do well financially and be very safe over there too.

I wasn't able to be here last Friday due to a passing in our family, but I do want to make mention of Jacob MacDonald and Sarah

Collins that, I understand, did very in my chair on Friday and Saturday as well with the Rotary Youth Parliament. Both great young community leaders in our area as well.

Lastly, I'd like to talk about our communities out home. A year ago this weekend we were hit with another major storm, a year ago, that actually hit the very same area that was hit again this past weekend. They've had a tough time of it. I remember last year we were without power for I think it was about three and half days. So I'd just like to say thank you for all those people that are out there that are opening their homes. I know I had offers from friends in Charlottetown for freezer space, and I know the fire departments are involved, and the police departments and Maritime Electric crews and all the extra crews that are coming here.

Just a thank you for everybody for their heart-warming efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back here in the House. I'm going to say hello to everyone here in the gallery, everyone watching at home in District 4.

I want to thank the wonderful workers that restored the power at my house yesterday evening, but I must say that there are still a number of places in my district including north Pinette and Iona and Murray River and Murray Harbour. I had a reach out from Guernsey Cove. Many people who are feeling the cold.

I'd also like to recognize the wonderful volunteers that I've got in the district. We have a warming centre in Murray Harbour at the community centre. Today at our church, St. John's Presbyterian, they opened up to serve people some warm food and a place to go and get warm and charge your phone and get some water.

I'd also like to recognize and congratulate the Caledonian Club. Saturday night I had

the opportunity to go to the St. Andrew's Dinner. It was a wonderful event, very well attended. It was at the Charlottetown hotel, we had a wonderful meal, and I just want to say I had the opportunity to lead everyone in *O Canada*, *God Save the Queen*, and *Auld Lang Syne*. I'm very disappointed that all my members here in the House didn't get a chance to come and join me, but we had a wonderful evening, and thank you very much.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I want to recognize everyone in the gallery and people from District 12 that are listening in and that's given me great advice over the years.

Last night I had the opportunity to attend the annual community meeting with the member for Morell on the Newcomer's Association. A great number of videos were shown of the newcomers to Prince Edward Island and how wonderful they love Prince Edward Island and how open we are as a community to the newcomers.

Three people were recognized there last night: Trinity Church for their efforts, and Mary Connolly was recognized, and Go Cuts Family Hair Styles' Jason Pitre for the work they have done with the newcomers. If it wasn't for people like this we wouldn't be as welcoming to our newcomers to Prince Edward Island.

I also want to thank them for the great effort they do, and all members. There was a great story in the *Guardian* today, a letter to the editor, which I believe everyone should read.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. R. Brown:** Not yours, Teresa. Not yours.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back in the Legislature. We did have a messy weekend and I want to thank all of my transportation workers who were out on the roads during that storm and clearing the roads afterwards.

This morning I stopped into a workshop to bring greetings to the workshop on family prevention and violence and its impact on the workplace. I want to thank all the workers that work supporting people that do have challenges. The family prevention services, I really want to thank them for their work, and our police forces, and all the frontline workers that deal with families' experiences and challenges around violence and families.

In the gallery today we do have the Prince Edward Island Antique Car Club and I'll be recognizing them further later, but I especially want to recognize a former neighbour of mine from Bideford. Mr. Warren Phillips is with the car club. We still hold him in our community. His family is active in our community, but I want to welcome him here this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery and I'd like to say hello to all those from Charlottetown-Lewis Point for watching, especially those from Charlotte Court. Blanche Campbell and Lester Hennigar are always online watching. I'd like to say hello to them.

I, too, would like to offer my congratulations to all the students who participated in the Rotary Youth Parliament. Our Page, Nathan Kerley, was outstanding as the minister of justice, and you could all take some advice from his speaking abilities. Robert Larsen, a former Page, was named the youth Frank Zakem Young Parliamentarian of the Year. Thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, and the legislative staff and rotary and all the teachers who put an effort in to making this weekend a success.

I say, thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I rise today to welcome Paul Jenkins, a constituent to the gallery. I should note as well, a note of thanks to those at Maritime Electric and others that were out on the poles on Sunday evening in the midst of that storm. I was out shutting the water off at my cottage and having to crawl around under the cottage, and I can say I had to change outfits twice and my hands were so cold I couldn't feel them by the time I was done. That was only about two and a half hours so I could only imagine doing that for 12.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to greet everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald today, especially Janet Cotton and Betty Wigmore, and also welcome a great group to the gallery here today. I notice Sharon Labchuk, one of my constituents, here and a member of the New Glasgow Substation Working Group. I also see Arnold Smith over there, another one of my constituents, also a member of the New Glasgow Substation Working Group, and quite the entrepreneur and long-time business owner in the district, a councilor in the resort municipality. It's great to have him here. I wanted to also mention that he was the co-winner of the Re-purpose for a Purpose contest with Habitat for Humanity, the judge's choice award this year. Congratulations, Arnold, great to see you here.

I also wanted to congratulate the Novice A team from North Rustico who travelled to O'Leary – and a beautiful rink they have in O'Leary there, it was Hockeyville, and just gorgeous. They managed to take second place in the tournament, second to Bedeque,

who we meet this Sunday in another game, so we're looking to get our revenge.

Finally, I just wanted to say that the fundraiser for Douglas and Harriet Cole went very well in New London. Congratulations to the New London firefighters and the Women's Institute. They exceeded their fundraising target.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise today and, again, acknowledge and welcome everyone who may be tuning in via EastLink or online.

I'd also like to just send out a big thanks to all of the individuals, whether it was the road crews, volunteers or community organizations that did pull together like Islanders can do and will always do for other Islanders and helped others in need over the weekend.

I'd also like to quickly recognize the tremendous turnout we have here in the gallery today, the members of the Antique Car Club, and just acknowledge the tremendous work that they do in preserving our automotive history here on Prince Edward Island.

I'm also proud to state that I am the proud driver of plate 72.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everyone back for another week's session. I'd like to welcome everyone who is in the gallery, and those who are watching in District 1 on EastLink. I had the opportunity to attend several events over the weekend, but one highlight

of the event was passing out the awards to the Souris Fire Department as fire chief.

One award, in particular, goes to Wayne Brake. Wayne is retiring after 40 years of service. He is retiring. Wayne is ill. Wayne did get the volunteer of the year. Wayne is now over in Halifax in the ICU. It was sad, but at the same time, we're wishing Wayne well as he's is over in Halifax in the ICU. A very sad night for – always when you see one of your firemen retire. It shows that everyone is getting a little older each year, each day.

All my best goes out to Wayne and his wife Cathy who are now over in Halifax hospital, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to welcome everybody and everyone in the gallery.

Arnold Smith and his sister Vivian ran the Bay Vista motor inn in the tourism industry in Cavendish for a long time and were stalwarts in many decisions made in the industry.

Kevin MacKay, whose daughter I recognized I think it was last week – security, another tourism destination, Kevin, over 50 years. Rudy Croken, who I was involved with in minor hockey, Eddie Lund, of course, Kenny Murnaghan.

Most importantly, this time of year we come across bad weather from time to time and there are a lot of seniors and elderly living alone. I think it's important everyone looks around their community and ensures that they're safe and their well-being is looked after through the winter months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to rise again today and welcome everyone to the gallery. I'd like to say a special hello to everyone back in Evangeline-Miscouche, District 24.

I'd also like to mention I had the wonderful privilege this morning of representing the province and the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries at a Pioneer Francophone Fishermen's dinner and tribute to fishermen from the Evangeline region and Tignish area. Although I couldn't stay for the presentation of certificates, it was great to see them and have a chat with them and thank them for all their hard work and dedication they do to the industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Cows**

**Mr. Dumville:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to acknowledge the recent accolades of Cows Inc. They were named one of the top 10 finalists in the Private Business Growth Award that was presented by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and Grant Thornton.

Cows began in 1983 with a single location selling vanilla ice cream. Today they have 36 flavours of premium ice cream, five year-round stores, and six seasonal stores. Cows Inc. also operates five Anne of Green Gables chocolate stores.

Ice cream isn't the only thing that Cows does well. Always in demand is the ever popular merchandise such as t-shirts, toys, and gift items. I can't forget to mention their signature chocolate covered potato chips. This delicious product can be found in retail stores like Sobeys.

In 2006 Cows began their successful venture into the cheese market with their 12-month aged Avonlea clothbound cheddar. Currently they are selling three cheeses. All of them are winners of international

competitions. You will also find a line of butters on the grocery store shelves.

I would like to congratulate Cows Inc. for being one of the top 10 finalists in Canada for the Private Business Growth Award. Cows has never been afraid to get behind a business idea and grow it into an enterprising success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

#### **Miscouche Consolidated School**

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Music helps to bring out the best in young people. It nourishes self-esteem and keeps them engaged. Miscouche Consolidated School is looking for instruments so they can expand the number of students who play in the school rock band.

Music teacher Courtney Mullen said that there are only enough instruments to offer this extra-curricular activity to 14 students at the present time. She said she could easily double the number of kids playing in the rock band if she had more instruments.

Music plays a bit part in the lives of these junior high students who are currently part of the band. Kids in the program look forward to every chance they get to play, whether it is at lunchtime or after school.

They are enjoying time bonding with peers, talking, laughing, working towards a common goal of playing music together and creating a respectful community at school.

The school and Ms. Mullen are trying to get the word out to the public and appeal for any used keyboards, guitars or amps that people may not be using and might have just lying around.

I would like to applaud the efforts of Ms. Courtney Mullen and all those at Miscouche Consolidated who are engaging and fostering a love of music in our youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

### **Stratford Community School**

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise today, and I'll just go back in history a short time.

On the evening of Wednesday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> I had the immense pleasure of attending the closing ceremonies for the 2016 Stratford Community School. It was a wonderful evening showcasing the vast talents newly obtained by many of the students.

I would like to congratulate chairperson Jo-Ann Gaudet and her volunteer committee for their hard work and dedication to make this program available to the residents of Stratford. Of course, without the volunteer instructors none of this would be possible.

Community schools have been a tradition in communities across PEI during the fall and winter months for many years. Many people relate this program to rural communities, but I am proud to state that this year's Stratford Community School saw 305 students participate in 23 various courses over a 10-week period.

Just to name a few of the courses offered; guitar – both beginner and intermediate – line dancing, ukulele, creative writing, quilting, photography, cross-stitch, pickleball, sewing, estate planning, and the list goes on.

Each week a 50/50 draw would be held and on the closing night a cheque presentation was made to Stratford Elementary principal Kenny MacDougall. Through this effort \$1,000 was raised for the breakfast program at the school. This will certainly go a long way as the program serves somewhere between 130-150 children each day.

In closing, I again applaud the volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the betterment of our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

### **Low-income housing waitlist (further)**

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In response to questions taken as notice from the last Question Period, I hereby table information related to the social housing waitlist.

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

### **Internet contract (further)**

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I indicated that the first of this week I would table the Bell Aliant contract.

After consulting with my department I learned that a FOIPP process is still underway in the commissioner's office. Under the freedom of information act the minister's office is not part of this process.

As part of this process, our department advised the applicant and Bell that we had reached our decision to release the full unredacted contract. I will table these letters today.

Bell filed a request for review with the commissioner. The commissioner is now performing this review. Today my department wrote to the commissioner reiterating our position that the contract should be released as soon as possible. I will table this letter also.

The information contained in the contract is nearly 10 years old, and in the department's view the sensitivity of the information does not outweigh the public interest in releasing this contract.

Our government is committed to creating a competitive environment across PEI. We want the best possible value for Islanders.

As is clear by the letters tabled, my department wishes to release the full

contract, but we must respect the FOIPP process.

As a minister I am obviously frustrated on this issue. I will continue to pursue the release of the unredacted contract.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Questions by Members

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

#### **School review consultations (further)**

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

On Friday the Member from Alberton-Roseville raised concern about the school review process in the Westisle school family. These concerns were echoed at many meetings our caucus attended also.

Question to the education minister. We've been raising these concerns for some time. Now your own caucus has doubts about your process. Are you prepared to listen to those concerns and act, or will the Premier allow you to?

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

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

I will reiterate my response that I gave in the House on Friday. I have great confidence in the process. I have great confidence in the people that are leading the process in respect to school change and school review. It's a process that has been implemented, which is very consistent to school boards across the country, to make sure that we get appropriate balance and the best quality education we possibly can here in our own province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

#### **School supports and excellence**

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

Minister, I also attended those Westisle meetings. One issue raised at these meetings was the limited access to things like mental health, speech language, and also special needs supports.

Question to the minister: Do you think poor access to these supports helps or hurts student excellence in the Westisle Family of Schools?

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

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

Through the Learning Partners Advisory Council, through the Principals Council, through the district advisory councils, we also are hearing, loud and clear, the concern about various supports required to make sure that education in all our schools for all children across Prince Edward Island is equitable and fair.

Through the three rounds of conversations with all those councils it's been a consistent theme. That's why I'm pleased to announce today that we have positioned social-emotional well-being as our second pillar, one of our top three pillars in our mandate in the department of education, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Minister, how will this school review process result in better access to these services which are needed at Westisle Family of Schools?

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

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

The school review process, which I said is a five-step process, and really, the process is really looking at all school populations across the Province of Prince Edward Island

to make sure that we are using the resources to the best of our potential.

Because as minister I recognize, just like the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, that we do have needs. As government we need to respond to those needs to make sure that we provide the supports that students need in all schools across Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

### **Education administration and EELC department review**

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

I haven't heard yet from the minister how he plans on helping the Westisle Family of Schools.

Another concern many raised at the Westisle meetings was the feeling that rural schools and communities and frontline services are always being first targeted instead of departmental administration.

Question to the minister: Why not conduct a review of the administration and the department beyond the few changes that you've made in order to put more teachers in the classroom?

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

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

Last year when I was appointed the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture for the Province of Prince Edward Island I was tasked with the integration and the implementation of the vision that our government has for public education.

With the integration of the Public School Branch into the department of education, I am very proud that we've been able to protect frontline teaching positions and that we've been able to create a more effective, streamlined department with the reduction of approximately 35 positions that would be identified as administrative positions to make sure that we protect the frontline

services to make sure that we're responding to the needs of children in all Island classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

### **Size of EELC school administration**

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny to hear the minister talk about him collapsing the department into the district. It's kind of what my questions are about.

We've heard a lot of concerns about your top-heavy administration that you just made reference to, and you dealing with that has taken a backseat to you trying to close schools.

Question to the education minister: When you gobbled up the school board, did the size of your department's school administration increase or did it decrease?

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

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

Part of our mandate in the department, part of my mandate as the minister, is making sure that I'm providing leadership in building opportunities for success, achievement, and excellence for all PEI children.

I can attest that we've been able to protect frontline teaching positions as of this year. We've also been able to make a commitment to protect frontline teaching positions for next year.

I was pleased just recently, about four weeks' ago, to make a statement publicly that we're invested in about \$1.3 million with additional supports, not only classroom positions, but also EAs and youth service workers to all Island classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Administration. The building's full of people that you have that aren't in classrooms, that aren't in front of teachers every day. Administration has not shrunk at all.

Can you understand, minister, why teachers and students and parents are frustrated that they have to go to public meetings and explain to you to justify to you why they deserve a school and you can't deal with your own administration?

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

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

As the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters knows, there needs to be some level of administrative oversight. As I indicated in a few questions previous to the last question is that with the integration of the Public School Branch to the department we've been able to create a more aligned, more effective, more streamlined department, a department that has the integration of instruction tied with curriculum and achievement, and an alignment that allows us to be more connected to frontline educators in the Province of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What you're doing here is you're making moms and dads go to community meetings, take time away from their children, sports, other activities, family suppers, to justify why they should have a school. Community leaders have to justify why they should have a school, and you won't deal with your ever-bloated administration that you have.

Question to the Premier. Premier, when you seized control of the school system, you said it was going to be lighter and leaner. When you say lighter and leaner did you mean less bureaucracy or less teachers and students in schools?

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

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

I want to reiterate that last year when we laid out our plan for the new direction of public education we were very clear that our commitment was to frontline teaching positions, which we have committed to this past September. We also are once again committing to all FTE positions this coming September.

I want to reiterate that there is a need for some level of administration, but I would want to reassure all Members of the Legislative Assembly that we are very efficient, a very aligned, focused department in respect to outcomes and learning and social-emotional well-being of all children in the Province of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all know what this minister means by lighter and leaner. He goes to Toronto for consulting reports that tell him to close schools. Now we find he's down in Florida doing business in Florida.

Question to the minister: Is having a lighter and leaner education system, a lighter and leaner education bureaucracy, why your department went to Florida to buy brand new branded mugs?

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

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

I am extremely proud of the direction that this government is moving in.

I, too, hear from the public – parents, teachers, educators – in respect to the challenges that schools are presented, particularly schools that are overcapacity with large class sizes. We often hear from all the constituents that we represent the issues around class composition and the

need for government to make sure that we continue to find parity and balance and equity for all students across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Premier: When you were buying branded mugs in Florida, did you happen to get a quote on t shirts that said: My school was closed and all I got was this lousy mug?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Mr. Speaker, no.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

### School closure

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So under this minister nothing was changed except new pencils and mugs. No faces changed. Absolutely nothing changed. The school board policy changed. No elected school board, that didn't change. All of these things, none of them changed under you except for the mugs that you went to Florida and got.

Question again to the minister: Should students, teachers, and parents at schools you closed be looking forward to getting a Public Schools Branch mug as a consolation prize for their school closing?

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

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

I want to remind the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that this is a very serious conversation that we're having. This conversation we're having is about listening to Islanders from all across Prince Edward Island, both in rural and urban areas, as we continue to find ways to support achievement, support social-emotional well-being of our children in Island classrooms,

and most importantly, build confidence in the public in respect to the direction that our government's moving in to make sure that we're providing quality education for all children as they cross that stage in June for high schools across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure the minister I am quite serious, and I'm quite serious about this invoice I have for mugs from Florida that we can talk about as well.

It seems like the only thing that's getting lighter and leaner are the issues of rural Islanders and, for that matter, students in general right across the board which have been ignored, particularly since the last election.

Question to the minister: Will you take control of your Premier's drive to close schools, listen to Islanders, and put the learner at the centre of the conversation for once?

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

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

The conversation of learning is not just a rural conversation. The challenge in respect to overcapacity and under capacity are in all areas of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

My focus as the minister is to continue to look at education, not from a community perspective, but overarching to make sure that there's parity and balance, to make sure that we're not seeing classes with 30-plus students that are experiencing some pretty challenging issues with respect to learning environments. That's our priority.

I do want to remind the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that our government has been very focused on education across the province. Let's talk about Souris

Regional High School new development of \$20 million, the Montague Intermediate of \$1.6 million, the Montague Senior High School of approximately \$22 million, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

### **School closure (further)**

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I watch and listen and travel to public consultations on education, and this same minister that came to District 1 and closed four schools, I want to offer a word of caution to all Islanders on this government's school review process. Us up in Eastern Kings went through it, went through the promises, the failed promises.

Minister, why are you repeating the same mistakes this government made in 2009 when you closed many schools in Eastern Kings PEI?

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

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

I'm very proud of our government's commitment to public education since 2007, not only with the volume of infrastructure – and I know that the Member from Souris-Elmira is extremely proud and pleased and does spend a lot of time at the new \$20 million school which, I believe, was led by a very consultative discussion, and compliment to parents of students in that community to design and be part of that conversation.

We're going to continue to support education, not only in rural communities, but in urban communities because it's about the overarching quality and outcomes for all children and their well-being.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is the same minister that strolled into Souris and promised them a new school, promised them the green grass. They promised them the world. They came and put a sign up: The future site of the new K-12 school in Souris, just before the election in 2011. But they went and closed the four schools and promised the world.

I'll caution all Islanders across PEI on this government's promises and how they work. Don't trust their promises.

### **School promises in Eastern Kings**

Minister, why has this government failed to deliver on the promises made to Eastern Kings region when you closed our school in Eastern Kings?

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

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

Last spring, following my daughter who was playing grade 9 basketball, had the opportunity to be in the Souris school. I must say that there would be a lot of communities all across Prince Edward Island, even in my own riding of District 11 Charlottetown-Parkdale, that would love to have a new \$20 million investment in infrastructure. Very pleased and very proud, and I know that the students in Souris are getting a quality education in the K-12 model that they have.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a nice school. They were promised a new school. It's a renovated school. For \$4 million more you could have had a brand-new school. For \$4 million they were willing to raise the money and you refused it. You refused it. Another \$4 million and they would have had a new school.

I painted my truck, minister. I painted my truck a month ago, it's a 2006. It's still a

2006. It's not a brand-new one because I renovated it.

Minister, why does this government fail to understand the importance of our small schools and our small communities? And why are you coming after rural PEI again?

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

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

I, too, want to remind the Member from Souris-Elmira that a \$20 million investment in infrastructure in a K-12 school is more than just a coat of paint.

I want to remind you that we've been very fortunate to separate the politics from investments in rural communities in respect to the needs in infrastructure. I know that there are schools in various parts of the province that were built in the mid-1950s that are getting tired, and very pleased that we've been committed to providing the best we can with the resources we have to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

### **Economic development in rural communities update**

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: Minister, could you give us a bit of an update to this House on economic development in rural communities across Prince Edward Island?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Economic development in rural PEI is alive and well. When you look at part of my lending portfolio, we have over \$222 million invested in rural PEI right across from one end of the province to the other. I think that's about 60% of our total lending portfolio. We continue to build small

companies, having the Ignition Fund. If you take a look at the number of people that applied for the Ignition Fund, the majority of them are from rural PEI.

We take the Zone down on lower Queen. Even though it's located in Charlottetown, many of the businesses in there come from rural PEI. We continue to grow rural PEI, whether it be our export growth – thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Economic development assessments**

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's all great news, minister. Glad to hear it. I'm a bit concerned. There were 30 economic development assessments done this fall for this province by your government, and I'd like to ask you a question, minister: Can you tell Islanders how the department carried out these assessments and what the criteria was that you used?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure what reference of assessments the hon. member is talking about.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

### **Cornwall bypass original plan changes**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this year the government announced that it was going forward with the Cornwall bypass. Phase one is now largely complete with two new roundabouts having been constructed.

There's been much made by this government for the need for consultation, transparency, and openness in all of its business.

A question to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: What changes in

the original plan were implemented due to public input received in the public meetings held on the Cornwall bypass?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about the Trans-Canada Highway extension project that we're presently involved in it should be no surprise to anybody that this project has been on the go since back when Mike Currie announced it. It's taken this long and our partnerships with the federal government to be able to move forward.

But when we look at infrastructure in this province we look at it from a strategic point of view. This is strategic. This will add \$40 million in GDP to the economy of Prince Edward Island as a result of the construction that is going on as part of the Trans-Canada highway extension.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your first supplementary question.

#### **Cornwall highway studies (further)**

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

I asked what changes, if any, to the original plan had been made. I heard none.

The minister in a recent presentation to the standing committee cited safety and economic benefits to the town of Cornwall as the two principal reasons for building this \$65 million capital project, one which she touted proudly as the biggest ever capital project on Prince Edward Island.

Can the minister provide this House with the studies or the documents that support this project, firstly as being necessary to improve safety, and secondly, which demonstrate the economic benefits of it to the town of Cornwall?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, I'm not sure if the member was paying attention last week. I tabled over 100

pages dating back to 1979 of a number of different reports related to exactly why that project was necessary to move ahead, and with the support of the town of Cornwall.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party, your second supplementary question.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

In the line of questioning which preceded mine, where the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism was unaware of the existence of the 30 economic assessments, I am also unaware of an economic assessment which has been done to show that this road is indeed necessary or beneficial.

If the research has not yet been done to support the two main rationales for proceeding with this project, then it was frankly irresponsible for government to begin work on it. It is also impossible for us to have an informed debate in this House regarding the appropriation of capital funding for this project if even government does not have this information.

Will this government withhold the approval of the Cornwall bypass until this research has been completed, new fully-formed public consultations held, and that we have a fully informed debate in this House?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, consultations on this started back in 1994 with the first plebiscite that the town of Cornwall had, but we have had consultations.

We presented four different options during our consultations. We also have estimates that estimate that there will be over \$10 million in wages over the course of four years for this project; \$24 million will be spent on materials like asphalt and gravel. Again, this is going to add to the economy of Prince Edward Island with over \$40 million in GDP. We will continue to look at strategic investments as part of our infrastructure project on Prince Edward Island.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

**Federal Recognition of Charlottetown as Birthplace of Confederation**

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

Many individual residents in the downtown area, the Downtown Residents Association, and even federal MPs have been pursuing Charlottetown's place in history by requesting that parliament pass an act recognizing Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation.

MP Wayne Easter currently has a Bill, C-253, that was given first reading in March 2016 and remains in the private members' bill queue in Ottawa.

My question is to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture: Has your department taking any initiatives in support of this bill, minister?

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

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

Want to acknowledge MP Wayne Easter and others who have gone before, like the former MP George Proud, to have Charlottetown officially recognized as the Birthplace of Confederation. I recognize, our department recognizes, that the act will benefit not only the city but the entire province, and will formalize this recognition by placing it in statute and it would also affirm a signification historical event and strengthen our position as a heritage destination.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, your first supplementary.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you, minister.

Minister, will there be any efforts made to support or impress upon the federal government the importance of having this pass before it dies on the order paper in Ottawa?

Thank you.

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

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

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our country is in 2017, and an excellent opportunity to finally recognize Charlottetown's place in the story of our country. My department will be writing and staff are currently working on that to support the Government of Canada in joining with our partners to express support for this recognition.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

**Alberton intersection**

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question's for the minister of transportation. There's a busy intersection in Alberton at the corners of Church and Main Street, which is actually Highway 12 and Highway 152, which is the province's responsibility. In my opinion they're not really that safe.

When you approach the intersection from Northport via Main Street, you have to stop at the stop sign and then proceed out into the middle of the intersection and stop again because there's a building there that obstructs the view. I don't know if there is any other intersection in the province that exists like this one.

Can the minister tell me if there's any plans to realign this intersection to make it safer?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had the opportunity actually last weekend to be up in Alberton doing some craft shopping in the area. I'm familiar with that particular intersection. It's a three-way stop at the moment. We have had correspondence with the town of Alberton, and with the member from Alberton, who's been a great advocate for that particular issue.

I have sent my staff up there to do an assessment to see what is possible to do any changes in the future and we will continue to work on that with him.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, your first supplementary.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you mentioned, minister, it is a three-way stop currently. Are there any plans to make it a four-way stop intersection?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, as I said, did send up and have an assessment done to that particular area. We aren't able to realign it because of the buildings that are on those intersection corners. However, we can make it into a four-way stop. Once we give notice and put some signage up we'd be happy to do that in the immediate future.

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

### **Economic development assessments and rural school closure**

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister indicated, he's not aware of the assessments that were done, and that's fairly concerning to everyone who is interested in education in this province because those assessments were a key part of this government's plan to close rural schools. Yet they were just one-line assessments like: area's growing, developments underway, lots for new subdivisions, and the more grim – none to report.

To the minister of economic development: Do you feel these simple lines are a firm enough foundation to close rural schools?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the hon. member for clarifying the

question because I wasn't quite sure where she was coming from.

I can tell you from this point of view of economic development, which is my portfolio, directly related to that we go to the eastern end of the Island and you look at some of the things that we've been doing down there – investment in companies and looking at all our assets across the province, and starting with the Georgetown Timber Yard and what we're doing there to maintain 40-some jobs in that area.

What we've done with Slemon Park, purchasing Slemon Park so we can react quickly to new proposed businesses that are going to enter into there. We're looking at SRDC and CADC because we don't see as urban-rural anymore, they're all interlinked. We want to continue to grow urban PEI and rural PEI equally, and I think that's important.

The investments that we're making and the changes that we're making are strategic and we'll continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe the minister of economic development could have a conversation with the minister of education. We realize in rural communities that we are growing, that the future does look bright. I would suggest that we're going to need to have schools in those rural communities to ensure that the future does look bright.

Islanders deserve to know from you, minister of economic development, where we really are as a province and not read it from this school change process report which was very discouraging, I think, to all Islanders.

Minister, why did you not even bother to conduct a meaningful assessment of the current state of economic development across our province before this report was done?

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

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

The Member from Belfast-Murray River raises some great points. The school change policy which is being led by the Public School Branch has a very well laid-out process. Step 1 was data collection and direction of the process; two was the public consultations to identify viable options.

But some of the discussions that are coming from that, one is local knowledge, and that is knowledge from the community through the public conversations. I must say that there are some tremendous conversations going on across Prince Edward Island now about public education. It's not about what we're potentially going to lose, it's about opportunity.

We're being very respectful, from what I'm picking up. There's no playbook, there's no agenda. We want to make sure that we continue to provide the best quality education in our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Future of PEI

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, as well, can comment on some of the positive things that are happening in my district. We have an expansion of the Gillis Lodge, 20 new jobs. We have a new church, a Presbyterian church right next to the Southern Kings Consolidated School. I think one of only two churches built in Canada for the Presbytery last year, with the whole focus being to be next to a school, and how important that is to rural communities to develop that hub.

Imagine the economic development we would have if we had a long-term commitment to Northumberland Ferries and a ferry contract. Those are just a few examples.

Minister, I feel the education department in this report are wrong and I would like to know: Do you agree that we do have – and

this is to the minister of education – do we in fact have a very bright future across all of PEI, including rural communities?

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

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

As the minister of education I am extremely committed to making sure that we continue to move the quality of education for all children, not only from an academic achievement perspective, but making sure that our schools are whole, our schools are supporting children in respect to meeting their needs. I think we would all recognize, as Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the needs of children today coming through our public school system are a whole lot different than they were 10 and 15 and 20 years ago.

We'll be paying attention and we'll be very well balanced in the conversation. I have great confidence in the leadership and the process that's underway to address some of the points that the member from Murray Harbour addressed.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

### Population strategy

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning has been in his position now for 18 months. In fact, I remember him saying that he's got his mandate letter on the wall of his office. The first priority of that mandate letter is to create a population strategy for PEI.

Minister, where is that strategy?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. R. Brown:** We have a working draft, Mr. Speaker, working its way through government.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Does the minister see the population growing in every region of our province under this new government policy?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

Thank you for the question. Yes.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister tell us how much population growth this strategy will target specifically over the next five years?

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, as has been said in the throne speech, we are looking at a population growth to 150,000.

We are ahead of target and we look very good at reaching 150,000 and exceeding that limit.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great news, and it's really good to hear that we're trending in the right direction. We're doing well, especially in all regions of our province.

I wish that this minister would saunter on over to the minister of education and maybe give his updated numbers to him. Because you know what? The minister of education is spreading population data across PEI that says they don't have a plan for population growth. It says that they're showing reduced numbers of students.

### **School change and population growth**

Question to the minister of education: Why does your school change process assume such meagre population growth over the next five years when we have the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning here saying that: No, hold on, the population is booming?

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

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

My hope as the minister of education is that we continue to grow the population. Part of the school change and review process, which should be being conducted on a regular basis or every three to five years, needs to respond to the changing demographics.

The reality of the situation we're currently in, in communities all across the Province of Prince Edward Island is because governments of the present and governments of the past have not supported a very progressive evaluation of demographic shifts, populations, trends in respect to where people are choosing to live.

This school change policy, which I said is very consistent to every other jurisdiction in the country, we'll be working very closely with all government departments to make sure that we provide the best support we possibly can in respect to any potential decisions on any recommendations that are made.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a bit disturbing to hear we have one minister saying that: No, we've got a population strategy that's circling around government, it's going to do well, we're on trend, we're going to hit 150,000 people, but then we have another minister who is out there showing data to all public meetings right across PEI saying that: No, our population is going down.

Which is it? Does the minister of education believe that our rural population is going to grow?

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

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

My wish, as the minister of education, is that we continue to see robust growth in all communities across the province.

But we also have to recognize, currently, as it sits today, that we have some very serious situations in respect to overcapacity and we've got some very real situations as far as under utilization.

It's not just about rural Prince Edward Island. You can drive through the city of Charlottetown, and identify an overcapacity school and an under-utilized school within two to five minutes of one another.

The objective is to find better balance and best use of the resources we have to continue to move the quality of public education as one of our key pillars for a prosperous province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

### **Population strategy and minimum teaching allocation**

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I couldn't agree more. We do have serious issues with some of our urban school. It's insane, the overcrowding and stuff. But that doesn't mean you have drag all these rural schools into this whole process. You don't have to do that. Let's fix the issues in urban PEI.

Minister, do you think reinvesting in schools with a minimum teaching allocation strategy would be a wise plank for a population strategy?

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

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

As I said numerous times in the Legislative Assembly, the school review process is a process that I have tremendous confidence in. It's a process that will give us better information in respect to staffing and decisions moving forward.

We have some real issues. In September of this year we have overcapacity and under-utilized buildings and we need to address those situations. It's not just about rural Prince Edward Island. There is real or more complex or more challenging in city areas of the province.

Through the process, through a very open, transparent dialogue, we hope to get recommendations from the Public School Branch that will support and continue to move our system forward.

Thank you.

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

### **Deleted government email accounts (further)**

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My final question is to the Premier: Premier, which email accounts were deleted?

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

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

I am becoming very familiar with records information management in my role as the education minister. I do have the responsibility under the legislation.

We will be presenting and bringing forward a framework. I have taken the question under advisement. When the staff gives me the information I will table that information.

But I look forward to responding to the Auditor General's report, which I take very seriously in my mandate as the education minister, to make sure that we tighten up enforcement in the legislation, to make sure

that we have new, modern infrastructure, make sure that we have appropriate training, make sure we have the staffing and resources to modernize our IM in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Point of Order

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Friday I asked the minister of education, responsible for records management questions, surrounding this government's ongoing cover up of deleted emails and purged email accounts. The minister of education responded he did not know the answers and he would take my questions under advisement and bring this information back to the House.

Rule 62(3)(b) of the Rules of Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island reads:

The minister to whom an oral is directed may state that "...he or she takes the question as notice and answer it orally on a subsequent day under the same order of business..."

The Premier has refused to answer any questions surrounding this ongoing deleted email cover up voiced by members in this House.

Remarks were made by the Premier to the local media which ran in this Monday's *Guardian*. The story states the Premier has since elaborated that it was two individuals whose email accounts were deleted. But when asked by the *Guardian* for their names, the Premier refused to name them.

This is a quote: "The auditor general took the approach of not naming individuals, and I think if she's going to change that, she should be the one that does so."

Under Rule 62(3)(b) of this House the minister of education has taken my question under notice on Friday and is obligated to answer them orally on a subsequent day. However, the Premier's comments in the media are quite clear that the government

will not answer these questions. This government is refusing to answer any and all questions about the egaming scandal and deleted emails since it came to light.

This is a shameful, undemocratic day in this Chamber when the minister of education takes important questions about government's deleted email scandal as notice, knowing full well that his Premier has ordered him not to answer them.

Procedurally, I'm concerned that a minister of the Crown would attempt to use wiggle room to take a question as notice with no intent of bringing forth a response.

Either the minister of education is disregarding my privilege and the collective privilege of this Assembly or the Premier is refusing to allow his government and this minister to answer the questions is disregarding my privilege, the privilege of the minister of education, who is an equal member of this House, and the collective privilege of this Assembly.

I would ask the minister to clarify his intentions. Does he intend to answer these questions and is he committed to the House, or is the Premier preventing this as the remarks to the local media indicate?

I ask the minister to answer this now as I'm prepared to move a motion to send this privilege matter to committee immediately following his response.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, I will take that under advisement.

**Mr. Myers:** That's not what I (Indistinct).

I had asked for clarification from the minister to clarify his intention to the House, whether or not he would bring back – because if he doesn't, then I'm prepared to bring a motion of privilege.

**Speaker:** Yes. I, too, will take that under advisement.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

Statements by Ministers

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Response to Nov. 27<sup>th</sup> Storm**

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to extend my appreciation, and that of the public and the Assembly and of the province, to community volunteers, first responders, and transportation and utility workers, who are serving Islanders affected by Sunday's early winter storm.

This storm caused power outages across the province and, as of this morning, nearly 1,400 Islanders remain without electricity.

While the winter weather can test our resiliency, storms such as the one on Sunday illustrate the generosity and warmth of Islanders.

We have heard stories of Islanders reaching out to neighbours to provide a warm meal, a warm place to stay, and other offers of assistance.

While the power is out there are warming shelters open at the following locations; Murray Harbour Community Centre, which has served 150 people, including providing water, warmth, cell charging and over 60 meals; Cardigan Fire Hall; Dr. Roddie Community Centre in St. Peters and the St. Peter's Fire Hall. There are also warming shelters at the community centre in Lower Montague, Montague Food Bank, St. Joachim Church Hall in Vernon River, and we heard in the House earlier today of other locations.

Islanders affected by power outages in these areas are encouraged to stop by, warm up, charge their devices, and spend some time with their neighbours.

Thank you to all the community volunteers who are working hard to keep these warming shelters open, and to the crew who have worked diligently to restore power in all parts of the province, and to the community organizations that have put these offers of assistance in place.

The PEI Emergency Measures Organization is monitoring the situation across the Island and sharing safety messages through social media.

First responders are busy helping Islanders. The Island fire services responded to many

utility pole fires, motor vehicle accidents, and structure fires.

Some health services in Kings County were affected by power outages, and patients are reminded to call ahead.

We sincerely thank all Islanders for their service to each other. This is a fine reflection of the quality of our Island community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think we have to thank our volunteers and the community groups that step up to the plate and help in times like this. Also, you know that Islanders always have been the very first to step up and help their neighbours which is greatly appreciated.

One thing I think that we must make note of is generator use with the changing climates. This is a concern to me how the environment's being affected and that, in some cases, forces people to use generators from local stores. I encourage the people installing these generators that they make sure that they do install them properly, they do install carbon monoxide detectors so that their family is safe when they're put in these situations.

I think that I'm going to go back to the climate change. I'm very concerned over climate change. I'm very concerned over the environment, and I think we as a province need to look at our infrastructure as a whole, and is it prepared for the future, and what changes climate can bring?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to echo the praise and the gratitude of the Premier and Leader of the Opposition for all the volunteers and the

workers, first responders, linemen who kept Islanders safe and warm over the last couple of days.

Prior to moving to Prince Edward Island I lived in eastern Ontario. I was there during the ice storm of 1998 which was a far more catastrophic event than the one we just went through this weekend. But I think it's clear that we have to expect the frequency and severity of these kinds of events to increase as global climate change kicks in.

I wonder whether it's time for us on Prince Edward Island, as is done in other places, to start burying our utilities. Not only would there be a tremendous aesthetic advantage to that, but also we would – if not completely remove – we would certainly greatly reduce our vulnerabilities to events like this. I realize that would be a massive capital expenditure, but I would like to suggest that any new utility cables which are installed be done so in that manner.

Again, I'd just like to close by thanking all of the volunteers and workers who kept everybody safe.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Prince Edward Island Antique Car Club**

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, member of the Prince Edward Island Antique Car Club and the National Association of Automobile Clubs of Canada will gather on Prince Edward Island to mark a historic anniversary and a little recognized part of Island history.

Father Georges-Antoine-Belcourt is well known as a missionary who worked throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the areas we now know as Manitoba, North Dakota, and Prince Edward Island.

What is perhaps less known is the fact that Father Belcourt, when he was carrying out his mission work with the area's Acadian population, became the first person to import and own an automobile in Canada. While working with the area's Acadian population, Father Belcourt did in fact

become the first person to import an automobile into Canada.

After hearing about carriages that moved without the aid of horses Father Belcourt contacted a manufacturer in New Jersey. This was in 1866, before Confederation.

His car, perhaps better described as a steam wagon, employed a steam engine to turn its rear axle.

The new purchase was enough to get a write-up in the *Charlottetown Herald*, and without a roof, windshield, or shock-absorbers it probably managed to shake up its driver at the same time as it amazed onlookers.

We have in the House with us today a number of the members of the Antique Car Club of Prince Edward Island who will be marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canada's first automobile with a ceremony on December 11<sup>th</sup> at the Farmers' Bank of Rustico Museum.

I would like to take a moment, with your indulgence, to recognize who we have with us today in the gallery: Rudy Croken is the president of the club; Roy Mills is actually one of the original members from 1964; Wilfred Moase, the provincial representative for the National Association of Automobile Clubs of Canada; Paul Jenkins is a 50-year club member; Doug Parkman, another 50-year club member. There's also Warren Phillips, Barry MacWilliams, Joy MacWilliams, Jan Thjisse, Sheila Wakelin, Don Hickox, Kevin MacKay, and all of the members of the executive, and also Arnold Smith representing the Farmers' Bank Museum of South Rustico.

Our Island owes a great deal to groups like the Prince Edward Island Antique Car Club who do so much to preserve and commemorate the history of Prince Edward Island and of Canada.

I want to thank them for their work, and best wishes, and I look forward to attending that celebration. Welcome.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Antique cars are a great interest to me. It's like a step back in time. I thank the members of the association, the work they do to preserve that part of history. It also shows how much we've evolved in that we're going from vehicles that used, at first, fossil fuels, and now we have vast resources going into renewable style vehicles with battery power and stuff like that which are better for the environment.

We've seen great strides by the industry to make vehicles safer for the road with the environment, and I think that's fantastic.

I must say also I'm an antique vehicle owner. I have two restored antique vehicles: a 1953 Dodge three-quarter ton army truck, and also a 1970. The big thing about them was I found it so enjoyable to spend time restoring them with my family and my children, and to me that was a great treat.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to salute the members of the antique car organization, and of course in my District 17 is the Car Life Museum right there in the Bonshaw Hills.

I had the great pleasure this summer of performing alongside Boyde Beck in the Small Halls series of concerts and events, and one in particular in Stanley Bridge where Boyde told the story of Father Belcourt and his first car. As Boyde put it: Not only did he have the first car, he had the first car accident, because it wasn't long after he sat behind it he didn't quite figure out the power of the thing he was sitting in.

Cars, of course being older than Canada herself, have evolved tremendously over the time from the coal-fired steam engine that Father Belcourt rolled around Rustico in to the internal combustion engine which we got stuck with for much longer than we should

have, to the more modern hybrid and electrical vehicles that the Leader of the Opposition cited in his remarks.

It's time for this province to reintroduce the incentives for Islanders to buy those electric vehicles. They used to exist and they are gone. But if we are to evolve along with the car itself and provide cleaner transportation here we need to incent those electric vehicles. We also need to develop a comprehensive public transportation system here on Prince Edward Island in this kind of holistic coordinated approach.

Congratulations to the gentlemen of the club. I look forward to looking back 150 years from now at the electric vehicles which will then be dinosaurs of their day.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

### **Hillsborough Hospital**

**Mr. Henderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government is committed to creating a modern approach for mental health in this province. We are proud of the progress we have made thus far.

We have the Strength Program which has reduced out-of-province treatment referrals for youth to zero over the last 18 months.

The Strongest Families initiative is providing telehealth support for families in need.

The transition unit at the Provincial Addiction Treatment Facility in Mount Herbert has significantly reduced wait times for the facility.

The new Bridge model will allow service providers to work together to identify and support individuals and families at acutely elevated risk of harm.

The Triple P parent support program is expanding.

And the Reach Program is helping to transition young people back into the communities.

On November 14<sup>th</sup> we released the landmark 10-year mental health and addictions strategy for our province. This important document lays out five strategic priorities that will guide government decision making for the coming decade.

Hillsborough Hospital is currently our province's main psychiatric facility. It provides specialized care, long-term treatment, and rehabilitation for individuals facing acute or enduring mental illness, cognitive disabilities, or psycho-geriatric conditions.

During the next year, the capital budget provides funding to begin the functional programming and master planning of our mental health facilities. This step is essential in modernizing inpatient and outpatient services in the province, identifying the number and type of care required, determining the most appropriate setting to provide these essential services, and developing the best staffing model for operating these facilities.

As this work is underway, care and safety standards need to be met at the current location. Over \$600,000 in funding will be invested into upgrading the safety and security at Hillsborough Hospital. This will allow for new features such as closed-circuit television throughout the entire hospital, additional security in two patient units, and new electrical and fire panels for the building.

The majority of these investments will be transferred to the facility that replaces the Hillsborough Hospital.

We are committed to renewing the mental health care programming infrastructure on Prince Edward Island that will meet the current and anticipated needs of some of our most vulnerable Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I have been following the issue with regards to mental health and addictions here on PEI very vigorously since I was elected in 2011. I waited and waited for a report to be tabled. I'm still waiting for a report to be tabled.

As a matter of fact, in the standing committee just probably less than a year ago, or about a year ago now, we had the chief medical officer responsible for mental health and addictions here in Prince Edward Island at that committee. At that time I asked where the report was because all we were provided with at that time was five very short PowerPoint images.

This government, yes, they did come out with a strategy a couple of weeks ago. I attended that highly anticipated announcement for quite some time. I looked forward to attending and I did attend, but unfortunately I found it to be very thin on details. In particular, the investment by this government in mental health and addiction services here on Prince Edward Island.

It's great to announce here in the House today they found \$600,000 to put towards some closed-circuit cameras, some new breaker panels, and various equipment such as that in a very outdated facility of the Hillsborough Hospital when they can find \$65 million that wasn't even on a capital budget for the last couple of years to do a highway construction. It bemeses me to understand or to figure out why this government is so bent on paving across Prince Edward Island when we have Islanders that seriously are in need of assistance and help.

It's no secret to the minister, it's no secret to me and many other MLAs in this Legislative Assembly that hear from our constituents, that we have individuals right now with serious mental health issues that are being housed at the QEH or other primary care facilities here in Prince Edward Island, group homes where the staff aren't adequately trained to deal with these individuals.

The Hillsborough Hospital is an outdated facility. We all realize, we all know, it needs to be replaced. I implore this government: if

you can find \$65 million to put approximately six kilometres of asphalt across Prince Edward Island, then find the money to replace the Hillsborough Hospital and support Islanders with mental health issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And \$600,000 is a lot of money, but when I hear that it is to be spent on security cameras and electrical infrastructure I wonder how much that is going to contribute to the compassionate care of the people who are unfortunate enough to find themselves in that facility in the first place.

Approaches to mental health treatment have evolved tremendously over time. We have gone from sort of jail-like institutions with straitjackets and imposed ECT and chemical treatments – all the awful things of the Victorian era and before it – to more humane treatments.

But a new facility, of course, I agree with the hon. member, is required here, but it has to be more than the facility in which these people are treated. It's the way in which we treat them with compassion and with care. I would like to see in this province a really concerted effort of prevention, at putting forward and understanding of the modern way that we look at mental health, and looking at diet and exercising, counselling and group therapy, and all of these things that we know can not only treat mental health and make people better but prevent it from coming in the first place.

I also hope that when the time does come when the Hillsborough Hospital is finally replaced with a modern facility that the staff who work there are given an opportunity to give input into how this new facility is built and in what manner it will work.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Presenting and Receiving Petitions

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I beg leave to present a petition from residents and concerned citizens of Prince Edward Island regarding the proposed water bottling plant in Brookvale by Pure Island Waters and I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the petition be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Mr. Speaker, this petition states:

Prince Edward Island relies entirely on groundwater for all human water uses. The nature of Island aquifers is such that water flows across property boundaries and thus must be managed by government for the public good. The Government of PEI is developing a new, more holistic *Water Act*, but water exports either in bottle or in bulk, have so far not been part of the public discussions surrounding this new legislation. The creation and expansion of a water export industry on PEI could have severe and wide-reaching consequences for the management of this critically important public resource.

Pure Island Waters, a private company, is proposing to construct a water-bottling plant in Brookvale which would extract up to 400,000 litres of groundwater per week for export. Neither an environmental impact assessment, a Groundwater Extraction Permit, nor any public consultations are required for this development.

There are 2,281 signatures in my hand here on this petition, as well as 1,140 online for a total of 3,421 signatures.

The petition prays for the Legislative Assembly:

To urge the Government of Prince Edward Island to:

(1) halt the proposed Pure Island Waters' bottling facility in Brookvale;

(2) conduct a thorough study of all of the implications of the water export industry on PEI (including, but not limited to, environmental, economic, trade, regulatory, and governance) prior to approving any water-export developments; and

(3) begin a public engagement process to determine the consensus of local residents and Islanders on this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

#### Tabling of Documents

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Annual Community Meeting report that was presented last night at the newcomers' association and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a petition from the community of Belfast stating that "Belfast Consolidated School is an essential cornerstone of the identity, culture, industry, stability and future of Belfast... *and* any rezoning solutions must include its continued existence in order to allow the community of Belfast to survive" and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table written questions to the Minister of Health and Wellness and I move,

seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

#### Orders of the Day (Government)

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 1<sup>st</sup> order of the day be now read.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of capital supply to Her Majesty.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

I will now call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and Chair the Committee of the Whole.

**Chair (Casey):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to further consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty. Is it the wish of the committee that it be read –

**Leader of the Opposition:** Line by line.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Roach:** Madam Chair, I'd like to invite a stranger on the floor.

**Chair:** Agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Members, before we get started, I just ask you to make sure that you direct any – if you would like to get on the speaking order through the Chair so we can keep it orderly. We'll be going through it probably department by department. We'll start on page 7.

Could you introduce yourself for the record, and your position?

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** Jim Miles, executive director of fiscal management.

**Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Miles.

Page 7, hon. members. I'll read through – do you want me to start reading – I have two people lined up for questions. Do you want me to start reading?

Capital Expenditure: Communities, Land and Environment.

Equipment

“Appropriations provided for equipment purchases. Laboratory Equipment: 250,000. Field Monitoring Equipment: 25,000. Forest Fire Vehicles: 100,000. Total Equipment: 375,000.”

I have the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, and the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

First question is back in the spring I raised it, about the forest fire vehicles in the province. What vehicles are being purchased under this? Are we replacing one? Are we replacing two? Are we doing upgrades?

**Jim Miles Secretary:** We're replacing one truck a year for the next five years. That's the plan. Some of them will be the tractor that hauls the tractor-trailer around, that hauls the water tanker, and then the other ones will be the fire trucks.

**Leader of the Opposition:** The one you're being replaced, what are you doing with that?

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** It's a 1988 GMC.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Has there been any contact with the PEI firefighter school, maybe to turn it over to them for a piece of equipment?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, an intervention?

**Mr. Mitchell:** Yes, thank you, Chair.

Mr. Miles just explained that it is the 1988. I don't believe there's been a discussion of exactly where it will go. We haven't got it passed yet till you agree to it on the floor, of course. But if there's an intent that it would serve a useful purpose some place like that, we can look at that out in the future.

This is an ongoing process for five years, based on the events of last summer, and especially in our region and Nova Scotia, we do have to move forward here now and upgrade these trucks.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

Is there any increase in trees to be planted or trees to be grown at the provincial tree nursery?

**Chair:** Are you asking it to the Minister of Finance?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Yes.

**Mr. Roach:** That's not a capital item.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Final question: Is there any consideration by the government to look at a derelict vehicle replacement program, which would fall under Communities, Land and Environment?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Short answer would be no, we haven't had a discussion. We haven't had any requests to the best of my knowledge at this time. I wouldn't rule out that that could become part of something under a new plan regarding however climate

change mitigation moving forward could take place. It's possible.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll just end with – a number of years ago the Province of New Brunswick – I believe back in the 1980s and the 1990s – they had a derelict vehicle program where the government would basically buy vehicles from property owners, and then they'd recover it through the sale of the metal. It was to remove derelict vehicles from the countryside which would also lessen the environmental impact on the ground, like leaking fuels and so on.

I would ask that maybe someday that could be looked at.

Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you very much.

Just with regards to laboratory equipment, what type of laboratory equipment is being purchased and for which labs?

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct).

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Roach:** I've got that answer.

**Chair:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**Mr. Roach:** Okay, that's for the PEI Analytical Laboratory. A description of some of the equipment would be: an inductively coupled argon plasma mass spectrometer, a near infrared analyzer for raw milk composition; a LEKO carbon/nitrogen/sulphur combustion analyzer; a centrifuge – and this is going out in future years, but for this year it's the argon plasma mass spectrometer, and the list goes on for future years. It's kind of on a replacement schedule.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

So that's why we're seeing that commitment of a quarter of a million dollars every year to essentially try to keep up.

**Mr. Roach:** Exactly. It's replacement for the ones that we have.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

Field monitoring equipment, is that drones? Or what type of equipment are you looking at there?

**Mr. Roach:** It's water monitoring equipment.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

Is there a specific area that you're looking at monitoring?

**Mr. Roach:** That's all across the Island.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you.

Also, on the forest fire vehicles, I know the Leader of the Opposition had asked if perhaps they could be donated to the firefighting school here on Prince Edward Island, but I mean, it makes sense that the fire training facility that is training our firefighters has the most up-to-date equipment that they possibly can as well.

Quite often – well, not quite often – but it is regulated through the insurance industry that this equipment needs to be certified, whether it's the pumps or the valves and different things like that on the equipment. The Leader of the Opposition probably would disagree with me on this, but I don't think it would be a great thing to give our firefighters that are training outdated equipment when they need actual up-to-date equipment to train on.

But I do have an interesting request for you. I have a constituent by the name of Kory MacAusland. He's a volunteer. He's

actually an officer with our fire department over in Stratford. He's taken it upon himself over the last number of years, he's more or less adopted a community in Mexico where he solicits and obtains firefighting gear from many fire departments around the Maritimes and once a year he brings it down.

This equipment, to them, is second to none. Even though it's used, it's still like top shelf to them. He and I were talking just back a couple of months ago, and he was actually asking me about the fire trucks and if there's at any time surplus or vehicles being replaced.

Could that ever be a consideration that that type of equipment be donated in such a manner?

**Mr. Roach:** This particular vehicle is a three-ton float truck, and it's actually too underpowered to do the job it's meant to do, going through wet areas and that sort of thing.

But I'm certain that the minister responsible would welcome any sort of presentation or any sort of idea, so I would suggest that if they wanted to contact his department and put forth what the idea may be that he'd welcome that and have a look at it.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

I thank you for that, minister. I certainly will put Kory in touch with the minister.

Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

First off, I was wondering if you have any details on the field monitoring equipment that's going to be purchased.

**Mr. Roach:** I can tell you that this electronic monitoring equipment, it looks at water flow, water level, water quality, air quality. Much of the equipment is electronic, including wireless communication or GPS

capability, and also includes the use of boats with navigation equipment.

The replacement of these assets is estimated at about \$480,000, so the individual items have replacement costs over \$10,000.

It is proposed to create an annual capital replacement budget to accommodate the existing equipment replacement.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

Just to make sure I understood that correctly, you say the total of all the field monitoring equipment that's currently owned by the Department of Communities, Land and Environment is worth about \$480,000 if you had to replace it all?

**Mr. Roach:** That's correct.

**Mr. Trivers:** So you're just trying to put in a \$25,000 budget a year to make sure it gets replaced on an ongoing basis?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, for some of the equipment, just to keep it up to date.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you.

Is any of this equipment purchased specifically for the watershed groups and given to them for the work that they do?

**Mr. Mitchell:** Not to the best of my knowledge. This is our own testing, this is analyzing our own results that we go out and collect, and we have some (Indistinct) that do that.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Do you have enough equipment right now – that \$480,000 worth, which does seem like a substantial amount – to effectively monitor all the watersheds on the Island? And, of course, if that is the case, do you monitor all the watersheds on the Island for water flow, water level, and the

various other items you mentioned that you have equipment for?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** There is a couple of crews that go out and do the sampling for 10 months of the year. I don't know their exact pattern, that they go to each river or how periodically, but they do very effective work and bring back quality.

I think some of it is also in relationship with DFO that they do some of the testing with.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

I was wondering, right now with the current level of equipment that you own in the Department of Communities, Land and Environment, and use, are you collecting enough data that you can put together a water budget for the Island as a whole that includes water flow as well as water quality, or do you feel that – have you looked at that, and do you need to purchase more equipment in order to effectively put together a water budget for the Island?

**Mr. Roach:** Yeah, with this purchase I know here that it's up to a total of \$246,000 going forward. It's proposed to create an annual capital replacement budget to accommodate existing equipment replacement, but also for the expansion of the monitoring of the network.

This new equipment, additional equipment, will add to its abilities and capabilities management and reviewing stream sediment, estuary oxygen, and eelgrass to the monitoring.

This program also enhances what's currently being done, and I had talked about that earlier.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** I just wanted to underscore how important it is we understand all the details about our water across the Island.

I wanted to know if the watershed groups were consulted when you were looking at the field monitoring equipment that might be needed just in case they had some input. Because, of course, they're out on the ground all the time and in many ways they have more feet on the ground than the department does. I just wanted to know if there's equipment that they think maybe the province needs that they could add to the list.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I know that we are in contact with the watershed groups continuously and we now have a new ecological person that's in the frontline in dealing with them. I'm sure that I'd be quite comfortable in saying that conversation between the watershed groups and what their needs or what their thoughts would be moving forward on developing water data is ongoing and continuously discussed.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** The equipment that's being purchased on an ongoing basis for replacement as well as any new equipment being purchased, I'm wondering if one of the criteria for the equipment is that it makes it easy to extract the data and publish it online for consumption and use. Is that a criterion you've been using selecting the equipment?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** This equipment would be basically just doing the testing. Those data results have been going online for a number of months now so that'll just continue with that. It's not software, if that's the question that you're asking. It's the frontline testing equipment.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm just concerned that if you don't have a plan for the process from beginning to end – collecting the data, managing the data, and publishing the data – you could end up with a situation where

you've got people in the field collecting all sorts of great data, but you don't have the manpower to actually publish it and of course, analyze it afterwards.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** I appreciate your great insight on this but I know that the watershed groups have been actively involved with the department, and this is the focus of the department to collect very useful data that we can use in a great fashion that will give us information that we can predict on. This technology changes all the time as other technologies do. We're just trying to keep up and keep above and do as good a work as we can with what we have.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** I mean, water is such an important resource on this Island that really we shouldn't be just struggling to keep our heads above water, as you said, and you get to keep things going as best as possible. We need to have that comprehensive plan in place.

I would say the watershed groups should be intimately involved in the plan as well, Really, if you had an infrastructure summit where you could ask all groups for input – for example, software developers on the open data piece. Because we still haven't seen on the government website true open data. What it is comma separated value sets that are published on there for consumption, which is okay, but really what we need is that web API.

I think you should consider the full realm of capital purchases needed in order to properly create a water budget and keep it up to date.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, when buying equipment for capital expenditures, who decides what kind of equipment is to be purchased?

**Mr. Roach:** I believe the staff themselves would identify what the needs are. They are the ones that are out working in the field year over year. In the case of this one, they have recommended to purchase additional equipment that wasn't there before that would help out. Up in your area where they're talking about stream sediment, estuary oxygen and eelgrass has been identified as very important. These are purchases that are trying to keep up to date and they would be identified by the current staff.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Is this equipment purchased right here on PEI?

**Mr. Roach:** All this equipment would have to go out on an RFP. It may or may not necessarily be available or produced here on Prince Edward Island. But it might be carried by a local supplier.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** When this goes out, is it invitation only or does it just go right out –

**Mr. Roach:** It would be invitation only. It would go out public. It would be a public RFP, request for proposals.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

I was wondering if you've ever considered purchasing equipment in-house for the Department of Communities, Land and Environment, that can be lent out to groups like watershed groups. I think that's probably one of the main problems they have is getting the money together so they actually have the tools to collect the information they need. They've got a lot of great passionate volunteers, but sometimes the technology is lacking. As we can see here, we're talking about a field monitoring equipment budget estimate of 25,000 to maintain 480,000 worth of equipment. A little bit of money goes an awful long way.

Have you considered purchasing equipment in-house that was actually used by the watershed groups in supplying them with that equipment instead of year-to-year funding that goes out on a per-project basis?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Your points have some worthiness to them. But staff worked with all watersheds, so who's doing what at particular times. It's probably more efficient for staff to go out and work with them on particular things.

I believe right now the funding that they – they established their own needs and requirements, and they vary from watershed group to watershed group. Some are more project-based, some are more community-based. I think for what we're doing at the moment where staff will go out and work with them on a particular project has been very effective.

I'm not aware of any watershed groups that feel they don't have the equipment to do what they need to do. That's never been brought to me. They all seem to be very appreciative of the connection with the staff of the department and all the support that they get.

I wouldn't close the door on something like that if there was a particular request, but we've never received any. I think staff does a wonderful job with working very closely with watershed groups all across PEI.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** I was wondering: How many boats does Communities, Land and Environment own at this point?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** We have two, currently.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** You mentioned, Minister of Finance, that you're purchasing some GPS

wireless devices to aid with the boat navigation. Did I get that correctly?

**Mr. Roach:** I think what they would use those for, not so much my guess, wouldn't be so much to identify where the boat is. I think they have a fairly good idea where they are. My estimation of that would be they would identify clearly exactly where they got that water sample or where they tested something. I would expect that it's more for that purpose.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, is there anything going to be in the Capital Budget for fire equipment for the province?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Forestry department? These trucks have been identified as a priority with the change in dry summers. We had Fort MacMurray last year and then Nova Scotia, so it's hitting fairly close to home. Our trucks, in particular, we've been trying to upgrade those for the past number of years, but due to budget constraints it's usually sometimes one of the first things that are dropped from the list.

Right now with the way things have been going the trucks are the most important priority. Will there be new gear associated with the trucks? I assume so. Some of the connections, fittings, hoses, will probably need to be upgraded for the specific vehicle. I guess the short answer is probably yeah, there will be some upgrades to the equipment based on the needs of the new vehicle.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

I know we all stand up in the House here in our greetings and we thank the fire services of Prince Edward Island and how important they are. With climate change and

everything, we see it happening here on PEI, and the devastation that happened out in Fort McMurray.

Wouldn't the Minister of Finance realize how important fire equipment is for your services, your department here on Prince Edward Island?

**Mr. Roach:** I don't think I am any different than anyone that's sitting in this Legislature today. I think each and every one of us realizes how important it is to have our provincial fire departments equipped, and we recognize the great work that all of our firefighters across Prince Edward Island do.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

I thank the minister. No offence, but I think your priorities are way out of whack. We've got a \$65 million bridge that was not in the capital budget, and here we are looking for fire equipment in Prince Edward Island and where do our priorities on Prince Edward Island lie?

**Mr. Roach:** When capital budgets go out, they go out to each and every department and the departments would then come back to the finance department. They would sit down and they would talk about what all the priorities are for the province and the decision would be made –

**Mr. LaVie:** Looking after themselves.

**Mr. Roach:** – within the department. They would have X amount of dollars to spend within that department and it would then be converted to this capital budget.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm looking here at the fact that forest fire vehicles are under the CLE capital budget. I was wondering if any capital purchases for search and rescue would also be included in this department's capital budget.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** No, although I expect that this group would work with search and rescue. They are a standalone entity. They have their own facilities. They have their own volunteers. They also have a couple of trailers that I'm aware of, but I'm sure that our department would work closely with them if there was that type of a first responders' need.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Has anyone from search and rescue approached the department asking for any equipment or money to purchase equipment?

**Mr. Roach:** I believe that would fall under public safety.

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, it would?

**Mr. Roach:** Yeah.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

One of the things I hear from fire departments especially, I will say, the New London fire department, they have an issue where they have radios that have an ongoing charge associated with them. I think there was a lot of finagling back and forth. This is the wrong part of the capital budget I'm assuming this is in. I'm looking at the minister of transportation. That's under your department, is it?

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct),

**Mr. Trivers:** It's under justice and public safety as well? I will wait til that page.

Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

Just one question while we're talking on equipment. Do you have a detailed schedule of what equipment is going to be bought at what time and when? Is there anything on that?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Staff do know the vehicles and the order they would like to replace them in. Back in the last session during the budgetary process there was a document in there that listed all the vehicles, their year and where they stand in the queue. I'm sure staff would know exactly which vehicles and the order they would like to replace them in. As was mentioned earlier, that 1988 three-ton that was a float truck puller. They do have a priority list which I could try to get for you if you – on the side.

**Chair:** Total Capital Expenditure – Communities, Land and Environment: 375,000.

Shall it carry?

**An Hon. Member:** Question.

**Chair:** Sorry. Hon. members, if you have a question, if you could indicate to the Chair I'd be happy to add you to the list.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair.

You listed off a number of things under laboratory equipment for Communities, Land and Environment, and I'm curious the reasoning – just explain to me why you would put a certain piece of equipment in the capital budget, but yet maybe another piece of equipment might be under the operating budget. Can you explain the difference to me?

**Mr. Roach:** It depends if its value is over \$10,000 or not.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** That's across the board in government? If the piece of equipment is over \$10,000 it goes in a capital budget and

if it's under \$10,000 it goes in an operating budget?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Are there any exceptions to that for any department?

**Mr. Roach:** None that I'm aware of.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair.

Has that policy been around for quite a long time, the \$10,000?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, that policy's been there in government for some time.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair.

Are there any thought to changing that policy with costs increasing?

**Mr. Roach:** I guess we could consider it. I don't know what you're recommending or what you're proposing.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Not recommending, just curious if that would ever change. Because I suspect that at some point \$10,000 doesn't buy what it used to buy, that's for sure.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Total Capital Expenditure – Communities, Land and Environment: 375,000.

Shall it carry? Carried.

I will direct you to page 9.

Capital Expenditure

Education, Early Learning and Culture

Equipment

“Appropriations provided for equipment purchases.” Trades Training Capital: 250,000. Classroom Technology: 100,000. Total Equipment: 350,000.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

As far as the classroom technology goes, so one thing I have been hearing a lot from my district, as well as other districts, is kids with special needs that require certain devices in the classroom. With the classroom technology, where does that stand now as far as the special needs' kids and the requirements they need?

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

**Mr. Currie:** It depends on the needs of the children. It's a very legitimate question. We've got a fairly rich inclusion model here in Prince Edward Island so there is – we work very closely with Family and Human Services in respect to supports. Some children with severe and unique disabilities would be able to access DSP for devices.

The Public School Branch would not be fully responsible for aids. There would be some level of support, but I can go back and find out. We're spending about \$40 million in the whole area of special education, but there would be sort of – Family and Human Services, depending on the situation, would be involved. Families would have to take some of that responsibility, but depending on the school and the situation that would be a factor as well.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, from what I have heard a lot of these families have agreed to take on the majority of the responsibility, but the service is not provided in a lot of schools. Is there a timeframe when all schools are going to have WiFi, that these special needs kids can take their devices to school? Is there a timeframe that all schools in Prince Edward Island –

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

**Mr. Currie:** Timeframe: by this time next year we will have pretty well all schools

completed with WiFi with the exception of four. A couple of those schools, particularly one which you're very familiar with which is in your riding, is around the asbestos issue, so the wiring can't be put in until students are out. By this time next year I believe 100% of all schools in the Province of Prince Edward Island will have access to WiFi.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

You mentioned one of those schools would be the elementary school in Kensington would not have it by this time next year.

**Mr. Currie:** Queen Elizabeth, yes.

**Mr. MacKay:** Queen Elizabeth? I guess from what I have heard, that was a promise that was made, that they should have had this by now, so to hold them out any longer – realistically when can that school expect WiFi?

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

**Mr. Currie:** By this time next year all schools – the reason why East Wiltshire and Queen Elizabeth are at the back end is because of the asbestos issues. There can't be any interruption or major construction, particularly with the ceiling tiles, or any disruption. That work has to be done over the summer. We can anticipate that that will be completed by this time next year.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

I realize that the asbestos is going to be done over next summer, but will the WiFi be done right after that? It'll be done the same time, basically, then?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Yes.

**Mr. MacKay:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

With regards to the first line for capital for trades training, is there a specific facility that you're looking at putting that equipment in?

**Mr. Roach:** It looks like that's going to be spread out and what there – it's to prepare students for the jobs of the future in construction trades, biotechnology, robotics, and human health sciences.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thanks, Chair.

I applaud you for that. I mean, it's very important that we invest in that type of equipment especially for technology and the way the jobs are ever changing.

You spoke about robotics. Is this primarily for high schools, junior highs and high schools, or where are we looking at here?

**Mr. Roach:** It's primarily for those students who come into grade 10 so that it gives them an opportunity to see what's available in areas they may want to enter into going into the future.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

It's essentially high school level?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes.

**Mr. Aylward:** Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Are we going to be able to ensure that every high school across Prince Edward Island, regardless of the geographic location, that the kids will all have the same advantage, the same equipment, the same resources in their schools?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Absolutely. If you look at the high schools across Prince Edward Island, particularly from Souris, obviously, with the investments that we've made there, all high schools will have defined curriculum, particularly with technology and trades.

We're working very closely with another government department around investments, particularly in training and programming. The college at Holland College is very interested in what's going on with our public system.

To respond to your question, Member from Stratford-Kinlock, that the high schools are – we've got a very robust agenda in respect to trying to respond to those needs of students who may not be aligned to the regular academic stream.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

The minister brings up an interesting question there with regards to the post-secondary institutions such as Holland College.

Do we have that level of dialogue going back and forth to ensure that we're purchasing and putting the technology in our schools that is going to match up for the students as they move onto post-secondary so there's no gap there?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Yeah, there's an extremely strong relationship right now between the college and the public – the department in respect to – I mean, there's constant – they're constantly evaluating the programs and the needs at the college in respect to labour market. We're very much involved in that conversation from our department in respect to what is currently being offered and what programs are being available to students, and how we're preparing our 10s, 11s and 12s.

Not only coming out of grade 12, but when they start grade 10, that they're starting to identify – there's the compulsory CEO course that all students have to take now to match attributes up and start planning their academic agendas to align them to programs at the college.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Did you have another question?

**Mr. Aylward:** I did, actually, Chair.

I'm just wondering – the minister mentioned they have to complete I believe he referred to it as the CEO course.

**Mr. Currie:** Yeah.

**Mr. Aylward:** Can you just elaborate exactly on that?

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

**Mr. Currie:** The CEO course is a career exploration course, and it's compulsory. It's a compulsory course that all students must take in grade 10.

The reason why I know a little more about it is because my daughter who is in grade 10 this year is taking the course. Basically, what they do is they assess their aptitudes and interests. They try to target in on creating a career path plan. In that plan they try to kind of identify potential careers that they could be interested in and what courses they would need moving through their high school experience to be eligible to take those courses.

If it's at the university level, it could be particular maths and sciences. Or if it's at the college level it would be courses or areas of study that would be more aligned to college programming.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

My questions are along similar lines to what the Member from Stratford-Kinlock had brought up.

Again, bringing the minister of education in, I know that trades training is something that is near and dear to your heart. In fact, we had a caucus dinner with the Pages the other day and one of the questions or issues we discussed was post-secondary education and the training to get there, and what's required and how there seems to be a lack of training in the trades area.

What concerns me, when I look at this budget, is it really seems to be a maintenance budget. I mean, 250,000. It's sort of we've got what we have today in our schools, we're going to make sure we keep it there, but what seems like what needs to happen is the trades training program has to grow as opposed to be maintained. Perhaps there is money in the schools' construction and renovations budget, as well, for that growth.

I wanted to know: Do you have specific plans to grow the trades training program in the high school level?

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

**Mr. Currie:** It's a good question. I think the needs of students who are coming through our high school system across Prince Edward Island, they're starting to be more diligent and to question exactly what opportunities are available for them.

I have to say I'm quite impressed with the department in respect to the focus on this whole area of evolving curriculum and programs at the high school level.

There is a substantial volume, if you look at the new building in Montague, the renovations or the refit, as the Member from Souris-Elmira, refers to in Souris, the equipment and the technology at Charlottetown Rural and Colonel Gray. The high schools are much more aligned today than they were five years ago in respect to responding to the needs of those students who are looking and interested in trades training.

Just recently, a few weeks back, I was with the minister responsible for labour market development for an announcement at the college on the Atlantic trade strategy.

I am feeling pretty confident that we're being fairly progressive in Island high schools to respond to the changing needs.

The other thing that is happening with the learning partners, they're starting to look at high school curriculum, looking at the current semester's structure. Because the structured semester, the way it sits right now, it restricts that innovation and creativity for high school students to take another broad range of courses.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** That said, this Capital Budget we see for trades training, is that a maintenance budget or does that include any growth funds?

**Mr. Currie:** That would be, I would have to say, that it's definitely – there's a maintenance component to it, but as a department and as a minister, I'm extremely interested in expanding and growing.

We're working very closely with another government department and the college on how we retrofit or respond to curriculum and programs and equipment to prep our high school students moving forward.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

It sounds like you're saying all the right things in terms of wanting to grow the programs, and talking with the right players, etc., but it just doesn't seem to me that there's any money in the Capital Budget to do it.

That's what I'm trying to confirm at this time. Maybe there will be next year, maybe that's what the plan calls for. Maybe you want to get done with the school reorganization first, but I just want to confirm that, indeed, the budget we see here does not really include any growth.

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

**Mr. Currie:** I think one of our big initiatives right now is the – we all know the

significance and the importance of WiFi in all of our high schools, and all of our schools. Of course, the investment of the Chromebooks, and initiatives like take your device to school.

I think WiFi is a pretty clear priority from an infrastructure perspective, but as the minister I'm very interested in trades training, coming from a family that is very trades-based and grew up in a trades home, and having lots of friends that have gone through trades.

As the minister I'm extremely committed, and as you know there's money available and you have to set your priorities.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

You might have answered this, but I just wanted to clarify. The classroom technology budget estimate is going from \$2.25 million to \$100,000, and that's primarily because the wireless access will be installed by the time we get to the 2017-2018 budget in March. Is that – just to be clear?

**Mr. Currie:** Absolutely, yeah. As (Indistinct) indicated by the Member from Kensington-Malpeque, this time next year we'll have pretty well all schools fitted in WiFi. The reason why there is a delay is because of a couple schools – we have Three Oaks that's under construction which will be delayed because of the impact of the construction, but the other two schools we have asbestos which will be dealt with over the summer and we'll be dealing with the WiFi. So, yeah, yes.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Chair.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald has asked most of the questions.

Just back to the trades training. The budget there, talking about maintenance versus moving proactively, and is there any plan – I guess through the department of education – to grow that trades training component in schools on an ongoing basis? Is it something

that you sit back and you wait for students to show an interest or is there definitely a proactive way of pushing that forward? We know that there's a huge need for trades.

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

**Mr. Currie:** If you look at the family of schools, the Montague family of schools, which you're – as an MLA you represent southern Kings and Belfast. Montague being a newer school it's pretty state-of-the-art in respect to the opportunity for kids in that part of the province.

I would say, from my perspective being in the department now since last January, I'm quite impressed with the focus not just on academics and achievement, but the whole focus on curriculum and programming wherein entrepreneurialship and trades training – it's an area we're focused in.

Obviously, right now in the Capital Budget, WiFi and Chromebooks and getting all our schools technologically equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an immediate priority, but the department – I'm very interested, and the relationship that we have with the college and working with Minister Brown's department, there's some pretty interesting things going on.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Chair.

Just on that, we know that there are going to be jobs in the trades. There are jobs in the trades right now because our demographic are getting older.

I'm just wondering what the focus is on through the department of education to push that. I mean, it's fine to say we have a facility, but in the classroom how much is that pushed as far as students that maybe would succeed much better in a trade than they would moving onto university?

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

**Mr. Currie:** I did share – all grade 10 students coming in have to do the CEO course which is compulsory, and the CEO

course allows – it really gives students a better idea in grade 10 exactly what their aptitudes and what their interests are. That will allow them to create a career academic path plan, and that plan will allow them to make decisions on what particular courses or maths would be required if they wanted to take drafting, for example, at the college.

The other thing that's really important is that the college is very engaged in what's going on with the high school curriculum because the college is designing themselves for the labour market and the labour force, so we're engaged in what they see as the needs of the economy and the communities after Holland College.

They're very much engaged in what's currently being offered and what's going on and what are we doing to provide and equip those students that may not be aligned to go through just a regular academic path.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I just wanted to move down to the capital improvements section for a minute and ask a couple of questions from there.

**Chair:** Sorry hon. member, we're going to – I'd just like to keep it orderly so instead of bouncing around we'll get there.

**Mr. Aylward:** No problem.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Oh, sorry.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering on the budget for the classroom technology, because we know that there's still upgrades going on with the WiFi, and I know in particular the schools that are in my district are at the very end of that cycle. They're the very last ones to get it.

Can we have a list of all the schools and the order by which they're going to have that installation completed?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Absolutely. Actually, I have seen that list and there is a list sort of – actually there is a pretty good balance between the rural-urban discussion about – it's just, I think, probably 25 out of the 45 by the end of January are schools outside the larger centres. But I will bring sort of a work plan back and table that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

I guess I wasn't making any indication that there weren't any rural schools done. The two that are in my district are (Indistinct) schools that you're currently targeting for closure.

While I know that you told the House here today that your mind isn't made up and there's no playbook that you're playing from, it seems awful strange that those schools would be left to the very end of the school year when all these decisions will be – I mean, it's too cute by a half, as a matter of fact, that that would be the case.

I know from a fairness perspective and if you're really planning on being open and giving this process that you're in a fair shot, I don't know why you would take two schools that you've targeted for closure and put them at the very end.

I'd be interested to see what other schools are down really low and see if they're also schools that you've targeted for closure.

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

**Mr. Currie:** I will bring that work plan back and share that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I know that French school up in Fortune is being moved into a renovated school in Rollo Bay, but work came to a halt. Do you know where that's at? I'm getting a lot of the questions, and –

**Chair:** Actually, we're going to get to that in the next section. Do you want to save it for the next section?

**Mr. LaVie:** Okay.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Capital Improvements – Schools

“Appropriations provided for school construction and Capital improvements.”  
School Construction and Renovations: 10,180,000. Capital Repairs: 1,500,000.  
Total Capital Improvements – Schools: 11,680,000.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct).

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** My question, again to the minister.

We know that the French school is leaving Fortune into Rollo Bay. Rollo Bay is being a renovated school, and it's at a standstill right now. Do you know where that's at? The work has been done, probably three or four months ago (Indistinct) the other work is done, but nothing else.

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

**Mr. Currie:** My understanding is that it is a Capital Budget priority, and I can't speak why there would be a stoppage or a delay, but I can certainly find that out. I will send a message off and hopefully I can get the question before we finish up here today. It is one of our Capital Budget priorities and I'll have that information for you.

**Mr. LaVie:** Appreciate that.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of questions on the school construction and renovation. First is where is the \$10 million going? Where are you planning on spending it this year?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Can you repeat that question, please?

**Mr. Myers:** The \$10 million on the school construction and renovations, I'm just wondering –

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

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, the \$6,530,000 is going to Three Oaks, and \$3,650,000 is going to Ecole La-Belle-Cloche up in Rollo Bay.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

Last year the budget estimate was almost \$9.3 million and you spent \$7.3 million, so you spent \$2 million less on your capital renovations than you had planned on last year. What happened or what got delayed or what got pushed out that you didn't spend that?

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

**Mr. Currie:** I don't have that information (Indistinct).

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance, do you have that information?

**Mr. Roach:** I don't have that information. Do you want to (Indistinct)?

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** Three Oaks was delayed going in with that money. It'll be pushed out into a third year so the project (Indistinct) change in size.

**Mr. Roach:** The money doesn't go away, it just gets –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** There's 2 million in this current Capital Budget for school construction and repairs that isn't new money?

**Mr. Roach:** That's money that's fresh (Indistinct).

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you very much, Chair.

With the pending changes with our education system here on PEI, of course, there have been lots of public meetings. I'm hearing loud and clear from my constituents that if not already, very soon down the road, we're going to be looking at the need for an additional school, or schools even possibly, to be built in the Stratford area.

Has there been any advance insight into looking at land possibilities around that future plan?

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

**Mr. Currie:** My department has not had any discussions on land acquisition. We don't know exactly what the recommendations would be coming from.

We do have some situations in the Charlottetown area, which are very close to Stratford, which are extremely under-utilized.

I'm sure all of that will be on the table. We have not had any discussion. We're presenting our Capital Budget plan over the next five years. There is no indication for new infrastructure.

I did have a very good conversation with the mayor of Stratford. He is concerned about the community and what lies in place for public education.

Stratford is a feeder school to Stonepark and Stonepark is a school right now that is extremely overcapacity with some pretty serious issues. That would be a school that

would definitely need to be addressed as far as September of next year.

There is no formal planning on behalf of the department and there are no formal discussions about new capital infrastructure for schools in Stratford at this point in time.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I know you talked about what you're investing in or hoping to invest in in the next couple of years.

Would you be able to bring back the capital dollars invested into Morell high, Morell Consolidated, Mount Stewart Consolidated, and Donagh Regional over the past five years for me?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Sure.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Carried.

**Chair:** You had a question? Make sure you signal. I'll put you on the list.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, going back to the asbestos in the schools, last year when the tenders went out, how many tenders were on cleaning up the asbestos, how many different companies?

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

**Mr. Currie:** I don't have that information right now, I'll have to bring that back.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Obviously, with the schools there was quite a concern of the asbestos not being cleaned up.

The question was raised to me numerous times and I wanted to ask: If there was more than one tender on the asbestos in the school, why wasn't another tender allocated to clean up the schools in an efficient time?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** The tenders would have been put out through our department because we do most of the tendering even though it's on behalf of.

I can go back, hon. member, and get that information on if and how many. I know there was one, obviously, received, but how many others were received – I can certainly get that information.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just a question to the minister. Under school construction and renovations, I understand that there were a couple of requests for Ecole-sur-Mer and Evangeline for renovations and they didn't get into this Capital Budget. Could the minister explain the rationale behind that and what happened?

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

**Mr. Currie:** The French Language School Board, the total envelope for capital budget was approximately 100 million. The total envelope of capital budget to public education, both French and English, was approximately 25 million, which is 25% of the overall budget.

Keeping in mind that there is competing demands for the capital budget all across government, so basically the priorities are set by the French Language School Board. Those requests were submitted through the capital budget process. Both Evangeline and Ecole-sur-Mer were priorities. We're committed to completing the project in

École La Belle Cloche in Souris, which is a major initiative that was started.

We also have some infrastructure investment in École-sur-Mer in respect to their new band room, and we have renovation money aside for Evangeline.

**Chair:** Shall the section carry? Carried.

Capital Improvements – Culture

“Appropriations provided for culture infrastructure.” Museum and Heritage Sites: 150,000. Total Capital Improvements. Culture: 150,000.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering if the minister could confirm whether or not that 150,000 is just the beginning of the money that is going to filter into Stratford for the new museum?

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

**Mr. Aylward:** I'm serious, now. I'm serious.

**Mr. Currie:** There have been no discussions of any new museum build. That money will be targeted to maintain and to enhance our current level of museums all across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you very much, Chair.

If this money is not going to Stratford for the new museum that eventually will be built in Stratford, what is this money being used for, exactly?

**Mr. Currie:** This money would be used to address capital needs and improvements and maintenance and upgrades in all our museums across the province.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

That's great, but I'm looking for specifics. I'm looking to find out if there are various cultural sites all across Prince Edward Island. Where is the funding going to? Is it going to one? Is it going to two? Is it going to several?

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

**Mr. Roach:** Some of the identified issues that are in some of the museums that have to be identified is the Green Park Shipbuilding museum and Yeo House. Two of the barns on the property have been neglected for years and now suffer from some structural damage. They require some immediate attention.

Orwell Village is another one that's identified for some renovations. The Watts building has been identified, and some of the facility doesn't meet current standards and environmental controls, and there needs to be some work there.

The Acadian Museum is looking for new flooring, lighting upgrades. Basin Head is looking for some work. Elmira buildings needs some work. Again, Green Park, they're looking for upgrades to the washrooms, the roadway.

Those are all the ones that are in there to get some of this money that is projected out over the next number of years.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

We have Green Park, we have Orwell, the Watts building, Acadian Museum, Basin Head museum. Can you identify the exact dollar amount going for each one of those facilities?

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

**Mr. Roach:** I see that in what's budgeted, what's forecasted, is over the next number of years, I think it's –

**Mr. Aylward:** Chair.

**Mr. Roach:** – five years out, 150,000 a year for a total of 750,000.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Okay, my point was – now, the minister just answered what my point was. I'm only able to focus on the current year because I don't have the multi-year outlook.

**Mr. Roach:** The current year is –

**Mr. Aylward:** 150 –

**Mr. Roach:** 150,000

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, my question would be: What's the break down between Green Park, Orwell, Watts, Acadian, and Basin Head.

**Mr. Roach:** I don't have that.

**Mr. Aylward:** Chair.

**Chair:** Hon. members, just to clarify, the multi-year outlook is on page 3 in your book.

Thank you.

**Mr. Aylward:** All right.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** I'm wondering: Could the minister bring that detail back?

**Mr. Roach:** Minister, would your staff have that detail for this year?

**Mr. Currie:** Yes, the (Indistinct).

**Mr. Roach:** For this year.

**Mr. Currie:** Absolutely.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, and then I'm going to go to somebody else.

If you have more questions I'd be happy to come back to you.

**Mr. Aylward:** No, it's just the same question, I just have to ask it three or four times. Could the minister bring that detailed breakdown back?

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

**Mr. Currie:** I said yes.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

**Mr. Aylward:** Thank you, Chair.

To clarify, the Minister of Finance turned to the minister of education and said: Would your staff have that breakdown to which the minister responded: Yes, they would have it. That's fine, I know that they would have it, but I wanted to know specifically if he would bring it back. He's now said he will bring it back. I just want to clarify that.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

I think it's probably fair to deduce from the fact that five years out at 150,000 per year it's certainly not on this government's agenda to give us a new provincial museum. Would that be a fair assumption to make?

**Mr. Roach:** There's no financial planning for a new provincial museum at this time.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Going right through to 2021-2022?

**Mr. Roach:** Well, not for (Indistinct) – I mean, things can change.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Right, as we saw with the Cornwall bypass. A lot of money suddenly became available. Okay.

**Mr. Roach:** Just in response to that. Last year in the House I was asked the question: Could this budget change last years? I responded: Yes. You can find it in Hansard. I said: Yes, it may change. Because there are negotiations potentially ongoing with the

new federal government and we're hoping that if we get those changes there could be changes in the budget.

I'll give you the same response this year. If suddenly the federal government come along and says: Look, we're going to put a whole lot of money into culture, and we have an opportunity, I'm sure we would look at that. We wouldn't wait until the end of this cycle to do that.

I hope that opens it up for you.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Of course, forecasts and estimates change every year in every department.

**Mr. Roach:** That's, I think, why they're called budget estimates.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Sure, I understand that, and I happen to know that there is federal money available if a government is so inclined to apply for it for cultural uses. I just wanted it noted for the record that obviously for the next five years that is not something – at least at this point in time – that this government has any particular interest in.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Chair.

Along that same line I was going to ask the question, if there is money available, if we have a matching with federal government, could we look at maybe getting a provincial museum? This is just the Capital Budget so we know things can change. I'd ask the minister if that's a possibility.

**Mr. Roach:** I think with the money that's available right now there are no matching funds for that.

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

**Ms. Compton:** If money does come available it's something that this government will look at?

**Mr. Roach:** I think anytime money becomes available I think that we would always look at it. If it can fit within our budgetary forecast, we'd consider it.

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Chair.

Is that something we could debate in this House before you spend it?

**Mr. Roach:** I think we are a long way from a debate at this point. On that one there is no money available.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, is there any money in the Capital Budget here for musical instruments, specifically for schools?

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

**Mr. Currie:** We invested 100,000 just recently for new band equipment. We work very closely with the Public Schools Branch on the Capital Budget and with my department to look at ways, if there is slippage and there's opportunity. Have it on the forefront all the time.

But we did an announcement at East Wiltshire of 100,000, and there is a committee that struck band teachers to determine who gets those instruments. So, yes.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

The reason I bring that up is I know that at Gulf Shore Consolidated they were in a bad way in terms of needing more instruments and instrument upgrades. I know that the music teacher there, Kirsten MacLean, did a great job using her contacts because she sits on some national boards of music education-wise of finding money through a national program to actually purchase more instruments for that school.

I guess my next question is: That 100,000, you say that will be allocated across Prince Edward Island, is that right?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Yeah, there is a committee struck that's sort of independent from government that will be working with the band teachers across the province, and band programs, to look at distributing fairly the resources they have to enhance new pieces of equipment in band programs.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Was that part of last year's Capital Budget?

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

**Mr. Currie:** (Indistinct).

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** You announced it but it wasn't part of any Capital Budget, it was found money, as it were.

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

**Mr. Currie:** It wasn't found money, it's money that was identified that we targeted that was not used maybe for whatever particular reason. It's just getting good use of the money we have and trying to meet the needs that are coming at us in the public school system.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, minister. Definitely, I think that's fantastic you're investing 100,000 in musical instruments because I think it's a core key part of the curriculum.

One thing that concerns me is I know there are teachers out there that weren't necessarily aware that was coming and so they were working very hard outside of the province to get money when, if they knew

the money was coming, it might have made their life a whole lot easier.

Going back to the idea of an infrastructure summit, and communication, openness and transparency and putting stuff in the Capital Budget – you know where I'm going.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

Is there any money here going towards the office of the public archives and records?

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

**Mr. Currie:** Yes. As I've indicated, we will be presenting a five-year strategy and I have communicated pieces of that strategy.

If you look at the Capital Budget, we have identified a secondary site for storage because the current storage facilities for the Public Archives and Records Office is at capacity. We are moving and have identified approval through the Capital Budget process. Yes, that would be my response to that question.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

Can you tell me in which of the three or five years this will happen in? Because I don't see anything about 150,000 every year.

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

**Mr. Currie:** Is this pertaining to the question about the secondary site for public archives?

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, as per the Auditor General's (Indistinct).

**Mr. Currie:** It's in this Capital Budget and we have a site identified as well.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

Where would I find it in the budget, I guess?

**Mr. Roach:** It's not in this budget, it's in the current year budget.

**Mr. Myers:** Current year Capital Budget (Indistinct), this Capital Budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Currie:** Current year. There's money – as a result of responding to the Auditor General's report, it's in current year.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, there's no line there. It's 150,000 was your budget estimate and your budget forecast is 150,000. You only had 150,000, but you've just told the House that that money goes towards a variety of other institutions and stuff.

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

**Mr. Roach:** Perhaps I can help here. The budget expenditures and the estimates are for 2017-2018. As a result of the recommendations made by the Auditor General, we put it in the current year which is the budget we're currently operating on. That's where that money's coming from for the archive.

**Mr. Myers:** I completely understand that.

**Mr. Roach:** Okay.

**Mr. Myers:** So 150,000 is all you have in that line item. How much money did you spend (Indistinct)?

**Mr. Roach:** It's not in this budget. It's not in the 2017-2018 budget, it's in the 2016-2017 budget.

**Mr. Myers:** Which is right there as a budget forecast. I can read! It's there, it's on the page! It says budget estimate 2016-2017, then it says budget forecast 2016-2017, this year's budget.

**Chair:** Thank you.

We'll get an answer here from (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Myers:** No, he's (Indistinct) treating me like I'm stupid. I'm not stupid, I can read a budget book. I've been here for five years. I worked on budget systems for the province for five years before that! I know a budget.

**Chair:** Hon. member, we're going to have the Minister of Finance respond to your question.

**Mr. Roach:** To the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, in any way I have given you the feeling that I somehow think you're stupid, that's not the case.

**Mr. Myers:** I don't feel stupid, I just want the answer.

**Mr. Roach:** And we are trying to get you the answer, but I don't want anyone walking out of here feeling that they're being treated unfairly or that anybody here is being disrespectful to you.

**Mr. Myers:** I'm fine, I just wanted the answer because it was in the AG's report so it was really serious stuff. It's very serious.

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

**Mr. Currie:** We'll make sure that – get specific clarity on your question. But it is in budget, it will be part of the five-year strategy. It is in existing. But we'll bring that information for clarity on which budget and –

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair.

Where is this building located?

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

**Mr. Currie:** It's – I don't think – I believe it's Slemon Park. I'll bring that back as well.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** How much of this went to museums, then, and how much went to the storage building in Slemon Park?

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

**Mr. Currie:** I'll bring specifics back on that as well.

**Mr. Myers:** I guess that's it. I can't ask any more questions (Indistinct).

**Chair:** Shall the section carry?

**Mr. Trivers:** I have a question.

**Chair:** On that section or the next section?

**Mr. Trivers:** Actually it is technically on that question. Doesn't matter should we carry it or not.

**Chair:** Yeah, we carried it. So we're going to go to Bus Replacement.

**Mr. Trivers:** I'd like to still ask a question.

**Chair:** Okay, sure. What is your question?

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair.

This is talking about the musical instruments again. We talked about how there was \$100,000 announced, but I believe it was the member from Miscouche in your (Indistinct) statement today, your member statement, you actually asked for band equipment to be donated, is that correct?

I'm trying to marry these two concerns together. We seem to have a lot of funding that's going to be used to purchase band equipment province-wide, but at the same time the member from Miscouche is saying: Look, we don't have enough band equipment, we're looking for donations.

It seems to me we need to put some of this money in our Capital Budget so people know what's going on. Either there's a disconnect in communication or else the money has already been allocated. I wonder if you could respond to that.

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

**Mr. Currie:** I've been sitting at these tables now for 10 years when it comes to capital budget, and if you look at the history of capital budget spending there's always

intense competing demands from all government departments for more capital budget.

If you look at what we've announced this year, approximately \$100,000, if you look at what education has basically gotten, 25% of that overall Capital Budget, with – between the English and the French board, we've got new schools. I did make a statement a number of weeks back for an additional \$100,000.

I think it's safe to say, to be very honest, there's always going to be more asks, and whether it be new infrastructure – we had questions from the member from Stratford today on a new build in Stratford. There's always going to be competing demands from government departments. I think my focus is to make sure that we get the best value for every dollar we have, not only in the operational side of public education but to make sure that we do what we can.

For example, when we were able to identify money that wasn't used we reinvested that money back in new band equipment. That's part of the challenge, and we'd always like to have more. We've got pressures on both the French and the English side.

Part of the reality of our situation right now with our public school system, we have schools that were built in the mid-1950s, particularly in the Charlottetown area, and we do the best we can with the dollars we have.

**Chair:** Bus Replacement.

“Appropriations provided for the purchase of new buses.” School Buses: 1,070,000. Total Bus Replacement: 1,070,000.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you.

I see that in all previous years and in all subsequent years it's \$2,070,000. Is there a reason why we're a million down on just this particular annual Budget?

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Call the hour.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hour has been called.

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

**Chair:** Shall it carry? Carried.

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 p.m.

**The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

If I could indulge you with a couple of minutes – I would like to welcome tonight – we have Pat Banks, president of the PC association here, Adam Ross, and Krista Shaw.

I would also like to say hello to a good friend of mine in District 19, Janet Payne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Motions Other Than Government

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would now like to call Motion No. 72 to the floor.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

**Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron):** Motion No. 72.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters moves, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the following motion:

**WHEREAS** the Public Schools Branch serves approximately 19,000 students from kindergarten to Grade 12 in Prince Edward Island;

**AND WHEREAS** the Public Schools Branch includes 56 English public schools, 26 of which have been recommended for review under the School Review Process currently taking place;

**AND WHEREAS** members of the public have expressed widespread criticism and concern about the current process that calls for a review of schools every five years and which offers no regard for the impact of the school review process on the future of their home community;

**AND WHEREAS** much of the data collected during the current school review process on the various families of schools concentrates on enrollment numbers, future maintenance costs and projections surrounding residential and economic development in an area;

**AND WHEREAS** the very principles of the School Review Process are centered on regressive and negative outcomes for the future of our schools and their communities;

**AND WHEREAS** this government in its 2015 election campaign promised that it would not close schools;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that this Legislative Assembly listen to their electors and taxpayers' growing concern about the current school review process, which many have publicly stated is moving too quickly and is too concentrated on dollars and cents rather than the best interests of Island school aged children and Island communities;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the School Review Process have as its mandate the maintenance of all current schools in the system regardless of their enrollment;

**AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the School Review

Process in areas of low enrollments concentrate on economic development for the area aimed at bringing in new businesses, and an increased population;

**AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the School Review Process also ensure that schools with low enrollments receive incentives and supports for the utilization and conversion of extra classroom space by their communities for various activities such as health and wellness, art, culture, music, dance, senior activities, space for new businesses, craft development, training programs, just to name a few;

**AND THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this Legislative Assembly call for the immediate removal of the every five year requirement for a school review process under the new School Change Policy.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to start out. I know at the end of this debate I'll get to close it and I want to hear from everybody, so I'm not going to talk for a long time. I am going to talk about some of the ideas that have been bouncing around in my head.

For five years I have been elected and for five years I've been beating the same drum: small communities are important, rural communities are important, the government is not investing in those communities, and the government isn't doing enough to help ensure the survival of those communities. The small schools are important and they're a part of the fabric of the rural life. Without rehashing all of that, I'm going to go and I'm going to talk about it in a new way.

I don't think that there's not movement that has to happen on this file. I don't think for a second that there shouldn't be some work done as it pertains to reviewing schools. I don't necessarily agree with the process and I'll get into that in a minute. There are two separate and distinct issues. One is urban schools are overcrowded and the other is – I don't even call it an issue, but to separate it from what's going on is that we have small

schools in Prince Edward Island that are the fabric of the communities that they are in.

Let's start with the urban schools because we can deal with these independently. I think that you fellows over there have been elected for 10 years. This problem has – awful close to 10, you have been here for two – this problem has been increasing over that period of time. I think that the numbers that government has been flashing around for all of these years also showed that in the Charlottetown area the population was growing and that this was in fact going to happen.

We watched Stratford grow. Anybody who travels from Kings County to Charlottetown has watched Stratford grow simply by all of the apartment buildings that have popped up along the stretch, things that you can see while you drive to Charlottetown. It used to be a wide open field there, trees where the Sobeys is now, and then a field as you're coming down to the bridge, and now when you look it is all full and it's all getting developed.

I think government needs to make changes in the Charlottetown area to help accommodate the overcrowding problem. I think government needs to make some changes to help ensure that the classroom size and the classroom composition are adequate for student excellence. Those are important things that need to happen in Charlottetown.

On the other side, most of us are quite happy in rural Prince Edward Island with what we have, our small schools, the community interaction, and we all understand how important they are. We're not taking away from – it's not because of us that the Charlottetown schools are overcrowded. It's not because we choose to live in rural Prince Edward Island that the Charlottetown schools are overcrowded. They are overcrowded because of government inaction. I mean, let's call a spade a spade. It's because government has slowly watched this happen over the past 10 years and has done nothing about it.

Equally, I could say the same about the decreasing enrollment that we have watched in the rural communities. We saw it today. The Member from Morell-Mermaid was

able to point out that the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning is predicting a population boom on Prince Edward Island. It's just going to be booming because he has a population strategy. The minister of education, his people are out and the numbers that they are showing us at public meetings are saying: No, you guys are disappearing.

It can't be both. There can't be both. If we're growing – I would like to believe that the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning has a handle on this. I would like to believe that the population is growing and I would like to believe that government has a plan because they should have it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct) we're growing.

**Mr. Myers:** Well, it'll be marked down and you're probably going to hear it a lot through this school review process if you continue down the road that you're on.

So why not give it an honest effort? Why not put some faith in the policy? The policy that the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning is bringing forward has no value if there is no effort put into it. There is no value in what he is telling us today unless we get behind him and put effort into implementing that report. I think that's important. That is something that I have been talking about here for five years. The fact that you can't show me those numbers and you can't just say the line goes down and that's all there is to it – if you were in business, if you were McDonalds and you were looking at your line going down, you would be everything to change it. You would be throwing everything but the kitchen sink in it to try to make that number go around.

Why was government satisfied with the last 10 years of pointing at a sheet of paper and showing me: No, your line's going down, sorry?

People who live in rural Prince Edward Island love it. I represent some great communities. I'm going to talk about the two communities that have schools, Georgetown and Cardigan.

Both facilities are facilities that people in their communities are very proud to have.

Both facilities are community facilities. The community rallies around – I know in Georgetown it's in close proximity to the rink, the playhouse, and tons of other wonderful things that are going on down in Georgetown right now. There's a regrowth period happening there.

Another thing I have to laugh at – and the Member from Belfast-Murray River was pointing that out today to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, when she was saying that he stands up and he says great things are happening in Georgetown and we're investing money into the old pulp yard there and there's going to be all these jobs.

Yet when I go to the education meeting it says: Georgetown school, no economic activity to speak of. Maybe the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism could correct that. Maybe it's his job to say: Whoa, we're dumping some big money in there because we have confidence that Georgetown can grow. Maybe one conversation between the two of you.

The minister of education can go back to Bob Andrews and said: Hey, numbers are wrong. They've been way off base since day one, and maybe it's time to stop that process there. We don't need to stop the process everywhere. The problem in Charlottetown needs to be fixed. No problem in my district. No problem at all. We're quite happy with the facilities that we have.

My children both went to school in Cardigan. They're through that phase now. They're in intermediate and high school. It, too, wonderful school, wonderful community support. The people in the community are really behind that school.

Like I said in Question Period today, why is it that we out in the smaller areas of Prince Edward Island have to come to Charlottetown and justify to you why we should keep a school? You wonder why people are frustrated, you wonder why people are getting more and more frustrated all the time with this process. It's not fair to ask people to beg for their school, part of the fabric of our communities, and it's very important to them.

One of the other things – and it's been touched on and it goes back to the Workforce and Advanced Learning population strategy that has yet to be announced but we hear has wonderful numbers in it – is that it's going to be really hard to attract young families into those rural communities if we're not able to offer those services.

It's going to be really hard when people are talking to the realtor and saying there's this place and this place and this place, and you have a young family, one of the first questions they're going to get is: How close are we to the school? You're an hour and 20 minute bus ride each way.

You've already stacked the deck enough against us out there. We don't need this. Willingly, we'll help you fix the problems in Charlottetown. Willingly, we'll be a part of that discussion and help get you on the right track in Charlottetown.

We don't have a problem in Kings County. We don't have a problem in our rural schools. We're very happy, and I think that you need to stop it completely out there.

The last thing I'll touch on for now, and I'll come back – and I promise to be shorter at the end of this – is the five-year requirement for the school review. I've been at enough meetings between the Georgetown school and the Cardigan school to hear people say that this is a real deterrent for people to choose that school when they're registering their child.

You're taking a five-year old, putting them in school this spring and you're just through the process, by the time they're in grade 4 you're living through this again and you're saying: In grade 4 I could have to change school and put my child in a new environment in grade 4.

It's enough to make people look, and people have told me in Cardigan that they chose Montague because they knew it wouldn't close. They knew it wouldn't be closed. Then our numbers go down. Those numbers that you guys like to show me and say are going down, they're really not down. When you look and say there's children here, they're just not going to school here, we

need to find what the underlying reason is why, and that's certainly one of them.

That's why I brought forward that part of the motion today, to take out the five-year review.

Anyway, I think this is really important. It's an important discussion for this Assembly. I hope everyone gets behind it here tonight.

I want you to remember, as you debate this motion, we have two problems. Problems in your words only. There's an overcrowding issue in the city schools, and when you go to the rural areas there's no problem. We're fine and we're happy. We're not complaining. We never said a word. We're quite happy with what we have.

In Charlottetown I hear them. They're complaining. You've taken their resources – (Indistinct) resource rooms and you're piling people in there; There's a problem because they're saying there's a problem.

It's important to listen to the voices. The people in the cities are saying: We have a problem. The people in rural areas are happy. They're not saying there's a problem.

Think of that while we debate this motion tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I need a podium if I can find one here. I have a doodad.

While I'm waiting for that, I'd like to also mention that this is an important issue, this motion. We have also people that have travelled here from Westisle family of schools tonight, and I want to recognize them, that this is a motion that's dear and true to Islanders hearts.

I am pleased to rise tonight to second this motion which outlines our concerns about the current school review process and calls

for the elimination of every five-year requirement of the review of our school system.

I want to stress that I am seconding this motion because I care about the future direction of our education system in our province, and I care about the sustainability of rural communities.

I believe that this motion represents our opportunity to ensure the decisions made by our government reflect what is important to our families, our children, our children's education, and our community as a whole. This is not an easy task.

It's interesting to note that the theme of the province-wide school review is better learning for all. That is an objective that I think most of us can agree with on both sides of the floor. We want our children prepared academically to compete in a growing complex world, one that requires major changes and adjustments to the curriculum to meet the rapid advances in technology. I believe we all can agree that our children cannot be left behind.

Our schools must be able to adjust to a new world, and we must ensure our children have a strong educational foundation going forward.

I've been looking over some materials provided during this process related to the assessment of family of schools. There's lots of talk about the school enrollments, the structure of the school, the parking lots, and even accessibility.

The report related to my own Kinkora family of schools troubles me greatly. It shows and predicts that enrollments will continue to decline, and our schools are projected to be under-utilized into the future. Amherst Cove has a 37% utilization rate. Kinkora High has 75%. Somerset Elementary at 50%.

Physically or structurally, Amherst Cove, Kinkora, and Somerset Elementary identified it as being in pretty good shape. The overall cost of the operation and maintenance of these three schools is roughly \$300,000 annually. Not much when you have to consider that the government can find \$65 million for a six-mile stretch of

highway, or they can pave a section of road for a soapbox derby, but we cannot find money to fund our schools in the classrooms.

I also want to point out that what really bothers me on this information on the Kinkora Family of Schools is that residential-commercial development in all three schools areas has been identified as being none to report.

The minister of economic development is telling me things are ready to happen in Borden-Carleton.

It shows we have another example of lack of communication between that minister and the minister of education.

Will closing a couple of schools in this area make any difference? Will lumping all our children into one big school really help provide better learning for all, or will it simply save a couple hundred thousand dollars? Will closing a couple of schools help to grow our community and change the information that it states in the summary: "No significant residential development in the catchment area." In Kinkora we have a brand-new subdivision up and running and ready to go. In Borden-Carleton we have a new one in Cape Traverse and we have another one being developed in Bells Point.

To me, that sounds like a government that feels that this is the way it is, and this is the way it has to stay. Perhaps it is an example of Wade's way or the highway.

Are these assessments telling Islanders that since enrollment is declining that means just shut her down? Do we suck it up, or realize that people just want to work in our smaller communities, they don't want to live here, or our kids? Well, they have to go to big schools. I do not agree.

The report on the Kinkora Family of Schools recommends a more in-depth study of each school. From what I have read, the objective of that study would be, and I quote, "...better student distribution, optimal grade configuration, and more efficient use of facilities..." Not much there about better learning for all.

To me, this is rather a bleak outlook for the future of our communities and our children. I believe that we need to do better. I believe that the very spirit of community engagement that brought you all here tonight can and will ensure a better education and life for all.

It has been said over and over again that our schools and hospitals are the backbone of our communities, and I believe that. Yet, systematically, these are being shut down. We heard that very strongly in West Prince when I was up there to that.

You know they continue to take away from West Prince. Well, they're not going to let it happen in their school system.

Unfortunately, major changes have taken place in the past and are taking place today in isolation of each other. These changes are having a negative impact on the sustainability of our rural communities. These changes, if we needed them, let them continue, they'll be taking away from the backbone of small communities and towns. Pretty soon there will be nothing left to sustain there anymore.

All through this process I have felt that there is a real lack of overall vision for communities as a whole. What is your vision here tonight for your community? We must think about this. What do you see in the future? What would you like to see happen? Are you giving up and facing bleak realities? Or are you willing to pitch in and build your vision of a vibrant community where our children can learn and grow and be part of something special? Are you willing to help build a Kinkora family of communities where our children can have community pride, go to schools near their homes, and be engaged in helping to build something better?

Yes, our schools are costing taxpayers' money, but there is a price for everything we do. What price are you willing to pay when it comes to your future, your children's future, and the future of your community?

My thought is that we cannot allow the further erosion of our communities from school closures and hospital closures that take people, teachers, and health care

workers, our parents and our children, to other areas.

This is not going to strengthen our rural areas. It's going to weaken them. Maybe our schools will be under-utilized, but with some community effort and some community spirit we can make use of that space and perhaps create more jobs and bring people to our areas. Or encourage other entrepreneurs into new businesses.

Of course, I believe a high quality of education facilities is vital to our future. I also believe that our children need the sense of community, of belonging, of being engaged. I hope that the impact of this review in our local communities will be an important part of the discussion and the decisions that are made as we go forward. We do not need to be going backwards.

From what I see about this process thus far is that it's all about the schools, about cutting costs. It's not about the children. It's not about the communities. Let's not let brick and mortar and dollars define the future of our students and our children. I think together we can do better.

I want to share some things that are happening in Kinkora with you. In the last 10 years the council has been very aggressive in growing this community. In 2001 they constructed a multi-unit residential subdivision. All these lots in the subdivision were sold within six months, but there's no talk about that in the school review. In 2014 another 22 subdivision was created, and that has been steadily filling up. No talk about that in the review. There is an additional area of the subdivision zoned for 20 senior housing units to keep families in our rural PEI. This will provide seniors to sell their large homes to new families so that they can move into the area and it allows them to stay in our community.

The community of Kinkora has also been very progressive in renewing its infrastructure so that they can grow. They've invested in upgrades to the central sewer system. They have installed 1.2 kilometres of sidewalks so the kids and the families can walk in the area. Kinkora Place, the community centre, has received over \$400,000 in renovations and upgrades. The community has invested \$500,000 in their

fire department. It, further, has a full-time paramedic staff or ambulance on staff most times of the day, which is a very big plus for the area. The fire department has over 32 volunteer firefighters and first responders.

The councils of Kinkora, Borden and Bedeque came together and they unanimously agreed to stick together and to support their rural schools. This is a very important step, especially when we have the minister of community and cultural affairs talking about bringing in a new municipal act to have municipalities join together and amalgamate.

The school system supports that. In turn, as our community, we fully support our schools. When government was unable to update our playground equipment, the communities of Borden and Kinkora came together and they raised the money to upgrade their playground equipment for their children. The community stepped up to the plate. This goes to the example of how important communities will stand behind their schools.

Businesses in the area are thriving in Borden and Kinkora. We're further being told by the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism – I'll go back a second ago to what I said. He's telling me things are ready to go in Borden and Kinkora. Why would we want to limit the resources and the facilities that are in our rural areas if these things are going to happen?

The province invested heavily in Georgetown, and the hon. member mentioned that with the wood facility down there. To get that back together. It's things like this that help our rural areas grow.

I want to read some quotes. These are from recent people that moved to Borden-Kinkora. I think it speaks volumes in regards to this school review.

This is from (Indistinct) Andrew McCarville, a young family:

Over the last few years I've had the privilege of working in the Kinkora Family of Schools. I have seen, firsthand, the quality and exceptional education our children receive, as well as the tremendous amount of community pride and dedication

in our schools. As someone who was raised in Summerside, moved to Kinkora with my husband, and became part of the close-knit supportive rural community, it has shown me that there's nowhere I would rather be to raise my children than in Kinkora.

Derek Dreyer comes out and says:

One of the main reasons for choosing the community of Kinkora when we moved to PEI was the proximity of the schools. With both elementary and high schools, our children are able to complete the education from day one to post-secondary. I also believe that it's a major draw for other families considering moving and developing in the areas of Kinkora Family of Schools.

This goes on. There are a number of people who have given testimonials of why they chose a rural area. This basically echoes what we've heard as a caucus from tip to tip of this Island. People want to live in rural PEI, they want to educate their children in rural PEI, and they want to develop in rural PEI.

I want to touch, briefly, on the evidence of inaccuracy in the reports leading to the phase two studies. An inaccurate report – and that's exactly what the report that we are basing these things on, this decision on, this review on, is inaccuracy.

There was a huge number of mistakes and inaccurate projections within the Kinkora Family of Schools which leads us to lose faith in the accuracy of reports for all of the zones, which is the total lack of competence demonstrated in these reports that were presented to the board of trustees on October 6<sup>th</sup>, as well as the catchment data that was released on November the 4<sup>th</sup>, that shows that the department of education needs to go back to the drawing board and recalculate the projections. Furthermore, no schools should be recommended for a phase two review without first correcting these numerous mistakes and miscalculations.

Acting against their own policies the department has done that. It has also become apparent the department of education made changes to the Somerset and Athena dual zone without first going through the proper legislated process required at the time. What

other changes have they made to zones all across the province behind closed doors?

Evidence of these changes is proven by the following: mistake in map. The zone map dated April 14<sup>th</sup> in Borden-Kinkora which had been posted on the PSB website demonstrated that someone created this map which assigned the five communities in the dual zone of Bedeque, Lower Bedeque, Central Bedeque, Fernwood, and Chelton exclusively to the Athena-Three Oaks zone whereby this zone had previously been zoned for both Somerset, KRHS and Athena-TOSH.

Parker Grimmer referred to this map as a mistake and, when questioned by the *Journal Pioneer*, added that the minister and other members within the department of education were not aware of its existence. How could this be possible if this map is actually consistent with messages shared by parents and other online information and catchment data also shared by the department of education?

Furthermore, Bob Andrews contradicted Grimmer's statement when he declared on October 6<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup> that he was not aware of the dual zone. I find that hard to believe. How could this be possible if the new map did not reflect policy as Grimmer had stated? Who was telling the truth, Mr. Andrews or Mr. Grimmer? If Grimmer was correct, then this mistake in the map truly did not reflect policy of the department. How much faith can we have in the study done by Bob Andrews when he completed a review of the Kinkora Family of Schools without even taking five whole communities into consideration?

If this degree of inaccuracy was demonstrated in Kinkora, how accurate has he been in the five other families of schools? The inaccuracies in this report continue and continue. I believe that this motion should be considered by all members of the House and that we (Indistinct) put a stop to the processes going forward and back this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First off, with your indulgence I, too, would like to welcome everyone here in the gallery, especially those that came from long distances tonight out in West Prince. It's great to see you here, and it underscores the importance that Islanders, especially rural Islanders, have assigned to this school review process.

I have to admit, when I first read the motion and it was first proposed by the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, I thought to myself: Of course we need a school review process, how else would it work? But the more I thought about the more I realized that schools are living, breathing parts of the community, and if there's ever an issue with the school it is almost readily apparent to the community where the school is located. The parents are there engaged with the parent-teacher associations. The students are attending there on a regular basis and bringing back information. The staff is there and they know exactly what's going on.

To have a review process, as has been mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition and the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that relies on external data like the economic health of the surrounding area and the amount of housing that is being built doesn't make sense. It really puts itself into a chicken-and-egg scenario. Are we going to build a school because the area is economically growing or are we going to put in a school first and then that can be part of the plans to economically grow the area? It doesn't make sense. So I wanted to say that I really do support this motion to ban the practice of a five-year review.

As I thought about it more, I thought back to the strategic plan that the English Language School Board had in place before they were dismantled. One of the solutions they had was something called progress monitoring. Really, what they were arguing for with progress monitoring is exactly what we think should be done with schools, and that's a constant review process with the people who are involved. With progress monitoring the idea is the teacher who is teaching the students on a regular basis goes

in and monitors the students, which they're already doing, and they fill out a detailed report that is kept and follows the student from grade to grade. It is detailed so you know exactly in what subject and what various areas within that subject how they are doing, and then you know if you have a child in grade 6 that is reading at a grade 4 level it is readily apparent to the teacher, for example.

That's progress monitoring as opposed to the provincial assessment which happens every three years. At grade 3 there is a provincial assessment and then another one doesn't happen until grade 6, and what happens in between? How does the student improve?

This is a similar situation. Why are we putting yardsticks every five years, especially when we have engaged communities and engaged staff at the schools, the teachers and the administration, and especially since this wide-ranging advisory council system is in place? I believe at last count it was well over 200 people on the Island involved in the various different advisory councils. How come they can't, at their regular meetings, discuss the future plans of the school and its viability and whether it needs to expand or whether it needs to be shared with other schools?

It only makes sense that this be done on an ongoing basis. I just wanted to say I wholeheartedly support this motion. I think looking across at the government members that if you really think it through, it may not be immediately apparent, but if you think about what a school review does every five years and what doesn't happen in the five years in between, I'm hoping you will support this motion as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Compton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise this evening in support of this motion. I can just speak mostly to my constituents and how they feel about the process that's happening. First, by

attending a meeting in Vernon River where it was kind of an information session. We sat back and listened to what was being told to us, and at the end of the evening I asked: Where does excellence come into this decision-making process? It does not, was the answer I received, which I think should be concerning for all Islanders, and especially for the Legislative Assembly, because I think we all feel that we try to do the best we can for our students and educators in the province.

We heard over and over again in the spring that this change, the dissolving the board into the department, and all of the decisions that were going to be made moving forward, were about excellence in education. We heard it over and over again, so imagine my surprise, as well as a number of people who were in that room, to hear that excellence was not a part of this decision. How do we make and create and nurture the very best students that we can to come out in grade 12 being wonderful citizens for this province who are going to make a difference?

That was, I guess, my first concern. My second concern was attending meetings in my district for both Belfast Consolidated and Southern Kings because both schools felt they were being put under the gun to justify their school, and not to try and cast doubt on the other school or to say that they wanted to see the other school close. It created a lot of stress and a lot of pressure. I know I talk to someone at both schools on a regular basis and it's taken over their lives in a number of ways, where all of the teachers and the staff should be concentrating on educating their students and providing that excellence in teaching so that we can have excellence in education.

I've heard that the process is being rushed. The parents and all of the educators are questioning the data that was put forward. They're skeptical, they're scared the decision has already been made. We've heard from the education minister that we've hired someone from Toronto to help with this process. I would say mostly they are afraid. They do not want to see their schools close. Our district is probably as rural as you can get. The residents love their communities and they love living where they live. They're also very proud of where they live.

We talked today in Question Period. I had asked the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism about the assessments that were being done because I think there were 30 of them in that progress report about economic assessments and whether there was any kind of developments happening in the communities that they were looking at. A lot of them there was said there was no development happening.

I asked the minister of economic development and he didn't know what I was talking about, I don't think, and I think they've learned since then – and even before, when I asked the question – that this was happening through a director at the board of education, and he was pushing it down the line to the principals, I believe. That's putting a lot of pressure on principals to come up with what the economic development is going to be, not only now, but in the future for their communities. I think that's something that we and this government who's making the decisions about education should look at.

I also asked the minister today about economic development across the province, and he was quite proud and happy to stand and tell us all about the economic development happening in rural communities. We all know that. Those of us who represent a rural community know that, and we also know how important our primary industries are to the betterment and the success of this province.

I hear it over and over again, and I know everyone in this room has heard it, that if rural PEI is doing well we're all doing well. That's something that we cannot forget when we're making these decisions.

Again, talking to constituents in my district – and a lot of what we're saying we're repeating because we have the same concerns and we're hearing the same concerns – but talking about the pressure that they feel that this is being rushed. It's been brought to my attention by a number of very forward-thinking people in my community that this should not be negative and we should take the time to look at how we best utilize the school facilities that we have. We are still going to be employing the teachers and the EAs and the bus drivers, so we are looking at bricks and mortar, and this

was not, I thought from the very beginning, a bricks and mortar decision, and I hope that it is not going to be.

We need to look at ways of utilizing our facilities. Can we lease part of them? Can we look at some kind of public-private school partnership? Can we look at just ways of utilizing the space so that it's less of a burden to the province, if that's what we're looking at, if this is about bricks and mortar? I guess we can say that these buildings are a burden to the province.

I also would like to mention what my seatmate talked about. There are two decisions to be made here, and one of them is overcrowding in schools and underutilization, and they are two separate issues. I think one, the overcrowding, needs to be dealt with much quicker than the underutilization because most of the underutilized schools, including the Montague family of schools, we're talking about schools in communities and how important they are to our communities.

I think we need to slow down the process, go back to the drawing board. We should not accept and do not want to see schools close across the province anywhere, and I want to fully support the motion that's being put forward. I ask that all my fellow members of the Legislative Assembly consider the very serious decision we have to make.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today along with my counterparts in the Legislative Assembly to voice my concern about the current school review process.

The process, as far as I can see, is nothing short of a sham. It is aimed at trying to make it look like government is listening to the people. The reality is they aren't.

Not only is the process flawed in terms of the basic premise, but it's flawed in terms of the information brought forward regarding various families of schools. Those who

made submissions at the recent public meetings have complained about school zoning maps that are incorrect and data on catchment areas with flawed projections. Many submissions have called for government to go back to the drawing board and get its facts straight.

Islanders have told government over and over again that the timeline for this process is unrealistic, that the impact of a school closure on the community, busing, etc., has not been identified or analyzed.

They have called on government to fulfill their promise of elected school boards. They have questioned the use of \$1.2 million annually on provincial assessments that indicate students are not performing up to par yet there is no allocation of additional resources to try and turn the assessment around.

There have been suggestions for schools to be utilized for extracurricular activities, for new businesses, and for government offices such as public health, occupational therapy, community and mental health, social work, speech pathology, etc. They suggest that early learning centres including for-profits utilize extra space in elementary schools for their facilities as most already have playground equipment, etc. They have suggested that if government would sell off vacant buildings or find uses for them, profits could go into providing additional resources for the overall education system.

The submissions contain wonderful ideas and suggestions. They are positive suggestions based on growing their communities and attracting new services and people. The submissions to public meetings have also questioned why there is no real discussion going on about the education component for this so-called school review. They are not about accepting low enrollment, no economic development and giving up.

The submissions to public meetings have also questioned why there is no real discussion going on about the education component of this so-called school review.

While the slogan may say Better Learning for All, the review talks very little about actual education. Submissions have told

government that they see Better Learning for All as way beyond the bricks and mortar. They want smaller classroom sizes, zero split classes, increases in classroom supports, improvements in specialists' support, clearer directions for teachers, inclusion for students, and improved support for teachers at the academic level.

Overall, there is the call for the end of the process and for the government to help Island communities grow through rural and economic development strategies. That's where the focus should be. Many have said they simply will not accept any more school closures.

Just like in the electoral reform process Islanders are seeing a need for change. They are demanding a change in attitude from negative growth to positive growth. They want help to ensure their communities remain vibrant and strong. We support that process. Tonight, we ask you to listen to the people. They care and they have a vision that is lacking in this current review process.

Mr. Speaker, and all my colleagues, I ask for your support on this motion.

Thank you.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to rise here this evening and speak on the motion put forward by the member for Georgetown-St. Peters.

I refer to it as a school closure process because that's exactly what it is. It's a school closure process. In 2009 I went through that school closure process. When that process started in 2009 we were promised the world. We were promised a brand new K-12 school on nine to 11 acres of land, green space, libraries. We were promised the world just to get our schools closed.

When it came down to it in 2011 – actually, it was the election in 2011. This minister right here came to Souris just two days before the election and put a sign on the main street of Souris saying: This is the future site of the new K-12 school. It wasn't

even where the school was going. The school was going on one of the back roads, but nobody would see the sign on the back roads so he put it on the main road where everybody would see it at the intersection.

To the people out there, be wise to the government. Be wise to what they're about to tell you. These school closures, it's all about money, and it shouldn't be about dollars. We shouldn't be putting dollars against the kids. Our kids should be the top priority in this province.

I had four schools closed in my district. Four schools closed. Is our deficit any higher? No. Believe it or not they're spending more. They just spent \$65 million on a highway, put 16 bulldozers up there. Our deficit's not getting any better. You're not going to save any money. I went through it. Four schools closed, promised a new one, and they could have had a new one, but we're going to cut some resources in the school, so they gambled. They've gambled with the kids. We'll give them a new school, but you're losing something else.

Twenty million dollars, renovated school. Another \$4 million – and the community could have raised the \$4 million. This government said no to the new school. (Indistinct) said no.

We heard here tonight about your small communities, and it's true. I was brought up in a small community, and we got nothing against the urban Charlottetown, Summerside. We need it. We need our cities and our cities need us.

But what's happening, we're closing rural and we're crowding our cities. As we hear, our schools are overcrowded. That's not rural's problem. Don't penalize the rural because your schools in here are overcrowded. They're shutting the services down in rural. That's why the people are coming this direction. We're overcrowding our schools. We're overcrowding our hospitals. We're overcrowding our road system. We're not set up. Charlottetown is not set up to handle it all. The roads can't handle it. We see it with \$65 million you're spending to save a three-minute commute into Charlottetown.

We're overcrowding and we're creating a problem, and we're not dealing with the problem, the problem being you're shutting rural services down. We need our rural services.

Last election we were promised four doctors. The Premier came to Souris and promised four doctors. He didn't invite the minister of health at the time. He never even invited me. I don't feel bad, but the minister of health never even got invited so I don't feel bad. Actually, the mayor of Souris never even got invited.

He came up. He didn't want anybody to know that he was making a promise. He wanted to know his Liberal caucus were making a promise, but today we haven't got that fourth doctor. We had to fight for the third doctor, and we just fought for it. We got three, we were promised four.

**Mr. J. Brown:** We take three in town.

**Mr. LaVie:** This is not funny. This is serious. We're talking about the kids here on PEI.

I do support this motion. I do not believe in shutting rural PEI down. You've created the problem in the city. You've got overcrowded schools. Don't penalize rural for shutting those schools down and think you're going to save the money because this government's got no plan, and you've got no priorities. You've got no plan. I've stated that for five years now, there's no plan. If you had a plan, five years ago this would have been dealt with.

We heard the minister of advanced learning, how he's got the population up to 150,000. Where is the population up?

**An Hon. Member:** Immigrants.

**Mr. LaVie:** I don't think they sent any immigrants up to Souris or Georgetown or Morell. I know my constituents, and you didn't send any up our way for work.

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's where (Indistinct) set up the fishing plant.

**Mr. LaVie:** You closed the fish plant. You want to talk fish plant? Four hundred people out of work.

**An Hon. Member:** Twice.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) closed two fish plants. You want to talk fish plants? You closed two. Four hundred people worked in one, 200 people worked in the other one. That's 600 people out of work when you closed two fish plants.

**Mr. R. Brown:** North Lake is going again.

**Mr. LaVie:** No, North Lake is not going.

**Mr. Myers:** Boy, (Indistinct) get out of the city sometime.

**Mr. LaVie:** No, they're out of touch with rural PEI.

I've been standing here for five years now and there's not one bit of difference. Not one thing has changed in priorities or a plan.

When I took over as chief of the fire department in 2002 I had a plan. I had a plan to where I wanted to be in 10, 12 years. I'm there for, what is it, 14 years? Minister of Finance does 14 years, I'm there.

My plan is up to date. In 14 years we spent \$2 million on the Souris Fire Department. I had a plan. We had that plan, and I had priorities. It's a lot smaller a scale, but it's the principle. Have a plan, have your priorities, and everything will fall into place.

In 2009 they were shutting the doors at the rink in Souris. She was \$100,000 in debt. I had 15 years' experience working at the rink back in the 1980s before I went fishing, so when they were shutting the doors, they were shutting power off on a Thursday night, I went over the Monday before and I said: I'll give you a hand for a year. I had some experience.

I spent four-and-a-half years there volunteering my time, and that's volunteering 40 to 60 hours a week. Actually, the first year I was elected, the day of the election I was up flooding the ice, that's where I was.

But in four-and-a-half years this was my plan. I had new boards. I had new glass. I had new floors. I had a new sound system. I had a new kitchen. I had \$8,000 done to the Zamboni, \$8,000 done to the compressor, in

four-and-a-half years, and I had \$94,000 in the bank. Why? Because I had a plan and I had priorities.

The first two years I had run that place I never even painted that place because that wasn't a priority. My priority was to have the kids on the ice, have the lights, and ice. They were my priorities. The rest was just material things.

But that's what we've got to get back to guys inside this Legislature. When we're dealing with our kids you've got to have a plan and you've got to have priorities, and building a \$65 million highway is not a priority right now on PEI. That's not our priorities.

I'm not going to take up much more time because everybody wants to speak here tonight, but I just wanted to get up and support this motion because I know what happened to me back in 2009, 2011. We had all kinds of promises.

You mustn't take those promises and fire them out the window. Be wise to the government, because I believe this government has a plan and a plan is in place. Don't close the schools in rural PEI. It happened to me and I don't want to see it happen to other communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in support of this motion.

I just started reading a book the other day given to me by an Island journalist, and it's called *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*. Some people in this House may be – I see nodding heads in the gallery. It talks about a variety of what you might consider vital organs that are necessary to maintain the health of a community.

The first one is to look after your water, and I presented a petition this afternoon on

exactly that. Then it talks about nurturing your youth, making sure that businesses are supported in the community. In there, of course, is the necessity for local services, services such as schools and medical centres and recreational opportunities and businesses where you can go and buy services and goods from your neighbours. Support your neighbours.

One of the critical elements of any rural community, whether that be in Prince Edward Island or Scotland where I grew up, is a school.

I grew up in a tiny village in the Highlands of Scotland, went to the Scottish equivalent of a one-room school, and I feel like I had a pretty special education. For sure there were some opportunities and things which are present in larger schools here which I did not have. I wasn't aware of that as being some sort of deficiency or that I was getting short-changed, not at all. I was with my friends. The teachers all knew us by our first names. It was a real sense of community. There was a sense that the school is not an industrial place where we're turning out nothing more than an element of production, capital machinery people in order to function within that.

That sort of industrial model is very much old thinking, and we need schools that nurture the individual brilliance of each child. I believe that every child is brilliant in her or his own way and that the school system we have now just does not speak always to that individual brilliance of each and every child.

There are many things to be said about the process of school rezoning. The Fullan report that was done recently, they did a report previously, and all of the predictions from that report are way off the old report. If you look at where they thought we would be today they were very often way off the mark. So how can we give any credence to this new report? I think it's important that we look back at their previous work and use that, perhaps, as a benchmark for giving credence to this new report which has come out.

But, of course, schools and education are much more than a math exercise. It's not just a question of counting up how many

kids are in your catchment area and then deciding whether or not you deserve to get a school. Education is about much more than that. It's about individualized opportunities for children in order that they can thrive and that they can be the best people they can be, and grow up to be content, happy, contributing members of society. Schools are there to grow citizens. That's what schools are for.

I love the 4-H model. The 4-H was in here last week, of course, where they don't just – and I described it in the House a couple of weeks ago, that our education system here is largely a 1-H system. We're just concerned about what's above the neck and we don't educate, always, the heart and hands and the health of individuals along with their intellect.

If we are to create generations of citizens who can contribute to their communities and to the province in which they live, then we need to speak to those individual needs of students.

When it comes to the consultation process involved in anything, actually, whether it's the Cornwall bypass or electoral reform or school rezoning, there's a spectrum along which public engagement fits. You can go anywhere from informing, which is the government saying: This is what we've decided to do and we're going to tell you what it is – all the way up to empowerment where you actually hand over the decision making of any particular issue to the people themselves. Of course, anywhere in between you have consultation, engagement, and there are other ways that people can get involved in the process.

We have already found here that government has paid \$9,000 for a study from people from away to come and project, probably incorrectly, what the math of our various communities is going to be into the future. That is so far from any sort of meaningful consultation that it almost makes me want to cry.

I think a school is not only an important place for children to be educated, but it is a catalyst for health within our communities. We need to keep our children in our communities, not in school buses for two, three hours a day, which so many of them

have to suffer. That's no way to grow up. That's no way to spend four, five days of your week, in a bus three hours a day.

The school issue, of course, is a particular, specific thing that we're talking about here, but it really falls into a much broader recognition of what we might consider development and progress in our province, and I think we have to reverse the centralization of services. I think if we want to revitalize the rural areas of Prince Edward Island we need to make sure that the people who live there have services, whether that be medical clinics, whether that be a community school, recreational opportunities, communication opportunities through proper Internet. All of those things are critical elements of maintaining the vitality of rural Prince Edward Island, a place that has been withering for far too long now.

When I go back to my childhood, I'm reminded of the economics book *Small is Beautiful* where, yes, we may not have had all of the facilities, yes, we may not have had all the opportunities that kids have now in the Gray or the Rural or any of the other big secondary schools that we have here, but we had something much more precious than that. We had an intimate relationship with each of our fellow students and with our teachers.

I'm reminded of, also, the sort of partner book to that, written by a good friend of mine who just recently died, George McRobie, who was a part-time Islander. I believe the Premier knows George or knew George, who wrote the companion to *Small is Beautiful*, *Small is Possible*. Those ideas are still very much alive. I think we have seen the problems associated with bigness and with centralization, and I think, slowly, humanity is recognizing that we work better in intimate small groups, and that's what we need to do.

There a lots of studies that have shown that children do better in small schools. They are more engaged. They are more likely to find their true individual path. They're more closely monitored by their teachers to recognize problems when they arise.

Those teachers, themselves, in small schools always report higher satisfaction with their

job. They always report that there is improved safety, there is improved collaboration, there is improved community between the children and the schools, and not just the ones in the same age group but the ones in grade 9 and grade 2 help each other out. That sort of mentoring, that sort of community building, which I think is one of the greatest lessons that we can have for life.

I stand in absolute support of this motion. There are so many things that we can and should do with our schools. One of them is not to close them, particularly our rural schools.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Representing Stratford-Kinlock I guess I take a slightly different view on the discussion, the debate this evening on this motion, but let me state unequivocally that, first and foremost, I do fully support this motion.

In particular, the third last therefore, I'd just like to read it aloud again: "And therefore be it further resolved that the School Review Process in areas of low enrollments concentrate on economic development for the area aimed at bringing in new businesses, and an increased population."

A fair amount of time here in the Legislative Assembly and the throne speech of this government and the previous Liberal government, which we all know is the same government all in one, has talked about reinvigorating the economy here on PEI, growing the population. Whether you want to listen to the numbers that come from the other side of the floor, I think it's incumbent on all of us to do everything that's possible to help every community across Prince Edward Island.

Representing Stratford-Kinlock, I can attest to seeing significant growth in my area. But I have strong connections to rural Prince Edward Island as well, and I would certainly

love to see rural PEI continue to flourish and to grow. I think it's very important that we do invest in our rural areas to ensure that they do have the opportunity. I think one of the key ingredients to that is through the education system and investment in the community, not only through education but also to grow small business in rural PEI.

It's just a couple of years ago that I travelled Prince Edward Island extensively as I ran for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party. I did get to see and experience the many small businesses that are throughout Prince Edward Island, in particular rural PEI. One of the key things that I heard over and over again from these incredible individuals was that they wanted to stay in their communities, they wanted to keep their children in their communities, they wanted to grow their businesses in the communities, and they wanted investment in their businesses so that they could accomplish that and help their communities to flourish.

We've seen over and over again where a government has a grand idea to bring a company in and give them tax incentives and different incentives to bring a business here from, let's say, India for example. Time and time again we've seen those initiatives fail. Why have they failed? Because every other community, every other jurisdiction in North America, is also vying for those jobs and those businesses to come to their communities.

Continually, we see when the incentives expire those jobs are gone because there was no loyalty. But when we're investing in small businesses in our rural areas we see loyalty. We see job growth. We see economic development and with that, if we continue, if we really are serious about investing in our rural areas, we will see an education system flourish in rural PEI.

We have our minister of education who has once again been recycled back into education. I'm not here to say any negative things about this man because I work with him. I work on many projects with him, whether it was when he was in health. But now he's back in education and we need to ensure that this minister is leading his government down the right path.

There's a lot of discussions right now on public consultation and the process that's going on. One of the serious issues here on PEI right now is the public perception of public consultation is flawed because we've seen it over and over again from this government where there's public consultation only to find out that that's just simply a smokescreen, that they have their plan already in their head. They already have their plan devised and this public consultation, as they call it, is nothing but a smokescreen.

We've seen it back when they were working on Plan B. We saw it recently in the plebiscites, in particular with the now 16- and 17-year-olds that were permitted to vote in the plebiscite, only to see the results ignored. I'm fearful of what those young people are going to think of our democratic process and the right to vote and public consultation. We've also seen a public consultation smokescreen with the Cornwall bypass, and there's many other examples I could use.

One of the other serious issues that I find with this process that's happening right now is over the last five years, since I was elected in 2015, we've seen changes over and over again within the school board system. It's to the extent now that it's just a total lack of confusion and focus. You might as well say it's a total state of chaos.

We've seen over and over again where they've tried to press the reset button for that to fail, and then try and reinvent it again. Change the board system, and then start again with another public consultation. But this government really needs to get serious about education here on Prince Edward Island.

I'll be the first to admit that when I went door-to-door during the 2015 election I had quite a few constituents that talked to me about needing a new school in Stratford because of the growth of Stratford. What I said to many constituents on their doorsteps is that rather than seeing an investment in bricks and mortar, I would rather see more teachers being put back into the classrooms. I would rather see more EAs being put back into the classrooms so that we could concentrate on excellence within the classroom for our learners.

But I've come to the realization that we are going to need to look further down the road with regards to what's happening with the population growth in Stratford-Kinlock and with our students. We have a fairly new elementary school and we're already at 499 students in that school, so we've basically maxed out that school as it currently sits.

During the discussion today on the Capital Budget, when we got to the education section, I did ask if there was at the very least – because I know that a school is not going to be built and a school is not going to be ready to house students in Stratford, whether it's a junior high or a high school, or whether it's a combination of – next fall. But there is a process to take, so I asked if at the very least government had even started looking at potential sites, potential land in the Stratford area for this possibility, to which I was told no.

Again, I see a government that doesn't have a plan, they don't have a vision, and I think that they really need to take a step back, really do honest and earnest public consultation, and listen to the public. Listen to the parents, listen to the educators, listen to the principals, and listen to the students.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will be supporting this motion this evening.

Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to rise in support of this motion. The Member from Georgetown-St. Peters spoke very passionately about this, as he does often about education in the Legislature, and I might echo a few comments that he's made as a few other.

Excellence in education is something that we talk about a lot, all sides of the House, and I think that it's the most important part of this debate.

I did ask this afternoon in Question Period about a population strategy for the province because I think it's an important factor that

we're missing. If this government truly believes in increasing the population in PEI, especially in our rural regions or other regions, it's important. Especially because at the very first public school meetings where this information was being given out the very first thing that a lot of these parents were given was information that: Wow, our numbers are going down. There's not a lot of hope for these communities. Some of them were very depressing. Some of them were okay, but some of them were fairly depressing.

That's why I asked the questions. I was curious why the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning has really great ideas for PEI. Apparently they're coming and we're looking forward to it.

Just an aside on that, I happened to Google PEI population strategy this morning, and the first document that came up was from 1997. Even when I worked in the office back in 2007 I heard a lot about this, so it's been a long time coming, extremely long time coming. It was a promise, 18 months, and it was the number one priority in the mandate letter, and I trust the minister that it will come at some point in the future.

But, it's good news that they have a plan. It's really good news. As I did this afternoon, I encourage the minister of advanced learning to go over and have a chat with the minister of education to say: Do you know what? Hold on here. Hold on. A lot of these schools that you're talking about, we've got big plans for their communities, we've got big plans for PEI, and do you know what? In five, 10 years' time it's going to look different. I appreciate that it's going to look different and I believe that. I honestly believe that. I think we can. I know our communities can.

It was an important point to make because we have serious issues in some of our schools. As the minister knows, right in his own district, there are schools that are very overcrowded. It's hard on the parents, hard on the students, hard on the teachers, the administrators. That has to be dealt with right away. But I'd like to echo the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters' comments: Let's deal with it, but we don't have to drag everybody else into a fighting match right off the bat.

We've got a number of schools in different regions in PEI that because of the capacity number it was triggered that they: You need to be part of the school change policy. I'll give you an example I know in our own community in Morell, in Mount Stewart. They've got fantastic class number sizes, 17-25 kids. Some of them are a little too full, some of them you'd like to see a few more kids, but great class sizes. Sure, the school was meant for a bigger number back in the day, but that capacity number could be misleading. It triggers this process.

Let's deal with the serious issues now, absolutely, but as the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning is pushing, let's hold off on some of these other spots because there are solutions out there and the communities are working hard and we wanted to solve some of these issues.

I was proud to be at a lot of these meetings. The public meetings, there were great presentations, a lot of work done, and the first ones people were a little bit confused over whether they should speak up or whether they shouldn't. But I want to give so much credit to a lot of these places that this could have easily turned into a my school versus your school type thing. It really could have started pitting school against school because there's a lot of small schools out there that worry: Is it going to be mine or theirs?

For example, in District 7 the good people there between Morell and Mount Stewart and Donagh and the high school, they didn't fall into that trap at all. The word coming out of that public meeting was so nice to hear. Everybody came out saying: Wow, I didn't expect that and it was fantastic. It was so good to see that people were coming with positive ideas. They weren't: We should keep our school and your school should close. That wasn't the way it turned out. The community was very proud of them.

A number of our Home and School meetings, I was very lucky to be – well, I am part of a couple of them but to be invited to a few others, and they were worried because they thought the first thing they should do: Maybe we should stick up for our school. Should we be trying to predict what they're going to do? Because if we don't stand up

for our school they might come with an option to close it or to change it around and then we've missed that chance.

My advice, and I think a lot of people's advice, was: Don't worry about the ifs, ask for what's best for your school. What does Mount Stewart, what does Morell, what does Donagh, need to be the best school possible, to provide the best education for your kids? Don't get sucked into this trap of having to come up with a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

There's problems in Charlottetown in a number of schools that we need to address right away, but if there's no – I'll say that again. We don't need to come up with solutions for problems that don't exist, especially if we've got some good strategies coming to invest.

Talking about investment, that's what it is. It's a policy decision. We've got some schools out there, some smaller schools – Saint Jean, Birchwood is under-populated, the Morell high school – where they probably don't have the resources to provide everything. It's a policy decision to invest in those schools. Either you do it or you don't. If you believe in them, in those schools and the communities, you do invest in them. I hope this government sees that.

I'd just like to finish off by saying that, again, I want to thank the people of our district. There's a lot of time and effort – I know the minister knows this, I know Parker Grimmer knows this, I know Bob Andrews (Indistinct) – there's a lot of people putting a lot of time and effort into this behind the scenes. A lot of nights of Home and School – I know the Home and Schools in Morell, Mount Stewart, I think it was five times in two weeks to go over, to plan, to come up, to focus on the six points.

I really want them to take that to heart because we've seen the last process go off the rails. We don't want this process to – there seems to be a lot of mixed information out there. I encourage the minister to listen to the process, to maybe take a step back where there isn't a problem and maybe try and find a few solutions rather than just trying to fix a problem that's not really there.

I'd like to thank the good people in the gallery tonight. I know a number of you are here because you're passionate about education and you wanted to hear this. Thank you for the work you're doing in your own communities and your own schools.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll stop in full support of this motion.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** Are there any other members that would like to speak to the motion?

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

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

I want to acknowledge all members of the opposition and the Leader of the Third Party for their comments. Discussion about education has been top of mind, not only here in the Assembly but in communities all across the Province of Prince Edward Island. Anytime we're having good discussion and debate about public education, there's only good things that will come from that. I certainly believe that.

A year ago I was part of a government that sent a very clear message about the importance of public education in the Province of Prince Edward Island. We made a decision to take a new direction, a direction that was built on engagement. At that time we created the Learning Partners Advisory Council, which is a group of 20 community leaders and educational leaders all across the Province of Prince Edward Island, to be part of a table to look at public education not only from the K-12 system, but from the 0-4, the early years, and beyond Grade 12 into post-secondary and into labour force.

I must say that conversation is very rigorous. They have a draft white paper that will look at overarching recommendations on suggestions about where we move public education into the future.

The second council was the Principals Council, and it's a council that I think is

critical in where we move public education in the province. That's the group of individuals that are leading all of the 62 schools across the Province of Prince Edward Island, and really at the end of the day have the ultimate autonomy but also the accountability to make sure that their schools are healthy, that our cultures are vibrant, that students are learning, and that we're providing places not only about student achievement, but places where children are becoming good citizens.

The third council is the district advisory council, and that's made up of the voice of parents and students. I must say that council has been exceptional. That is the work that's being led by Pat Campbell, and that group is getting into some extremely progressive conversations from the eyes of parents and the eyes of students in respect to what public education needs to be and hopes to be for all Island students in every school across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

We're well into the fourth round of conversations with our learning partners, our Principals Council and our district advisory council. Once again, the conversations are probably unprecedented in respect to the level of discussion about education. They're not looking at education from a lens where it's just about achievement. They're looking at education from all kinds of perspectives and what does the system need to be to make sure that we're providing the best for all students in every school across Prince Edward Island.

Part of my responsibility when I came in in January was I was given a mandate letter by government from the hand of the Premier, and that was to implement and to lead that work to activate the conversations through the councils. But it was also to integrate the Public Schools Branch into the department of education and allow for a stronger alignment between instruction, curriculum, and achievement for a stronger learning environment for all schools and to be directly linked to the public schools across the province.

I've taken that responsibility very seriously. We brought in an *Education Act* which replaced the act that was approximately 55 years old that was brought in then by the premier of the day, Premier Alex Campbell.

We brought in legislation to modernize the changes and to allow the public education system to be on the front foot moving forward to continue to respond to the needs of the learner in Island schools.

Another part of that responsibility was providing leadership and building opportunities for success, achievement, and excellence for all PEI's children and students in our system. It was also to streamline effective education leadership and focus resources on frontline capacity. With the integration of the public school board – and I had questions from the Leader of the Opposition today on what's different. What's different is that we looked at the organizations, we looked at duplication, we looked at roles that were being duplicated in both the English Language School Board and the department, and we integrated and protected frontline teaching positions by reducing the number of positions because of administrative duplication by about 35 to 40 positions.

We've also been very aggressive on building technology, capacity, and engagement in PEI schools to enhance learning possibilities, and this time next year we'll have probably about 98% of all Island schools that will be up and running with WiFi, we'll have Chromebooks in classrooms all across Prince Edward Island. Really, the whole premise of all that work was making sure that we build the system that advances opportunities for all youth.

Lots of discussion on the school change policy. I must say that the school change policy is a policy that is being led – and I want to compliment the leadership of the team that is providing that work. I recognize, as the minister, I've got emotional connection and ties to the schools that I went to: Parkdale Elementary, Stonepark Intermediate School, Colonel Gray High School. I think that I clearly recognize there's a real strong attachment and emotional connection to schools across the Province of Prince Edward Island and I want to be on record as saying I respect that and I respect the conversations that are going on in the public meetings.

The school change policy is a policy that has been enacted, it's a policy that is a five-step process. The first step was to present the

data, which was presented, and to give clear direction on the next steps in the process.

The second step was about public consultations to identify viable options, and all of the eight schools that were identified have been given the opportunity. There have been approximately 50 presentations in the public during those public meetings and those have presented ideas and suggestions. But there's also been another level of conversation. There have been approximately 60 individuals and small groups that presented outside of the public meetings because they didn't feel comfortable enough to make those public presentations. But there have also been over 200 written submissions.

As the minister I'm not directly involved, I haven't been briefed, I haven't been updated on any of those discussions. I've got great confidence in the Harvey MacEwens of the world, I've got great confidence in the Susan Willises of the world, I've got great confidences in the Pat Mellas in the world. If they're leading this process, with Bob Andrews and staff, to make sure that communities are being heard, that the process takes into consideration issues around local knowledge which has been the theme.

I, as the minister, understand that these are issues that may not be captured in step one which is the data and the information that we shared. We're also considering demographic shifts, we're considering transportation. It's a review from a number of perspectives about all schools and family of schools in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

The process we're respecting – I want to reiterate to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and all the constituents that they represent that there's no playbook, there's no predetermined decisions on this. Basically, the premise is looking at ways we can continue to improve the quality of learning, improve excellence, and to make sure that we get the best quality we can to every child in every school across Prince Edward Island.

I heard comments today from the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition. I think that the school system of the past is not the

same as the school system of today, and the school system of the future is going to look different, and the needs and the competency and the skills that our children are going to need when they leave the public system, whether it be 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies like critical thinking, collaboration, communication, are going to be skills that are going to be necessary in the global economy.

We recognize, and we have this discussion and debate, the world is changing and we as a province need to continue to respond to those changes. But also, how do we find the balance between respecting and sustaining communities across the Province of Prince Edward Island and, at the same time, building a strong education system?

I just need to go back – I remember the day, I remember where it was – in early 2000 when Prince Edward Island had just received its first results being a participant in PISA, which are international assessments, and basically evaluated or ranked Island students in early 2000 to how we were performing, not only to provinces in this country, and territories, but to how we were stacking up to countries across the world.

I have to be honest, that was not a good day for public education in the Province of Prince Edward Island. There was a clear message that the province needed to take action. There was a clear message that we were not competing with other provinces in this country. I think from the role of minister and the role of minister and opposition, I think we have to take that reality very seriously.

I move ahead a bit. In 2005-2006 the government of the day, the Binns administration, enacted a task force on education and that task force was really the starting point of the movement forward. We came into government in 2007, and I must say that our commitment as a government over the last 10 years has been very strong in respect to public education. Not to say that every time we swung the bat we hit the ball, but we're at the plate and I feel very confident that investments – we've invested an additional 85 to \$90 million in public education since 2007. We've supported new initiatives like progress monitoring, we've

supported initiatives that are more focused on assessment to allow us to get a better picture of where we could be strategic in supporting Island children to achieve and be successful. That was the foundation and we moved forward.

We brought our five-year-olds at kindergarten into the public school system, which I think we were the last province in Canada to do. But we also recognize the importance of our early childhood sector. We went from an early childhood sector to create the 45 early year centres in this province. I'm proud to say that as a government and part of the government in the past that we went from being the back end of a performer in early years to being at the front end of the country with the Province of Quebec. We all know the importance of early intervention and the early years.

We recognize that the face of education is changing. In our department we've got three key pillars. We're got one on student achievement. We want to give the tools and the skills to all the children to the best of their potential. Social-emotional we hear often. I had questions again from the Leader of the Opposition about what we're going to do in various parts of the province and how we're going to respond to the needs. This is not about student achievement, but this is about school cultures, how we support kids, whether be through OT, through counsellors, dealing with the high levels of anxiety that we're seeing in our schools.

The time to stand still is not now. Our focus has to be on providing the best we can for all children in all parts of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

The review examines whether resources are being used in the best way possible, and I think that's fair. I think we have a mandate and responsibility as keepers of the purse that we're overseeing, and we're being accountable to taxpayers' dollars and that we're getting the best value. I often hear from the PEITA and members of a class composition of the changing face, not only of class sizes. We also hear discussions and debates around combined classes and the impact that has. We're also seeing an influx as we continue to grow the population. We're seeing significant pressure with our

immigrant population and our refugee population and what their needs are in schools, particularly in the Charlottetown area.

I think that the need for a review and an evaluation of our populations – but not just the populations, what's impacting population trends and shifts – is very important. As I said, I've been in discussion with board chairs, ministers from across the country, and this is very common practice. It's a practice that is very consistent to good performing boards. They evaluate their populations and that allows them to respond to the needs of schools, whether it be populations that are rising or whether it's populations that are decreasing.

We know that provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan, Ontario, they, too, have rural areas and they, too, have the same issues and making sure that we find good parity and good balance in education as we keep our communities healthy and strong.

As I said, the conversation is alive and I'm very grateful for a very robust discussion in the Legislative Assembly. I think it's very healthy. I think the outcomes will be very positive for all communities. I think that it's okay to have difficult conversations. We have a lot at stake here. Education, as we all debate and we talk about, is really a key pillar in the prosperity and the future of the province.

I remember a comment by the Member from Souris-Elmira. He got up one day and he talked about the changing face and the skills and the needs of the fishermen and the farmers in our communities. I fully support that.

Today I had questions from the Member from Rustico-Emerald on how is our high school system changing and evolving to the trades sector. I had questions from the Member from Belfast-Murray River today asking: What are you doing to be better? How are you responding? How are you changing?

These are the questions I get and have been getting, and they are all very good questions because they are questions that are coming from a position of concern for all children in

every constituency across the Province of Prince Edward Island. I get that.

I am very pleased to hear the Member from Souris-Elmira talking about the new school, the K-12 model. I must say that the parent group that led that discussion, who were very engaged, showed tremendous leadership. We have a \$20 million investment in Souris and very proud that we have got a school that is a K-12 school. I'm confident that they'll continue to achieve and do well moving forward into the future.

We also talk, and I hear concerns about education in various parts of the province. Since I have been in government, been part of a government, I was at the announcement when we opened the \$21 million high school in Montague. The Montague Family of Schools, the members from Murray River, Georgetown-St. Peters, they all have children and constituents who they represent that come through the system and attend those schools.

If you look at the investment of \$1.9 million in the intermediate with the new band room, the new industrial tech room, the new school in Stratford, the investment and additions to L.M. Montgomery, if you look at the investments in Westwood, these are all areas that catch rural parts of the province.

École La Belle Cloche in Souris is underway right now. We've got investments in infrastructure. I would say that there has been an unprecedented level of spending in infrastructure to make sure that we do have a fleet of schools that are healthy and vibrant to continue to respond. To respond to the changing needs.

I had really good questions today during Capital Budget on the need for us to continue to build programs, whether it be in trades or in culinary, various aspects of the system.

I want to reiterate and I guess that will wrap it up. I am very supportive of the school change process. I think it's very important that we continue to evaluate our populations, the impact on transportation. I think these are all good conversations to have. I also want to reiterate that this is a process that I want to respect.

As the minister, this is a process that is a policy of the Public School Branch and I will be very supportive of the recommendations that come forward, but I've got great confidence in the process. I've got confidence in the openness and the transparency of the conversation. I continue to advocate for MLAs and to communities to hold myself accountable as the minister.

I am supportive of the school change policy, and I'm very pleased with the policy. It's a policy that was redefined. It was researched. It was built on policy that is very consistent to every school board across this country.

Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I will as brief as I can be, lest I be accused of trying to run the clock out.

I did want to make a few comments on this motion and I am going to provide a little bit of context before doing so.

I note that I, myself, am a student who grew up in Stratford and went to Birchwood Intermediate School, the late French immersion program there. Whereas I would normally have gone to Stonepark as I was growing up. You look at that. My route to school in the morning was get on a bus in Stratford, head into Stonepark, switch buses there and head back down to Birchwood. Logically, you're on a longer route than you would have been otherwise.

Out of all that, you look at it and you say: How does that really make sense? In the end, though, what I can say is at that point in time Birchwood had 650-some students, I think, by the time I graduated. Out of all that we considered ourselves to have gotten probably the best education you could possibly have gotten on Prince Edward Island at Birchwood school in Charlottetown.

I'll tell you a few of the reasons why. We had two months of gym class at the Charlottetown Curling Club. We had all

kinds of opportunities to go down to the civic centre at noontime to play hockey because we were a short walk down there. Our grade 8 homeroom teacher was named one of the best teachers in Canada at Birchwood school. My grade 9 homeroom teacher, Norman Beck, is now the principal at Stonepark school.

The quality of education at that school was second to none, to the point where my sister, who, by the time she was going through the same program, should have gone to Stonepark school, other than they gave the option to decide whether you want to go to Stonepark or whether you want to go to Birchwood. If you went to Birchwood your parents would have to drive you there. She chose to go to Birchwood.

A couple of the things drawing her: she played the violin, so she wanted to go in the strings program with John and Jenet Clement at Birchwood. They had a great band program and industrial arts and art and the whole nine yards. Again, I think she would count herself amongst the lucky people to have that education at Birchwood.

You hear comments as you start into this process that inner city schools aren't where we want to send our kids, and different things like that.

I must say, the great thing that I found as the process rolled through Charlottetown-Brighton was that residents of Charlottetown-Brighton participated in the process. They welcomed the process. They took the opportunity that was there to basically say: Look at the schools that we've got here in Charlottetown. Look at the opportunity that we have where we can help alleviate issues in other areas, such as Stonepark school, or such as in Stratford where there is overcrowding, with great programming that we have easily accessible in a five or a 10-minute drive.

That, I think, is what this process is all about. I'm coming from the perspective of having five schools in my district. A couple of them, Colonel Gray and Queen Charlotte, are on the overcrowded end of things. In the elementary schools I have one, Spring Park, that is about between 30%-40% overcapacity, literally will not be able to take any more students if they came to sign

up next year. We have West Kent that's pretty good. We have St. Jean that is on the lower end of capacity.

It gave us the opportunity to see those numbers being put before us and to see the realities that are facing the minister and the folks who are looking at this and being charged with compiling all of the information.

It also gave us the opportunity, in the second round of consultations, as a group of parents and residents of that area, to go forward and say things like – as an example, myself and councillor Mitch Tweel went forward and talked about the St. Jean school property and all of the great characteristics of it, which occupies almost an entire city block, and has one of the best elementary school gyms on Prince Edward Island. It has a tremendous opportunity in terms of space around it. You have the ability to go in and make those presentations and to inform them of those kinds of things, and that's exactly what the process is set out to do.

I think people that are going into this with an open mind have seen a benefit to the process. I think hearing from parents of Spring Park school in particular a couple of years ago as I was going through the election and on doorsteps, they wanted the process that was going to be used to deal with the overcrowding issue at Spring Park to be a holistic, thought-out process that involved not just their own school and maybe a couple schools that were right next door, but something that was sustainable in the long term and something that worked for all of the schools within at least a reasonable area.

There's a reason for that, and I think the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters mentioned it earlier, is that you want to know when you put your child in grade 1 they're not going to have to switch three times between now and the time they get to grade 6. You want to know that there's a thought-out process that is going to be there and is going to serve those students that are going to that school over the medium to long term.

I'm not sure that I'd stand here and say that the process is perfect, but I think it's a pretty good process, and I think it's very important

that we have a process that we can turn to on a regular basis and say: Is this working? I think it's important, as an example, to the teachers at Sherwood school that have 29 students in a grade 2 class and are teaching in a breezeway between two parts of the school in the gym, that they have the same ability to provide for their students as teachers in other parts of the province.

I think it's important that we take that into consideration, and that this process take that into consideration moving forward, and that, basically, at the bottom line students be put first and we not be stuck in our ways and looking to make sure that we get the best bang for our buck in our little corner, that everybody has the same opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are parts of this motion that I do agree with, "that this Legislative Assembly listen to their electors and taxpayers' growing concern about the current school review process..." I mean, I've publicly questioned it myself, and I certainly listen to my electors. I think most of us in here usually do.

That "the School Review Process have as its mandate the maintenance of all current schools in the system regardless of their enrollment." I think that's a good one.

That "the School Review Process in areas of low enrollments concentrate on economic development for the area aimed at bringing in new businesses, and an increased population." I think that's something that should go for any government without saying. I think we always should be working towards that goal.

I do have a problem with the last one: "...that this Legislative Assembly call for the immediate removal of the every five year requirement for a school review process under the new School Change Policy." I think that if we're doing something wrong

we have to find out about that, too. A review is not always a negative thing.

We have the Westisle principal's presentation at the Westisle meetings, that they made the presentation that they're not happy with the status quo. They might not agree with closing schools and that. Well, I don't agree with closing schools. I'm sure my community knows well where I stand on it. But if we didn't have the school review they wouldn't have a chance to voice their concerns there.

I can't support that part of the motion. I do find some good parts of the motion. I have a daughter in grade 1. She goes to St. Louis school. I know how important that school is to that community, as well as how important Alberton Elementary is to Alberton and Bluefield is to Bluefield and –

**Leader of the Opposition:** You should be supporting this.

**Mr. Murphy:** – and Hernewood to Hernewood.

I think, hon. member, I just made it very clear where I stand on this issue. I've stood up in front of my constituents at Westisle and I told them where I stand on this issue, and I still stand in the same place. It's this motion here that I'm not supporting, that I have an issue.

I think the reviews are a good thing. I don't think it's a bad thing.

I definitely want the best possible education for my daughter, as all the parents of all the students in the schools right across the province do. I talked to the decision makers and they assured me that there's no decision that's been made here.

I guess what I'm saying is I'm basically keeping my powder dry. I'm going to be there to fight for my community when the time comes, if it comes, but I'm not supporting this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

I just want to support the minister of education on this. I looked at his process and it seems a great process.

But I want to say one thing. In 1996 I went to school meetings at Colonel Gray, and at that time people talked about the inner city schools and segregated the inner city schools away from the rest of the schools. I thought 20 years from now we'd be beyond that, but no, I read in the paper, again, that still people think that the inner city schools are not quality schools.

I went to St. Jean school and I went to Birchwood high school. The member from Brighton went there. I had a great principal. He wasn't my principal, but – and the current minister of education has done a phenomenal job.

**Mr. LaVie:** He is now. He's (Indistinct).

**Mr. R. Brown:** George MacDonald did a great job there. He helped a lot of people.

I hope we have moved beyond claiming that the inner city schools are not the quality education.

I would argue that the inner city schools in Prince Edward Island, in Charlottetown, are the best schools because of the diversity the children learn. You go to Prince Street school, there's 27 nationalities there. What better way to show your child the world? But we still have people talking about that is not a good school. I will not endorse it.

But I do support the minister of education –

**Mr. Aylward:** You're the only one who said that tonight –

**Mr. R. Brown:** No, with people –

**Mr. Aylward:** Not one person in here has said that.

**An Hon. Member:** They did in Stratford.

**Mr. R. Brown:** They did in Stratford, and that's all I'm saying. We've gone beyond that and we do have great inner city schools, and the claim that they're not is not right. So

I'll support the minister in his endeavours there because there's a great process.

It's time, because we have a tremendous amount of diversity in our schools, to take a look at our schools.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I would like to stand and make a few comments in regards to this motion.

In my district there are three schools that I represent. The member from Brighton indicated one of my schools, Sherwood Elementary School. It's a wonderful school. It's a school my wife actually attended grade 1 in. The age of that school is on the far end of the spectrum, there's no question about that, but it is a wonderful school with wonderful teachers.

I think back to 2007 after we were first elected and kindergarten was being presented in the school system. I attended many meetings, very passionate meetings, actually, of parents who knew the school would be strained from this new group of kindergarten students that would be coming. But yet they really wanted them to remain within the walls of Sherwood school.

There was discussion back in the day at that time about a merge of Parkdale and Sherwood and coming up with new plans, but I really understand that parents wanted to remain within that school of Sherwood school. Thus we added on with a couple of mobile units, and today that school is still to the max as far as students, and the hon. member alluded to splitting up and using the gym.

Move from that school to Stonepark school, which is also busting at the seams. Currently they are running classrooms in an old computer lab with no windows. Students are being negatively affected by the –

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – air quality.

**Speaker:** The hour has been called.

**Mr. LaVie:** Extend the hour. Come on!

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent?

**Ms. Biggar:** No.

**Speaker:** No, okay.

**Mr. MacKay:** Unbelievable, people coming (Indistinct).

**Mr. Myers:** No wonder everybody thinks this is a (Indistinct).

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville, that this House adjourn until Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.

**Speaker:** Shall it carry? Carried.

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