

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

Friday, 9 December 2016

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS	2279
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	2282
EVANGELINE-MISCOUCHE (Acadian and Francophone Chamber of Commerce Luncheon)	2282
ALBERTON-ROSEVILLE (Elmsdale Church of the Nazarene)	2283
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Maggie MacPhee).....	2283
ORAL QUESTIONS.....	2284
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Educational Assessment Wait Time)	2284
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (West Prince Youth Addictions Counsellor).....	2285
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Autism Student Number).....	2285
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Autism Assessment and Diagnosis Student Numbers)	2286
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Autism Assessment and Diagnosis Wait Time).....	2286
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Shortage of Psychologists).....	2286
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Autism and Pressure Point in Schools)	2287
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Autism Action)	2287
STRATFORD-KINLOCK (Autism Assessments and Private Psychologists).....	2288
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Speech Language Pathology Wait List)	2289
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Classroom Support Roadblocks)	2290
KENSINGTON-MALPEQUE (Portability Between Public and Private Specialist Help).....	2290
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Telemedicine).....	2291
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Telemedicine Interdepartmental Meetings).....	2292
CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Diabetes Test Strips)	2292
CHARLOTTETOWN-LEWIS POINT (Financial Coverage for People with Type 1 Diabetes)	2292
WEST ROYALTY-SPRINGVALE (Water Act Update).....	2293
SOURIS-ELMIRA (Souris Dunes).....	2293
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Mi'kmaq Confederacy Loan Standing)	2295
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Deleted Government Email Accounts-further)	2296
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS	2296
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES (Economic Update – Primary Industries)	2296
COMMUNITIES, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT (Watershed Funding Formula)	2299

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	2301
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT)	2301
SECOND READING AND COMMITTEE	2301
BILL 59 – An Act to Amend the Health Services Payment Act (No. 3).....	2301
BILL 48 – Private Training Schools Act	2316
COMMITTEE	2321
BILL 58 – Municipal Government Act	2321
ADJOURNED.....	2326

The Legislature sat at 10:00 a.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

It's another glorious day on the Island. We're pretty blessed to have that kind of weather.

I want to wish everyone a great weekend, especially out in District 5. I want to put a shout-out to all my members there and remind them the hon. Lawrence MacAulay has a big Christmas party this evening at Pooles Corner. You won't want to miss that, so you can get out there.

I want to welcome everyone to the gallery. I see Eddie Lund is back with us. He wasn't here yesterday, I wondered if he'd gone off to the First Ministers' meetings when he didn't show up. He's got such a good record of being here.

I also want to recognize Randall Affleck who is a very distinguished person in the agriculture community, past-chair of the PEI Dairy Farmers of PEI, a really great man in our agriculture industry. We have a big statement on the whole economy of agriculture and fisheries and I'm sure that's why he showed up here today and perhaps listen to the rest of everyone else.

But anyway, I want to wish everyone a great day and a great session here this morning.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's Friday and it's going to be a good weekend. I think they're calling for a little bit of snow.

Tonight we're hosting the Order of the Masonic Hall and Order of the Eastern Star at our house. That should be a good time. It'll keep me busy.

I'd like to say hello to Lloyd Gallant. Lloyd is a great resident of my district and he lives up on 225 in Kinkora. Mr. Affleck there, also, great to see you both.

Have a good weekend.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning. Welcome back to everyone this morning and to those that are watching us on EastLink or on Facebook through the Legislative Assembly. I want to say hello to my residents of Tyne Valley-Linkletter.

I'd like to welcome everyone in the gallery, especially Eddie Lund.

Also just to caution everyone that we've had a bit of a freeze up over night and to watch out for some black ice along the way.

This weekend I'll be attending at the Farmers' Bank on Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. the official designation for the first Canadian car on PEI with the PEI Antique Club. I encourage everyone to come out and help celebrate with the members of the club at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon at the Farmers' Bank.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody in the gallery today, especially Eddie. It's good to see Eddie.

Coming on the weekend, I'd like to say hello to everyone in West Royalty-Springvale and wish them all a great weekend and week ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to all the folks in the public gallery.

I'd like to also say welcome to all the folks in Alberton-Roseville that are home watching on the computer or on the t.v.

I'd like to also wish a happy birthday to a loyal supporter up in Alberton there and a patron of the coffee shop every morning who gives me lots of sound advice and a good dose of medicine every now and again, and that's Lawson Adams. Happy birthday to Lawson.

I'd also like to say that Santa Claus is going to be up in the Alberton area tonight and tomorrow. Over the weekend he's going to make a couple of visits to Alberton. He's going to be at the Irving from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. tonight and he's going to be at the community centre in Alberton tomorrow afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I enjoy coming back on this Friday. The roads were a little slippery when I left the house this morning. As the minister of transportation says, everybody watch out. We're going to have some bad weather in the near future.

Also, like to welcome everybody to the gallery today and everybody watching home on EastLink in Kensington-Malpeque, District 20.

Just want to remind all my constituents, this weekend I'm having a social tomorrow at the Murray Christian Centre from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. There is going to be some food.

Santa Claus will also be there. He's going to stop on the way to Alberton-Roseville and there is going to be some entertainment. I just want to let everybody know it's not a political event, everybody is welcome. It's just a social to represent the district and I hope to see everyone there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

My pleasure to rise here on a Friday morning and welcome folks to the gallery, in particular Officer Chaloner who is also a coach – and owner I guess, too – at the CrossFit gym that I go to. Hopefully if I speak nice to him here it might be a few less burpees sometime over the weekend or whatever.

I'd like to also mention that we have our Greenfield Avenue Christmas party this weekend. Any of those residents of Greenfield in my district that are looking for something to do on Saturday evening, come on out. There's a list of homes that we'll be stopping at. Grab the list which should be in your mailbox and come join us.

Thanks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everybody into the gallery today and those that are following along at home.

I just want to give a shout-out to Melvin Ford from Georgetown. It's Christmastime coming upon us here again this year, and for the second year in a row Melvin is organizing a dinner at the playhouse in Georgetown on Christmas Day that's open to anyone to come to. I know last year I went down and helped them out. My two sons came down and helped and waited on tables and stuff. It was a great event and it

was largely attended, so I want to commend Melvin for the great work and the many volunteers that help him, the people who donate food to him.

It's a fantastic event and it is open to everyone on Christmas Day. It's a great event for anybody who wants to come down and check it out. I know that the Lieutenant Governor was there last year and some of you even – you know, the minister of education might come down (Indistinct). Paul MacNeill was there last year, so you'd be happy to see him.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to welcome everyone in the gallery today and also folks that are watching at home. On Wednesday when I was making my way here I saw a number of volunteer firefighters driving to an emergency to help someone out, so it was a great reminder for me to see all these volunteers, great volunteers in our community, that are out there helping us in our time of need, so I'd like to have a special shout out to them.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone in the gallery.

I just wanted to mention that Robert Dalziel of Cornwall turns 90 today, so happy birthday to Robert, and Marie Sanderson – a famous farming family in my district, Johnny and Robert Sanderson – but Marie hasn't been feeling that great lately, but I'm told she's on the mend so I just want a little shout-out to her and keep going.

Last night I attended a seniors' dinner in Cornwall at Sam's restaurant. I'm sure

there's lots of seniors that slept well last night by the looks of the plate size, and kudos to Fadi at Sam's who puts this on, and the town of Cornwall. It's extremely important. It brings a lot of people out.

Just a reminder, too, to those people in our communities, if there's seniors living alone make sure you visit them now and then and make sure things are okay with them, and especially over the Christmas season.

Tomorrow morning my wife and I will be hosting our annual Christmas breakfast at the civic centre. It's a complimentary breakfast, but we do take donations, and I think last year we raised close to \$500 for school breakfast programs in the area. If you're hungry and you want to stop by, I'd be more than happy to serve you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome everyone back here today, and those from District 1 that are in the gallery today, and all those that are at home watching the proceedings today.

Especially I'd like to acknowledge Joe and Annette Fay, great people in the community. Joe is better known for the mayor of the East Baltic Road, so I'd just like to wish them a merry Christmas. I'm not going to get up there for a little bit, so I want to wish them a merry Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, you'll enjoy this.

I was at a wake last night and I was talking to one of your constituents. She was going on and she was telling me what a great job the Speaker is doing in the House. I said: Oh, yeah? She says he brought in the 40-second rule and it really keeps the thing moving and more questions and more answers.

She didn't want me to divulge her name, but you do know her, and she does respect you, so she just wanted me to pass it along, and I respect not mentioning her name. She didn't

want me to. But I said it was all right if I mentioned our conversation. She really respects your job and the rest of us respect your job, and she just wants to let you know that you're doing an excellent job as the Speaker of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: He's got questions today.

Speaker: I'm just wondering if this is a promise of things to come.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to say hello to all those watching this morning from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, especially those from Charlotte Court and 501 Queen Street. I always appreciate their sound advice.

I'd like to give a special shout-out to One Hundred Women Who Care of Prince Edward Island. Their next meeting is on Tuesday, December 13th, where three deserving charities will present and one will walk away with almost \$15,000. Great at this time of year.

I'd like to thank all the members of One Hundred Women Who Care of Prince Edward Island and the Prince County hundred women who care. They're great leaders in our community, and I'd like to thank them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone back to the House today and those joining us in the gallery.

It's a beautiful morning driving in. I just couldn't get over the snow-covered fields,

and the sky was amazing, so we should all be enjoying the day.

A busy weekend in my district this weekend. We have a ceilidh tonight at the Murray River community centre, should be great entertainment, and on Sunday Garnet Buell and friends, the Murray River Ceilidh Committee, is having a fundraiser at the Kaylee Hall, actually at Pooles Corner. Garnet and friends have done great work for supporting the QEH, and this is just more of his great volunteer work. I just want to reach out and wish everyone there good luck and a great crowd on Sunday evening. I encourage everyone to come out and join the ceilidh group, so everyone have a great weekend.

Thank you very much.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Acadian and Francophone Chamber of Commerce Luncheon

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week the Acadian and Francophone Chamber of Commerce held a Francophone Pioneer Fishermen's luncheon.

La semaine dernière, un dîner a eu lieu en l'honneur des pêcheurs pionniers francophones.

This event was to pay tribute to the French-speaking fishermen and thank them for their contribution to the Island way of life.

On Tuesday, November 29th, the organization and its partners held the beautiful meal in tribute to the fishing community. There were 35 fishermen recognized with certificates. These were fishermen 50 years of age and older, and have had 20 years or more in an occupation in the fishing industry. It recognizes those who are carrying on the family fishing tradition and others who have chosen the occupation.

Entertainment was provided at the time of the meal when Amand Arsenaault, former fisherman, performed a beautiful song of fishing, accompanied by his son Norman on

the violin and Norman's wife, Paula, who was at the piano.

The Acadian and Francophone Chamber of Commerce of Prince Edward Island is a provincial grouping of entrepreneurs, cooperators, and French-speaking business people that encourage networking and sharing for the benefits of its members.

I would like to congratulate the Acadian and Francophone Chamber of Commerce on the success of the luncheon.

Je voudrais féliciter la Chambre de commerce acadienne et francophone pour le succès de leur événement.

As well as thank and acknowledge the men and women who have chosen an occupation that provide us with such wonderful support in the fishing community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Elmsdale Church of the Nazarene

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to acknowledge the centennial anniversary of the Elmsdale Church of the Nazarene on the Dock Road in my District of Alberton-Roseville. They're going into their 100th year of fellowship in worshipping together, and I would like to rise and congratulate the congregation.

Original church services were held in the homes of the members initially, and then they moved to a hall at the present location in July of 1917 with Rev. J.W. Turpel as the pastor. The church burned down in 1946. A second church was built in 1947 by Jack Arthur and other men from the church.

Family names of the original church were Hardy, Oliver, MacLeod, MacMillan, Sellick, Hines, Gillian, Costain, McArthur, and Ramsay. There are still members of the congregation today that are grandchildren from the original families.

The co-pastors at the church are Rev. Micheal and Rev. Betty Zita. They are also blessed with Rev. Sheila McCrea-MacCallum who volunteers much of her with time counselling and visitation to seniors and consoling those that are suffering the loss of a loved one.

The church offers the community two worship services on Sunday, youth group, Bible study and prayer, kids connect, and a striving seniors' program.

As you can see, the Elmsdale Church of the Nazarene has many reasons to celebrate and many reasons why the community will be joining in fellowship, song, laughter, and prayer as they approach the blessing of being part of the community for over 100 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Maggie MacPhee

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Anytime I can get up in the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island and speak about friends, it's a privilege.

I'm honoured to rise today and recognize Maggie MacPhee, the former school administrator at the Souris consolidated, and now the Souris Regional School, on her retirement after 39 years supporting students and staff at the Souris consolidated and the Souris regional.

Maggie is well-known in the Souris area and can guarantee every student who went through those schools would remember Maggie.

Maggie was always willing to help any student with any problem they had. She was always there to step up and lend a hand when needed. She was there to greet the students in the morning and say goodbye to them in the afternoon when they left for the day.

You could always count on seeing a smile on her face. She was a rock for all students and teachers at the schools.

Not only was she a mother to her own kids, but to all the students as well.

The staff of Souris schools insisted on Maggie having a retirement party, and I'm glad they did. It was an amazing turnout, and I had the pleasure of attending myself to wish her the best in the future. Maggie's significant contributions don't end in the school. She received the volunteer of the year award from the town of Souris for her contributions to the community groups and activities.

Maggie always devoted herself to give back to the community. She makes a mark wherever she goes.

I know Maggie and her husband Westy, who is a retired fisherman, will have a little more time on their hands now Maggie is retired.

I asked them at the retirement party: What's their plans? Their plans were looking forward to looking after their great-grandchildren, and now Westy is looking forward to putting in a vegetable garden in the spring.

I want to thank Maggie for her 39 years devoted to services to the Souris consolidated and the Souris regional schools, and her work in the community as well. She is someone we can call, look up to, just like the students did in her years of service, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Educational assessment wait time

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

PEI physician vacancies is not the only area of government that the MacLauchlan government has dropped the ball on. Current wait time for educational assessments by the Public Schools Branch psychologists in some areas of the province is three years.

Question to the education minister: Why are you failing the children of Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: Hon. minister, before you answer that – hon. leader, you mentioned the Premier's name. You say hon. Premier.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't recall that. Thank you.

Speaker: It's okay.

Mr. Myers: You did it yesterday. You said Mundy. You said Minister Mundy in your statement.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Oh, okay, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

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

I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. We've had lots of discussions this week, both internally and publicly, about our commitment to children with unique needs in the public school system. As a former educator who spent 20 years working with families and children with unique needs, I'm very passionate, I'm very committed, and I'm very focused on continuing to improve markers to continue to support children with special needs in all our classrooms across Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There's a three-month waiting list for some students who need to have a consultation with the community mental health, and that's disgraceful.

Question the minister of education: Will you explain to the House in 40 seconds or less why any student suffering with a potential mental health issue would have to wait three months?

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

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

As I alluded to, government's commitment to continue to grow supports for children with unique needs, but not only unique needs. But the question from the Leader of the Opposition is very focused on children that are experiencing higher levels of anxiety and dealing with mental health.

It's a theme that's coming from the learning partners council, the Principals Council, and the district advisory council. We're taking those conversations very seriously, and we're working very hard with the Public Schools Branch and the system, and in collaboration with the ministry of health, to make sure that we're using all our resources as effectively to reach every child that we can, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

West Prince youth addictions counsellor

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

It's a theme. I'm glad you recognized that, because it's a theme you're failing to deal with.

Minister, you represent a fair piece of West Prince, yet youth and families in that area are being treated as second-class citizens and are struggling to deal with some serious youth addiction issues on their own. They're not getting the help they need.

Question to the minister: Why have you not filled the youth addictions counsellor position for West Prince, or do you plan to?

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

Mr. LaVie: No plan.

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

I'll have to bring that specific question back. I don't know if that's a position that's under my responsibility to the Public Schools Branch. It could be under another department, but we'll follow up.

I recognize the needs. We did meet with a group of principals from West Prince and we have heard from the public meetings. We have listened to the small group meetings, and we have read their written submissions in respect to the issues that are coming forward, and recognize that government needs to continue to evolve and respond to how we provide services.

We'll continue to work hard. I have some productive discussions going on right now with current budget and looking at ways that we can provide more services and reach more children, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism student number

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

For some time now we've been talking about the challenges families are experiencing, as well as our schools and communities, through children with autism. This spring the minister of education told this House that there were 346 students with autism in Island schools.

Question to this minister of education: Minister, how many students with autism are in our schools this calendar year?

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

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

Government recognizes that the incidence of autism in the early years is on the rise. We have more children entering the public school system experiencing a range of issues on the autism spectrum, and we've very pleased that we continue to grow and

expand the supports for children with autism.

Today we've got 360 EAs. We've got eight autism staff that are designated inside the department to look at the zero to four early years window. We also have eight staff working very closely with schools in a consultation process with educators in Island schools all across Prince Edward Island.

We've got 10 speech-language pathologists, and we've got 140 resource teachers. We've got 9.5 psychologists –

Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Currie: – and 50 school counsellors, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism assessment and diagnosis student numbers

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

I'd like to thank the minister for not answering the question, as usual.

My next question, again to the minister of education: How many students in our school system are currently waiting for assessment and potential diagnosis of autism?

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

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

I recognize that – and I've said this – that my commitment in continuing to support families and continuing to work with the system.

We have approximately a budget of over \$40 million responding to the needs of children with unique needs, and very proud of the inclusion practices we have in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Right now we're very committed. Right now we do a number of initiatives. In the early

years we provide over \$700,000 for one-on-one care for 10-25 hours a week, as well as after-school tutoring grants, and currently, in the early years, we have 40 children that are on the waitlist with IBI and we're currently evaluation our caseloads.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Once again, I'd like to thank the hon. minister for, again, not answering one of my questions.

Autism assessment and diagnosis wait time

Another question to the minister of education: Minister, on average how long are these students waiting to be assessed and diagnosed?

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

Mr. Currie: Mr. Speaker, there's the assessments that are conducted in the department of health.

I know that we've made significant inroads with investments in physical medicine over the years, but also recognize, with the improved assessments, obviously that has increased. I believe we've got 40 students right now that are waiting for IBI intervention between our zero to four-year-olds, and I recognize that's too long.

I will bring back the exact number of students that are waiting for assessment inside the Public Schools Branch.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Shortage of psychologists

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

The minister just somewhat answered my question, my second-last question, and, again, he failed to answer the question I just asked, but I will go on.

Again, to the minister, these students would usually have these diagnostic assessments done by school psychologists.

Again, question to the minister: You talked about how many psychologists are currently in the system, but how many psychologists are we currently short in the system that are still trying to be hired?

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

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

I believe we have 9.5 psychologists that are hired. We are currently looking to hire. We have a wait time that's completely unacceptable, as the minister, but there are a number of factors, one, identifying individuals to fill those positions.

I'm looking at ways that we can address that formal assessment by looking at privatizing and moving towards psychologists that can provide those supports.

But I must add, while children are on the wait list there are interventions. I talked about the level of supports, whether it be through EAs, through resource teachers. Students are being supported that are still waiting for the formal assessments.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism and pressure point in schools

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

Again, to the minister of education, this spring the education minister set an unprecedented increase in students with autism spectrum disorder has become a point of pressure in the school system.

Question to the minister of education: Minister, can you clarify what you mean by saying students with autism are a pressure point in our schools?

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

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

As I indicated in earlier lines of question, I recognize as minister, with my ongoing meetings with the division of student services, which provides supports for children with special needs across the Province of Prince Edward Island, we're seeing an increase. There are more children coming into the system with autism needs. I can't give you a formal diagnosis because there's range on the autism spectrum, but I can bring a breakdown back.

I feel that we are making inroads, but, Mr. Speaker, we've got more work to do, no question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The minister goes on to say that, yes, the long waitlist, or time, for these children to see a psychologist for a potential diagnosis with autism spectrum disorder is unacceptable and far too long. But the minister goes on to say, that while that is unacceptable there are supports in place. I question, though, how you can have supports in place when you don't even have a diagnosis.

Autism action

Another question to the minister of education. The minister further said that addressing the issue would be a top priority once the *Education Act* was passed. The *Education Act* was passed this past spring.

What action has been taken to address this issue since the *Education Act* was passed?

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

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

I don't know if the Member from Stratford-Kinlock was in the House the day that I made my ministerial statement on a \$1.3 million investment bringing in 30 individuals, whether it be EAs, youth service

workers, or individuals to support children with unique needs in the system. That would be a reflection to the response.

But the Member from Stratford-Kinlock understands that we work on budget cycles. I will reassure all the Members of the Legislative Assembly that providing additional supports and growing and looking at way that we can meet the needs of children with special needs will be top of mind in our department in the budget process.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Autism assessments and private psychologists

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

When the education minister was in the health portfolio he worked to expand the role of private audiologists, and he knew, in fact, that they could play a role to help reduce long wait time for services.

Again, a question to the minister of education: Has the minister considered adopting a similar approach with private psychologists to help cut down the long wait times for school-aged autism assessments?

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

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

I want to reiterate, I recognize the wait times for the formal psycho-educational assessments are long, but also I want to reiterate that students that are currently on those wait lists are getting day to day supports and getting a volume of supports from the 367 EAs, the eight staff that work in autism that consult with our early year centres, the eight staff that consult with teachers and resource teachers.

We are working diligently. I have great respect for individuals that work in the area of special education.

As I alluded to earlier, we're ahead of the question from the Member from Stratford-Kinlock, and we are looking at ways to reduce that formal access – to a formal assessment in psychology, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

One of the hardest parts of the long wait times for students is the anxiety it causes the parents, and the children, of course, as well.

The longer the wait times drag on, the more helpless parents feel to try and help their children. I believe, we all believe on this side of the House, that an expanded role for private psychologists to help cut down wait times is worth trying. I've spoken to many of them and they are willing. They want to be on the frontline. They want to help these children.

Again, question to the minister: Minister, will you commit here today to exploring, at the very least, a pilot project like this to reduce wait times for school-aged autism assessments and, once and for all, get rid of this three-year wait list?

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

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

That work is well underway inside the departments. We have had numerous conversations. We're also having conversations with other government departments to look at ways that we can address – I mean, that's the work we do in government. We have issues, we have problems, and we work at resolving them.

Currently, I do want to reiterate that there are some good things going on right now with supports. We spend over \$700,000 for one-on-one care with children with unique needs. We also, basically, have children that access the Disability Support Program.

We allot \$6,600 to Island families. I think there's approximately 140 students right now that receive additional resources to help

support them outside of the classroom as well, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Speech language pathology wait list

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a parent, nothing tugs at my heart more than a child in need. As an MLA, little frustrates me more. At the school family meetings across the Island a common theme heard by our MLAs was poor access to specialist services like speech language pathology.

Question to the education minister: How many kids are on a wait list for speech language pathology in Island schools?

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

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

We're hearing the conversation very clearly. I do want to allude to an initiative that was implemented back in 2008 between the department of education and the department of health in respect to OT services that's currently in the Queens region, and we're very committed. We're working on an initiative right now to look at services, expanding services in the west and expanding services in the east.

We'll be paying very close attention. We are listening. We are hearing from schools. We talked about this school review process. Part of the reason why we are conducting reviews of the schools is to make sure that we can find the resources and support these concerns that are being heard all across the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you didn't answer that question at all.

Question to the education minister: How long is the current wait time for speech language pathology in Island schools?

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

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

I'll bring the exact wait time. As the minister I don't have the operational answers to all those questions, but they're good questions. We'll bring that information back.

We're working at addressing our wait times. As minister, I clearly understand. I'm not going to sit here and pretend that I'm oblivious to any of these questions. These are wait times that are concerning. We continue to invest. The investments that we made in – a recent investment of \$1.3 million is exactly to address and to provide supports for children that are on a wait list before the formal assessment.

There's a lot of great work going on in the whole area of student services. We're spending over \$40 million. As I always say, there's more to work to do, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've heard stories about families going through the emotional rollercoaster of knowing your child needs help, but you're stuck on a wait list for months.

Question to the education minister: What do you say to families like this who are stuck in an endless holding pattern to get help for their kids?

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

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recognize the reality of some of these conversations. I meet regularly, not only with families from my own constituency, but I meet with all Islanders and families. We do it regularly.

I work very closely with the Public Schools Branch and I have great confidence in their leadership, in Julie Gaudet, in respect to the way she manages the pressures and responsibilities that she has.

As government, we're committing to supporting the division of student services to continue not only to grow the supports, like we demonstrated recently with our \$1.3 million investment, but looking at ways that we can collaborate and consult and bring in teachers to provide the best access we can, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Classroom support roadblocks

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've also heard stories about families so frustrated with the waits they paid thousands of dollars to get help privately, then they find roadblocks in transferring that help into the classroom.

Question to the education minister: Why would a family that spends thousands of dollars for private specialists have to face roadblocks using the support for their kids?

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

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

I, too, have had those conversations and have those conversations with families that run – I'm not sure about the roadblock. We can get some information and more clarity on what he's referring to as a roadblock.

But currently we have supports in place. We provide Island children with autism and families with over \$6,600. We spend over \$700,000 to provide grants for one-on-one supports, after-school hours, and work very closely to support respite care.

There is work going on and it's an ongoing reality of the public school system. We're identifying more children coming in with needs than there are leaving, but I'm very committed to continue to grow and expand the inclusion model here in the province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Portability between public and private specialist help

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the education minister: Why isn't there more portability between public and private specialist help for services like speech language pathology?

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

Mr. Currie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize and we are looking at initiatives right now to look at ways to support better access for a range of services, whether it be psycho-educational assessments or whether it be access to speech language pathologists. We are looking at other models and other options.

I'm very much right now engaged in our budget process. We all know the importance of doing the best we can with the resources we have, but we're committed to looking at ways that we can reach more children with the resources that we do have, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the education minister: Why are you penalizing families' financially for looking out for their kids?

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

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

I'm not sure of the question of penalizing. I mean, parents do have the choice in some situations where if they have the means to look at additional supports for children, but the province, through the department of health and the department of education, we're looking at ways through investments in IBI investments.

As I say, we've grown. If you look at the investments and the changes in the resources that we have now to support children with special needs, as I alluded to, we have over 360 EAs. We've got autism consultants that provide work on the ground with families directly on intervention. We've got staff inside the Public Schools Branch. We've got more youth service workers than we have in the past. We are evolving as a system to meet the needs of the growing pressures that are in place to support a strong inclusion model, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Telemedicine

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

According to the 2015 Canadian TeleHealth Report, Prince Edward Island lags far behind most other Canadian provinces on the adoption of telemedicine services.

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is your department doing to bring modern telemedicine services to Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Actually, telehealth is a modern use of technology that we can use and utilize within our health care system, and in fact we actually do utilize telehealth. I think there's a telehealth service that's in Western Hospital and I believe Souris Hospital too, but I'd stand corrected.

But I know there are a number of facilities that do use that, and that allows physicians to access other services and consult with other physicians in other locations on a particular patient's issue, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Local health services are indeed a critical factor in developing and maintaining vibrant rural communities and by making better use

of telemedicine we have a really big opportunity to improve access to health care services in rural areas and keep rural health facilities open, and basically just generally improve the well-being of Islanders in our rural communities.

Question to the minister: What do you think are the barriers to implementing telemedicine more widely in rural Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: As I said, Mr. Speaker, we do utilize telehealth services.

We do have some facilities. We do not have all six of our facilities accessible to Telehealth. I guess ultimately the barriers to that would be the financial resources and trying to stretch the resources that we have with all the asks that we get in our department.

But telehealth is something that we see as an advantage to rural health care facilities and, once again, we will continue to look at utilizing those services.

I might reiterate that if we do have one facility that has telehealth in one region or whatever, it doesn't mean that other physicians can't access that service. It's just a matter of how far people want to drive to get that service, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

A barrier I don't believe should be financial because the long-term savings to the health care system in more fully implementing telemedicine would be enormous, so it's sort of a – it would be a wonderful investment.

I'll tell you what the real barrier is, it's reliable broadband Internet access. That's what the real problem is in delivering modern telemedicine services to all of rural Prince Edward Island.

Since responsibility for rural broadband, of course, falls with the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, your

two departments would have to collaborate in order to make this work properly.

Telemedicine interdepartmental meetings

Can I ask you, minister, how many meetings you or your staff have had with their counterparts in the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to explore the opportunities that better broadband connectivity could create for the delivery of rural health services in PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, our department has had consultations to deliver more high-tech services to our facilities across Prince Edward Island.

One of them is the implementation of Wi-Fi in all our hospitals across the province. Some of those facilities access that through community service. I believe Souris got the – the Lion's Club played a role in helping with that.

Once again, we have the chance to consult at Cabinet and caucus to talk about the issues when it comes to rural broadband services, and it is a limitation in some cases, but we still access all those services as best we can, Mr. Speaker.

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

Diabetes test strips

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is directed to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The 2016 report on diabetes on Prince Edward Island states that 32% of the provincial population is living with diabetes or pre-diabetes.

Minister, are you planning to revise the current policy for blood glucose test strips for people with diabetes to expand coverage and ensure all Islanders with diabetes have the needed strips for optimal management of their diabetes?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for that question.

In regards to – recently, I think, believe, November was diabetes month and we all, as MLAs, had the opportunity to meet with the diabetes association and we have done good things for the diabetic community.

We've added diabetic strips to the system, insulin pumps for children. We have a nurse practitioner that provides services for individuals with diabetes that are not on – don't have a family doctor and we will continue to do more.

I am looking at trying to see what we can do to improve the groups that access diabetic strips.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) family doctor (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: They've got a nurse practitioner.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, your first supplementary.

Financial coverage for people with type 1 diabetes

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, your department has done a great job with regard to financial coverage for insulin pumps for those under the age of 18.

Are there plans to expand the financial coverage for insulin pumps and supplies to all individuals with type 1 diabetes, regardless of age?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I have had the opportunity to have consultations with staff at Health PEI and myself to review the issue around better services and improved programs for people with diabetes in this province.

We do see that the potential of growth for people being diagnosed with diabetes is increasing. When I look at the insulin pump

program there are some jurisdictions that have gone up to age 26 for individuals accessing the insulin pump. My department is really reviewing that and seeing what we can do, if we can find the fiscal resources to enhance programs for people with diabetes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Water act update

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. LaVie: All right.

Mr. Dumville: Yes.

The government has recognized that water is a valuable public resource and it's in the process of public consultations. Would the minister please advise at what stage your department is with the water act?

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

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

That is a great question from the Member from West Royalty-Springvale, and he does a super job of contacting me with issues from his residents in his area. I know water issue is a big concern in his riding. Thank you for bringing that forward, hon. member.

It is a pleasure for me to update the status of the water act progress to the members of the Legislature today and those that may be watching. Probably all of you will recall that back in the spring session I had indicated that I would like to see, as minister, the draft act to be posted online first week of December, which obviously has passed us. Our legislative writers, we've been keeping them very busy with writing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Minister, when could we expect the water act, the legislation, to be introduced in this Assembly?

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was indicating, the draft act is about a month behind getting posted online with the significant amount of work the legislative writers have been doing. Once it gets posted online, around the first week of January, we will allow Islanders to take a month or so to kind of digest that, tear it apart a bit, analyze it, and then we'll begin the second round of public consultations around mid-February and hopefully get it tabled in the spring session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Souris dunes

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The transportation department built a wall to protect the Souris causeway.

Question to the minister of transportation: What is your plan to save the dunes?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, the Souris bridge, which was completed last year at a cost of about 8 million. Unfortunately, as I mentioned, that is a very delegate area subject to a lot of damage from the storms that we've had. We have built a protective wall along the causeway there, along the dunes, to encourage more dune growth. As a result of having the fence there we are having some success with that and we will continue to monitor it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister of transportation, you promised the people of eastern Kings a phase 2. When will phase 2 start?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We did have a consultant work with us on what would be the best way to approach the issues that are affecting the dunes along the Souris causeway area. We will continue to put together the second phase plan on that.

As soon as we have that finalized we'll make sure that we are continuing our discussions with the community. We understand it's a very big concern to them and to the town of Souris and we will continue those discussions.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister of transportation: Yes or no, is the funding in place for phase 2?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is part of a project that is ongoing and we will continue to ensure that we address those issues and we will keep the member and the community updated on what our plans will be.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I told this minister exactly what would happen when you built the wall. Nobody would listen. The sand dunes are gone, they're washed away, gone. No phase 2, so they're gone. They left.

To the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Minister, when does your department plan to deal with the destruction

of the sensitive dune system at the Souris causeway?

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

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

When that event occurred I did take a drive to Souris and view what was going on there. The hon. member knows that we were part of that process. To the best of my recollection, the process that was used was supported and endorsed by a world-renowned engineer that actually spent some time in that area during the summer months that said it would be a very effective method and that's the method that he would have suggested and has been used in other areas.

We, as the department, will continue to monitor and be part of the process and aid in any way that we can moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, a question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: When this took place did your department even get a call from the transportation department?

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

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Actually, phase 1 of the project has been completed, which consists of the construction of 200 metres sea wall. Work on phase 2 is continuing, hon. member, and that consists of installing measures to resist erosion, and we will continue to work with the community on that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks about phase 2. They should have done phase 2 like they promised the people when they came to Souris with a public meeting. The people told them: No phase 2. The dunes are gone; they washed away.

Now, to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: What are your plans to restore the dunes at the Souris causeway?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, there was a public information session held in Souris on February 25th, 2016. Mike Davies, coastal engineer with Coldwater Consulting, presented the assessment of the area and how we would move forward with the remediation and suggested alignment of the seawall, and the residents felt that the seawall should be placed in front of the existing dune system.

We will continue to work on phase 2 of helping with the abatement of the issues that we're having in Souris.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've just seen some terrible events just happen at West Point Lighthouse, the same seawall that's built at the Souris causeway, and seen what happened at West Point Lighthouse, it's washed out.

To the minister of transportation: I understand you built a wall to protect the road. We have to protect the road. It's the main entrance into all eastern Kings, I get that, you protected your road. But are you scared that the same thing is going to happen at the causeway in Souris as what has just happened at West Point Lighthouse?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any time there is a serious event as occurred from a storm which erodes our dunes area

on Prince Edward Island, of course, we're always concerned. We will continue to work on protecting that particular area and we will continue to work with the town of Souris on it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is the main road to eastern Kings. It's tourism for eastern Kings. You just found \$65 million to build a new highway when you can't protect your old highways.

To the minister of transportation: What are your plans to protect the dunes at Souris causeway today?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We will be working with the Department of Communities, Land and Environment to ensure that the best remediation plan is put in place and to protect the future of that causeway. We have every confidence in the work of our engineers and in work in consultation with the town of Souris that we will continue to protect that particular piece of infrastructure and are very aware of the effects that our climate change is having on all of our areas around Prince Edward Island. We recognize it is a serious problem that we all, as Islanders, need to work together on to ensure that they're protected.

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

Mi'Kmaq Confederacy loan standing

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance, when he was the minister of innovation prior to the last election, stood in this House and told us that the loan to the Confederacy for egaming was in good standing when in fact the actual loan agreement itself says that within 120 days at the end of a year they have to submit audited financial statements, which they didn't do.

A question to the minister who's responsible for the Premier's office today: Why is it that

the current Minister of Finance, who's now responsible internally by the Premier to clean up the mess in government, told this House that that loan was in good standing when it wasn't?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The egaming initiative in two thousand and I believe it was eight, and the parameters around it, we've addressed several times in this House. We've acted quickly on all recommendations as it related to the Auditor General's report and will continue to do so.

This government has done everything in its power to be transparent and accountable to the people of PEI on this issue. The Premier has come out and stressed and stated that this is not the way this government does business. We were elected on a mandate, Mr. Speaker, to be accountable, and that's exactly what we're doing, and we're moving forward.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, final question.

Deleted government email accounts (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Starting 14 days after missing that agreement there was a \$100 fine supposed to be imposed per week after that. The Minister of Finance stood in this House when he was minister of innovation, he said over and over again that this loan was in good standing. I have the loan document here today, the agreement, and it says that's not the case. It was not in good standing because they didn't submit their financial audits like they were supposed to to government.

Question to the minister of tourism. You like to answer questions, then today's your day: Whose emails were deleted?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to reiterate the process that we've followed to date and some of the things that we've done as a government to ensure that we're accountable to the people of PEI and we're transparent in every matter, that in every decision that we're making –

Mr. Aylward: Then answer a question.

Mr. MacDonald: There's conflict of interest that we've brought in. Ethics and integrity, whistleblower legislation, lobbyist legislation to come, *Financial Administration Act* review, disclosing write-offs which the opposition wanted. We're doing reevaluation of records management.

What else can the government do to move forward in a positive manner –

An Hon. Member: Tell the truth!

Mr. Myers: Answer the question!

Mr. MacDonald: – based on issues of 2008, 2009, 2011 that this opposition keeps going back to?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Economic Update – Primary Industries

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

I ask for your indulgence. It may be a little longer than the three minutes, for sure.

Speaker: Yes, go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. McIsaac: (Indistinct) so much good news here.

Mr. Speaker, as Prince Edward Island's minister responsible for agriculture and fisheries, I rise in the House today to provide an economic update on some of our province's primary industries.

I'm pleased to report that most of our primary industries are experiencing growth in 2016 over 2015, with some experiencing

record-breaking years. We are truly Canada's Food Island.

There are many more success stories than I could fit into a three-minute statement, but I'll do my best to give a quick glimpse of how agriculture, aquaculture, and fisheries sectors are doing this year.

In agriculture, approximately 50,000 acres of soybeans were planted this year and 25,000 metric tons were marketed through contracts with the Grain Elevator Corporation. Contract prices rallied well over 2015 levels to almost \$450 per tonne, resulting in the average value of the contract crop being significantly higher than last year.

Soybean quality is shown to be very good and the value of the soybean crop is estimated to be roughly \$1 million to \$1.5 million more than in 2015 which was \$18 million.

In potatoes, an industry that is worth more than \$1 billion dollars to the Island economy each year, we are receiving reports that yields and quality are good this year with growers indicating that the crop is much better than expected.

There was a total of 89,000 acres of potatoes planted in PEI this year.

Potato sales til the end of the third quarter in 2016 are 3.5% higher than the same period in 2015.

When it comes to grains, the PEI Grain Elevator Corporation continues its role as a principal handler and marketer of traditionally grown cereal and oilseed crops. At its fiscal year-end of July 31st, the corporation had handled 79,000 metric tonnes for the year and as of the end of September 2016 they received a total of 48,000 metric tonnes of barley, oats, feed wheat, and milling wheat, well over the five-year average of 37,167 metric tonnes.

When it comes to blueberries we are seeing significant increases in yields as PEI growers produced more than 34 million pounds of blueberries this year. This is a 19% increase over the 2015 crop and a 23% increase over the 2014 crop. It is estimated that 6,500 acres were harvested in 2016.

Atlantic Beef Products is experiencing growth as well and is expecting the new Sobeys contract will result in stronger returns for the company.

We are seeing good news in the dairy sector as well. Dairy producers received increases in quota of 3% on November 1st of this year and another 2% on December 1st. This increase in quota is attributed to the high demand for butterfat.

Overall PEI farm gate receipts in 2015 were about \$466.7 million. Farm Credit Canada is predicting a 3% increase in 2016 which equals a \$14 million increase.

HST, combined with lower fuel prices and a 19% drop in crop insurance premiums, have farmers in a much better cash position this year.

The department's Growing Forward 2 programs are fully subscribed for the 2016-2017 fiscal year which is an indicator of strength in farm cash positions.

On the aquaculture and fisheries side the oyster market remains strong. The oyster value was at a record of \$12.5 million in 2015 and this value is expected to be exceeded in 2016. There is a very high and ever increasing demand for the high-quality oysters grown and harvested here on Prince Edward Island. We have seen record prices for oysters in 2016, and our oyster processors are struggling to keep up with the demand. Prices are running \$25 to \$30 per peck for Choice and \$10 to \$13 for Standards, which is \$2 per peck more than 2015's price. These are the highest prices our department has on record.

Two major expansions are underway in the finfish industry. AquaBounty is planning a major expansion of salmon production in their Rollo Bay facility, creating a number of jobs in the area, and 3 Northern Harvest, the only 4-star best aquaculture practices certified facility in the world, is building a state-of-the-art salmon hatchery in Cardigan.

Growth is strong this season in regards to mussels with meat yields this summer and fall being very good. Prices are \$.60 to \$.70 per pound and demand is strong, and an expansion that will allow up to 10 million more pounds of production is being planned

for Malpeque Bay through the PEI Aquaculture Leasing Management Board that will allow for continued growth.

In marine fisheries we are seeing good catches in fall herring, and mackerel landings are seeing a strong price at \$.60 to \$.65 cents per pound.

I will end with success in our lobster industry.

The value of the PEI lobster landings will be more than \$193 million, which is \$43 million more than 2015. Data from reports submitted to DAF indicate spring lobster landings of 23.4 million pounds. Preliminary value of the landing is \$148 million. This is a \$27 million increase from 2015. Data from the fall fishery indicate landings of 6.8 million pounds which is 22% higher than 2015 and 1 million pounds higher than the record year of 2014.

In closing, I want to congratulate all of the hard-working men and women in our primary industries across the province and thank them for the incredible contribution they make to our economy year after year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to repeat everything the minister just said, but when you speak of our agriculture and fisheries on Prince Edward Island, what can you say? When agriculture and fisheries do well, PEI as a whole does well.

These fishers and farmers, agriculture, are very hard workers right across Prince Edward Island, and they work very hard daily to assure that PEI does well. The minister, he was into the soybeans and the potatoes and the dairy. He hit all aspects of agriculture and also the fisheries. Fisheries – a couple he didn't mention – it doesn't get mentioned very often. I'm going to mention it to him. It's our snow crab industry.

We have a great snow crab industry here on PEI and it's in the spring of the year, and it creates a lot of jobs also. Another one I'm just going to touch base on is our tuna fishery. Our tuna fishery – North Lake is the tuna capital of the world, and we have a great catch-and-release program up there in the tourism sector and it brings – as you are aware as a former fisher, it brings a lot to Prince Edward Island. You just wouldn't believe how much. I'm not going to get into the figures, but you wouldn't believe how many millions this brings into the economy of Prince Edward Island.

Economic development should be listening to this also. When you talk fishing and farming on Prince Edward Island, you're talking about the two main industries on Prince Edward Island, and that's something that we have to hold onto. It's been in place since the 1800s, back to the 1700s, so it is something we have to make sure that our fisheries and our agriculture are looked after into the future because they are the main industries in Prince Edward Island. We haven't got oil and we haven't got gas. We haven't got the industries that Quebec has or Ontario has or Alberta has, but we do have an industry right here on Prince Edward Island and it's unique to us. So let's make sure we look after our fisheries and our agriculture into the future so PEI will survive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As the hon. member just stated and everybody in this House knows, the economic health of the agriculture and fisheries sectors is critical to the overall economic well-being of Prince Edward Island, two of the biggest elements of our provincial economy here.

They are also the two elements of our economy, particularly agriculture, which is most vulnerable to factors that are beyond our control, to weather patterns, to market fluctuations, to subsidies in other countries,

to trade agreements that can be changed to protectionist policies that may or may not be developing in other countries, currency exchange rates. All of those things really profoundly affect the welfare of both agriculture and fisheries, but particularly agriculture.

There is really not much we can do about that and that should be a concern for us. As long as we rely on the export model that this government seems to be intent on doing, because one big customer may be there now in the States or in China for our high volume, low-value products, but if they feel they can get a better deal somewhere else or if the protectionist barriers go up in the States, which is entirely plausible given the new administration which is coming in there, then that one big buyer disappears and we're in trouble.

The continued diversification of our agriculture sector is critical. I'm really glad that you led off with soybeans as your first example. You ran through a wide range of new product – well, not necessarily new, but that diversity in our agriculture is growing, and I think that's really important for lots of reasons: for our continued economic health, for the health of our soil here, and for the well-being of farmers economically as well.

I think we also need to retain the infrastructure that supports our farmers and fishers. You mentioned the Borden beef plant, and that's a critical element of maintaining mixed farming here on Prince Edward Island. Thank you for bringing that up.

As the McCain plant sits empty in Borden, I'm fully aware of at least one other Canadian pulse and grain company with Island roots that would love to take over that facility, employ farmers growing, again, a diversity of crops, grains and pulses – 30,000 acres they would like to grow. I think, as long as that plant sits there empty, and we don't utilize a facility which could expand the diversity on Prince Edward Island, then we're perhaps not grabbing an opportunity that's there. I hope that your department, and other departments – Economic Development and Tourism – is aware of this offer, which is on the table, and that they jump at it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Watershed Funding Formula

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, watershed groups across Prince Edward Island dedicate their time and effort to protecting and improving some of our province's most sensitive natural areas; our watersheds.

They provide an invaluable service and we, as a government, are extremely proud to support them. The Government of Prince Edward Island provides more than \$1.12 million annually to watershed groups.

Since there are 23 watershed groups that are very different in many aspects, there needed to be a funding formula that allocates the province's contribution fairly and effectively. A funding formula also helps groups plan for the long-term by providing funding that is predictable and stable year over year.

Over the past year, the alliance, with the assistance from our department, has worked hard to develop just such a formula. I want to congratulate the PEI Watershed Alliance for recognizing the need for a fair and transparent funding formula.

A draft formula was presented to all member groups and was approved with a very strong majority. The approved funding formula will allocate: 50% of the funds to watershed groups based on size or area managed; 25% based on performance; 12.5% based on leveraging, or funds raised from other sources; and 12.5% based on community involvement.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: This new funding formula will be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted as needed, based on feedback from watershed groups and from the alliance.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, just – hon. members, there's a lot of rumbling going on over there. I find it awfully hard to hear the

hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment's statement. If you could just be quiet, at least, until he's finished.

Go ahead, hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: This formula has truly been a collaborative process between government and watersheds.

I want to express my deep appreciation to all watershed members for their willingness to work with us to conserve, protect, and enhance our Island waterways.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a long time coming. I know when I was first elected in 2011 this was something that we had been asking for, better funding for the watershed groups, because they were doing the yeoman's work of taking care of the waterways for government. Government hadn't been making any moves to even have any restrictive regulations as far as what was happening. The practices that were causing the heavy siltation in some of the areas and the fish kills and all those things were happening, and government was pretty well asleep at the wheel.

You need to fund these groups because they're the ones that are going to the work even when government ignores it.

Eighty per cent of the groups will actually receive less money from this government under this formula. I know that it's going to be a lot harder for a lot of them. The group that is active in my area can never get money from the provincial government because they're always told that they are federally funded and because of that they don't qualify for any provincial funds. Yet the federal fund that funds them is on a project-by-project basis so they have to put a bridge in to get money. There is no money for them to clean any of the streams. You only have to come out and see the Montague River. You can drive over the bridge in Montague after a rain and see that the river is red as far as you can look in either

direction. That's the direct cause of not having the proper systems implemented up in the upper part of the river.

I know a number of years ago I worked for the watershed group in Montague when I was a student, back when they were funded by government and funded properly. There was a lot of clean-up work done. The whole tributary system to the Montague River was cleaned up at that time. The fish has come back and it was lively and it was deep. Now it's to the point where it's filled up with silt again and government doesn't have anything to do with the local group to help them out there.

While it's good to see government finally make an announcement, it's not necessarily good for 80% of the groups that are involved and they've waited a long time.

I believe in the environment. I believe in handing over a healthy earth to our children. Government has to do a lot more to ensure that that happens.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Of course, I welcome this as well. Stable funding for watersheds has been something we have been waiting for a long time. I'm very glad to hear that.

We're all aware in this House of the tremendous work that the watershed associations do, and how they stretch that small amount of dollars that they each get into some pretty extraordinary projects.

In my own area, the South Shore Watershed Association, the work they have done in the Westmoreland River recently is just spectacular. Nobody doubts that the money is well spent.

I know if the Member from Rustico-Emerald were here this morning, and presumably would have had responded to this question for the official opposition, he would say you need to remove the fee for the saplings, the 50 cent fee, which you are imposing on the

watershed groups when they're planting those saplings in the riparian zones.

Fifty cents a sapling might not sound like a lot, but you multiply that by a few thousand and it's a significant sum for organizations that receive a very small amount of money.

I really ask you, minister, to revisit that particular fee that you're charging the watershed. Hopefully, you can remove that entirely.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Again, they do wonderful work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the written questions to the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy 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. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table Holland College Consolidated Financial Statements for the period ending March 31st, 2016 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, by Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I

beg leave to table the Consolidated Financial Statements for the University of Prince Edward Island for the period ending April 30th, 2016 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton do you have a committee report?

Mr. J. Brown: Not today, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Government Bills

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, that the 27th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 27, *An Act to Amend the Health Services Payment Act (No. 3)*, Bill No. 59, ordered for second reading.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Health Services Payment Act (No. 3)*, Bill. No. 59, read a second time.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that this House do now resolve

itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot if he wouldn't mind coming and chairing this bill.

Chair (Palmer): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Health Services Payment Act (No. 3)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Just before we proceed, just wondering if we could get an overview first of what these changes (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: This is an act to allow the department and minister to create regulations that basically control where doctors can practice. Currently, if a doctor decides that they accept a billing number, say in West Prince as an example, or Kings County, there is not a lot preventing us for them to leave and go and practice in another location in Prince Edward Island.

This would allow us the regulations that, should somebody decide that they want to go to another location, they would have to apply to the minister for a permit on that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Would this be included in the negotiations you're currently going through right now in the Master Agreement?

Mr. Henderson: I suppose it's all part of whether the physicians that we have – we have consulted the medical society on this and we will continue to consult the medical society as we bring forward the regulations on this as part of the process. They're aware that this has been taken for first reading.

I would say that I have a stranger, Nichola Hewitt, that I'd like to ask to bring forward, if it's the pleasure of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

Chair, within the last year or so the previous minister of health made a statement in the House here one time talking about the department was going to look at the reallocation or redistribution of the doctor complement across Prince Edward Island.

As you're fully aware, Souris – it's a campaign promise of your government leading up to the last election that they would have a complement for family doctors up there. It's never happened. There are other areas on PEI, too, that are disproportionately underrepresented by medical professionals.

Is this going to correct that? Or what's the intent there?

Mr. Henderson: To a certain degree it does have that ability because, once again, if a physician accepts a billing number – now I might clarify that our billing numbers are assigned by region, they're not specifically assigned to one hospital or another, although there's sort of an historical complement where physicians go.

But when a physician accepts a position – so say, as an example, Kings County – they accept a position at Kings County. If they decide to set up as a fee-for-service practicing position and they choose to go to Montague, that's great. Maybe later on they find a better office that might be in another location other than Montague within Kings County. That's not a problem. We do have an issue if a physician decides to go to another region. We don't really have the regulations to control that. Would that be a fair assessment, Nichola?

I guess, as an example, if a doctor leaves (Indistinct) and goes to another location in a more urban practice, as an example, that's going to have an impact on that rural area. That's what this is really about is to try to make sure that the terms and agreements that a physician accepts a position on is that they continue to do that. If they choose that they want to make a request to transfer, that

they apply to the minister for permission to do that.

Chair: Could I get our visitor to state her name for the record, please?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Nichola Hewitt, solicitor with the Department of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Is there anything more to maybe clarify it from your end on that, Nichola?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: What the amendment does is provides the Lieutenant Governor in Council with regulation making powers to set up a process whereas, where the minister said, if you've got a physician – so when a physician is admitted into the complement they're assigned, for example, could be, I don't know, Kensington area, you're going to run a family practice, and if that physician decides that they want to maybe run a paying clinic in Charlottetown, right now there's nothing preventing them from doing that, other than they just tell the minister they're going to do it.

What we've done here is put in regulation making powers that will set up a process. We have prepared draft regulations, sent them out to the medical society a month ago, to consult with them on this proposed process. They've got back to us and indicated that they'd like to bring it to their board of directors at the January 17th meeting and will provide us with some feedback. We have explained to them why we need that in place and it's just to prevent – the complement's there for a reason, as the minister, said to assign physicians across the province. This will be a way to ensure that all areas of the province are covered by medical practitioners.

Mr. Henderson: See, our issue isn't so much that – if there's a vacant billing in a different jurisdiction and a doctor wants to leave one location to go to fill a vacancy, that's not a problem. But if they go to a spot that there isn't a vacancy, then now all of a sudden the table has been tipped a little bit, with the disadvantage of maybe one area to the greater advantage of another. We just want to have a little bit more say in that happening is basically what it is.

I guess as a minister that represents a rural area, I think it has the most potential to be at risk if we can't control that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Am I right in understanding that currently there are no restrictions on mobility for practitioners within Prince Edward Island at all? So, given that – I'm sorry –

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: There aren't, unless there are terms and conditions imposed upon their billing number.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So for a specific contract, for example.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But there are no general rules or regulations.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Generally speaking, that has not been the case.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Given that, is there a sort of fairly large movement of general practitioners around? Is this a common thing?

Mr. Henderson: Generally not, but it has happened. I guess that's the premise behind, from my perspective, what has happened. I figured: How can that happen? Then when we find out that we really don't have the legislation and the regulatory authority to do that, I've asked the department to – we have to correct this.

We try to work well with the college of physicians, the medical society, on this. I think ultimately I feel, as a minister, we should have some authority to grant numbers. I think there's lots of rational reasons why we could do this and it's not a problem, and I think as a department we would support movement, but we just have to have some sense of control of it and make sure it's for the right reasons and at least knowing what's going on. Lots of cases the minister may be able to grant approval to transfer a billing number to a different location, but in some cases maybe that's not in the best interest of that region or the province.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I understand that general practitioners, in some respects, are businesspeople, albeit in a fairly highly regulated business. I mean, the thing that springs to mind is everybody wants to live in the urban centre. That's usually what happens. But am I not right in thinking that there's quite a significant GP shortage in the city of Charlottetown currently?

Mr. Henderson: Shortage wouldn't be the word, no. I think we're at full complement in Charlottetown. The issue might be patients on the patient registry.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, okay.

Mr. Henderson: There's a number of factors in that. Sometimes there are patients that are coming off the registry from other regions that are taking a doctor in another region, so based on that they might work in a certain area. That's a factor that goes with it.

But I go back to the issues of in really rural areas where it's unlikely that we're going to have it go in reverse. But in the case of maybe a fee-for-service doctor and they're practicing in a certain area, maybe a rural area, and they figure that there's more opportunity to move to another area. That could cause some concerns because, like I said, it may have an impact on the rural area where we have a more difficult time to attract and retain physicians. It's just to have a little more authority that when that might happen that they have to apply for the granting of a transfer, and we would look at the rationale behind that transfer.

I'll give you an example of a way that would probably work that would be positive. Say there is a physician in a more urban area that is thinking about retiring and a rural physician says: I wouldn't mind taking over that practice. They may want to amalgamate their practices together to a certain degree. We know that one is coming in and one is going to phase out. That might be a real reason why a minister would grant a transfer. But if a physician just pulls up stakes and goes to an urban area, as an example, and starts practicing and

competing against other physicians in that area, and at the detriment of patients in a more rural area, we have to have some sense of authority and control and be able to regulate that.

As I said, there are lots of reasons where it isn't a problem, where we could grant approval for a transfer. There are other cases. We just need to have better control over that so I think that's the best way I could describe it.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

One of my questions was going to be what has the medical society or College of Physicians and Surgeons given you in terms of feedback, but I heard you say you have been in contact and you are awaiting a reply from them?

Mr. Henderson: This amendment just allows us to put the regulations. I would assure the House that we will work with the medical society to come up with the regulations that are at least in the scope and premise of what I'm trying to accomplish here, and that would be supported by the medical society. To say every physician is happy with that, maybe not. Some may want to have that free range to go wherever they want to go.

Chair: (Indistinct).

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, sure, of course.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I think some of my questions have been answered already regarding the reasoning behind this and has it been a problem. I see in the first part of this it says: significant changes including geographical location or in respect to basic health services.

Mr. Henderson: Yes?

Ms. Compton: Can you give me an example of what basic health services – how that would come into play?

Mr. Henderson: Maybe I will ask Nichola to clarify that, but the geography is pretty basic. You know, that makes sense.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Basic health services are insured services that the province pays for.

For example, if we had a family physician in a rural area wanting to – so in those rural areas they are usually family practitioners. You get very few specialists. If you get a family practitioner in a rural area wanting to move to the city to open a specialist-type practice, maybe just a pain management practice or something like that, that would be a significant change both geographically and in terms of the basic services that would be offered.

When we work with the medical society we will be looking at – we've only sent out initial draft regulations and I suspect we will probably be amending them to define what significant change means.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you. I guess that's part of the question, too. Are you defining what constitutes a change as far as –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct).

Ms. Compton: Because that is pretty open-ended there, what a physician thinks a change is versus what the department thinks change is.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Typically we get into that type of detail in the regulations, and this amendment merely enables us to draft regulations. That's all it does.

Mr. Henderson: But the point is that they are making the request of the change. We need some authority to do that, to allow them to do that, I guess is the point.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Finally, does the department feel that this is going to negatively impact doctor

recruitment? I mean, I live in Belfast. A lot of people go to Charlottetown for a doctor or they go to Montague, if they have a doctor, let's say. I mean, we're a fairly small population, and if you have a doctor that wants to come here and you're going to limit the availability or where he can practice or she can practice, and their scope of practice, is it going to create any kind of detriment as far as recruitment?

Mr. Henderson: I guess my opinion on that is that I suppose it could, but I mean, if somebody's coming on the false pretense that (Indistinct) going to fill a vacancy, say, in Souris, and set up one day in Souris and then take off and go to Charlottetown –

An Hon. Member: Don't want that.

Mr. Henderson: I mean, it may be good for all of PEI –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: – but then what's going to happen is we'll probably get a lot of physicians and health services all in Charlottetown and Summerside. That's all I'm saying, is it allows the minister to have some sense of authority to make sure that we know what's going on and that physicians aren't taking advantage of the circumstance.

If there is a physician that they believe in complete free range to do whatever they so choose, maybe PEI wouldn't be the spot in that case, so that could have (Indistinct) but I think in general terms, we don't see this happening a lot at all. I mean, most physicians, they get a billing number, they apply for a vacancy. If they do transfer they tend to transfer to another vacancy. We have no problem with that.

It's just that if we don't have some authority to keep an eye on the situation it could have a detriment, in my opinion, on rural areas more likely than on urban areas, so that's really what the idea behind it is. I mean, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira is aware it's difficult to attract physicians to rural areas. Some physicians love rural area, but it's just in general terms it becomes more challenging. We think that if we didn't have some authority it could negatively impact services to rural areas.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Just on that note, I'm not saying a doctor would come here under false pretenses, but we are a fairly small population and if they're looking at: Okay, how can I – are they going to be made aware of the fact that this is part of the stipulations, I guess?

Mr. Henderson: I would assume that they would monitor these things before they make their decision, but maybe Nichola could add to that too.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: The act already allows the – when a billing number is issued, the act does allow for terms and conditions to be imposed on that currently, so this is no different, really. It's just saying if we haven't imposed those terms and conditions on you when you're billing number is initially issued, limiting you to something, then we're putting a process in place whereby if you want to transfer we're going to consider it. These are the criteria that we're going to consider.

Mr. Henderson: It's not that we're not granting it, it's that we want to know the rationale behind it.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: I will point out – the draft regulations point out a number of criteria that are considered. It's not just the minister's opinion. The minister will consult with PRPC to see what the complement is, what the specialties are. So it's not just a minister – ultimately the minister makes the decision, but there are a number of criteria that have to be considered before that decision is made and that is already contained in the draft regulations.

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Chair.

I brought it up in the House here before about the situation up in my district, that we have a doctor that has a West Prince billing number and he is currently not doing anything in West Prince. He's in

Summerside. Is this bill something that's going to help resolve that issue or is it going forward?

Mr. Henderson: It will be going forward, yeah.

Mr. Murphy: So there is no way we can rectify that problem?

Mr. Henderson: We can't make legislation retroactive to deal with that situation, but that's the premise behind the bill.

Mr. Murphy: Because he's got a West Prince billing number, but he's actually practicing in Summerside so we're actually down – we can't do anything, the minister can't do anything, until –

Mr. Henderson: The premise of this is that the Member from Alberton-Roseville brought this to our attention and this is our response to try to correct this for future.

Mr. Murphy: I certainly support the bill, but I wish it could be retroactive and rectify my issue up there too.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

The Leader of the Third Party, I just wanted to follow up on something he was saying earlier. He asked the question if this is a common occurrence or problem on PEI with doctors moving from one community to the other. I just want to remind the hon. member that in addition to, minister, what you responded, it doesn't happen frequently, it does happen some.

I mean, I recall not that long ago we had a GP that moved from Souris down to Charlottetown but –

Mr. LaVie: Again.

Mr. Aylward: Again. But you have to remember that our biggest issue isn't that. It's actually out-migration because we have the department that just can't seem to focus on retention.

You talked about the pain clinics. Have we had a replacement come in to fully take over Dr. Colohan's pain clinic?

Mr. Henderson: Not that I'm aware of. I think there is still vacant – he was a rheumatologist, was he not? (Indistinct)

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: I'm not sure.

Mr. Aylward: He ran a pain clinic as well.

Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Then there's another ER doctor here at the QEH who also runs a very specialized pain clinic.

Would this in any way impact that second practice that he's operating?

Mr. Henderson: More than likely not, in that case. We're really talking about more of a general practitioner changing the scope of their practice. More so than somebody who is already filling a specialist's position that we already have. Most specialist positions are more assigned to PEI. They tend to be in a certain area.

It's really more the situation of general practitioners who generally tend to be in the more rural areas, and it allows us authority for them to – if they decide to move their practice and not fill a vacancy. Like I say, we have physicians that go to different locations across PEI. I have no problem with that if there's actually a billing number that's vacant. The issue becomes when they leave a place to go to another spot where there isn't any vacancies. We don't have the authority.

Mr. Aylward: Kind of like the Member from Alberton-Roseville was referencing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Chair.

What would happen in the situation where we had a GP practicing out of the Sherwood

medical centre here in Charlottetown and they wanted to go to Souris every other weekend to help out in a clinic?

Mr. Henderson: That's not an issue at all. Usually they're either filling in a locum position to do that, or that's part of the terms of the contract that we have with them.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Mr. Henderson: This is really more against, once again, fee-for-service physicians more than salary. Salary, as Health PEI may have the authority to determine where they work and when they work and the hours that they work, and the compensation and all that part of that, is a set arrangement.

Fee-for-service physicians have some sense of independence, and when we assign them a billing number to bill the province we don't really have the regulatory authority to hold them to a geographical region. Travelling within the geographical region or practicing within the region is not an issue for us. If somebody wants to practice in O'Leary and wants to move to Alberton, that's within a West Prince region, it's part of a West Prince complement, there's a vacancy, that's not an issue.

It's a position, in the Alberton-Roseville's case, where a physician takes a billing number for the west, goes to another location, starts practicing. We have no authority. It's a fee-for-service physician. We have no authority to grant that and/or we're obligated to pay that. West Prince, in that particular case, tends to suffer about – now has less doctors, and the billing numbers are all full.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Chair, and thanks for that, minister.

I guess my biggest concern is I just am fearful that these changes are being made to give the minister more authority, more power, to do exactly what the previous minister had talked about in the House, redistributing the complement of, in particular, GPs across Prince Edward Island.

Because as we know, in some of the rural areas, particularly up in the Souris area, the promise has been made over and over again that they're going to have four doctors, but that has never materialized.

I just want your assurance that that's not what this is all about. You're not going to turn around and say: Okay, there's now only going to be two billing numbers for Souris or there's only going to be one billing number for this community. Nothing like that is going to happen?

Mr. Henderson: No, that's not the premise of this. I would say that, as far as the complement of billing numbers, that's already established. They are located to regions. That's not about this.

It is about having some authority as a minister to where physicians practice. If the physician says that they're going to Souris and we, in all good faith, provide them a billing number to do that – of which they do have three physicians servicing that area right at the moment – if they decide to pull up and go to somewhere else, I have no authority to stop that. That's the problem. So Souris is left with no service and the people of Souris would probably have to go to another geographical region to get that service, so that's not what we want. That's why, I think, the minister needs some sense of authority to control that.

It is about some sense of authority and power of this to the minister of the department. It's what we want. It's not about a power grab. It's just about trying to regulate good, reasonable decisions here that protect rural regions or whatever region. It could be Charlottetown or Summerside, or Summerside to Charlottetown for general practitioners.

If a physician is practicing in Summerside and decides: Gee, I think there's more business in Charlottetown, I'm just going to leave and go to Charlottetown – now, all of a sudden, we've got an over-complement in Charlottetown, an under-complement in Summerside, and I have no authority to grant that. They just go do it.

Chair: The Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you will agree with me that every person, man, woman, and child on PEI should have a doctor, right?

Mr. Henderson: That's the general principle. We would like to see every Islander have access to a family doctor. I would say that they have access to health care services in this province. The goal is to try to have every Islander have a family doctor. In most cases we're in good stead in that case, but in other places we're not.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I've heard Souris mentioned here quite a bit this morning, and I hear quite a bit about you wanting authority.

For five years now I've heard – we were promised four doctors in Souris to serve the eastern Kings region. How come that has not taken place if you want authority?

Mr. Henderson: We haven't had the ability to attract a fourth physician to that area. I would reiterate, it's not different in West Prince than it is Kings County. Each of those regions has a complement of 12 physicians.

Once again, I can't authorize a decision to set up in a certain location if they're choosing to be a fee-for-service doctor. I can authorize it to a region, but I have no authority to stop them from leaving that region. That's the premise of this bill.

We continue to recruit. I believe we have about five or 10 physician vacancies for family practices in the province. I think there's really one in West Prince. I think there's one in Summerside, and a few more in Kings County.

I'm just saying that those are the general principles of recruiting and retention. We do have doctors who tend to retire. We have doctors who move to other locations, other provinces, other countries. That's all part of life in recruiting and retention. We continue to recruit for those positions when a vacancy becomes available.

I would think that this would be a bill that you would strongly support and endorse.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I did hear this for the last five years, and you do agree that every man, woman, and child has a doctor. Why don't you make that your priority?

Mr. Henderson: It is my priority, but like I said –

Mr. LaVie: It's not happening.

Mr. Henderson: I can't snap my fingers and they just come out of thin air. We have to recruit physicians. We have to provide any physician who has an interest in coming to Prince Edward Island – then we locate all of the vacancies. They're all aware of all the vacancies on Prince Edward Island that exist. Those particular physicians do their due diligence in deciding what locations they want to go to. When they do they sign contracts, but we do have some that tend to be once again fee-for-service at some point in time. That's where this bill comes into play, is that they decide to go to different locations on PEI and we don't have the authority to control that to the degree that we should have.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

I know, minister, when you're talking health care we could probably be on the floor here for six months asking you questions.

Minister, you've probably seen the piece in the *Guardian* from the Island-wide access, chair, Alan MacPhee. I've asked questions in the House on this issue. Why are you not allowing the people of eastern Kings to have walk-in clinics 24/7?

Mr. Henderson: Actually, this is rather a good news story, since Dr. Adriana Verdejo has set-up practice you have three practicing physicians. In fact, from the Souris area, I believe, there are only 13 people on the patient registry currently.

An Hon. Member: Thirteen?

Mr. Henderson: Thirteen. It's a good news story. As Verdejo has increased her practice she has taken people off of the patient registry. The demand for walk-in clinics has declined and locums were the way we were providing those services in the past. Right now, we monitor the thing quite closely, but most people from the Souris area are able to access a physician probably within a day or so, anyhow.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Again, minister, you're playing with figures like you do with the ambulance.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Eight minutes.

Mr. LaVie: There's a decline in walk-in clinics, you say. When somebody is sick and ill, we want to know that that clinic is there for them. It don't make any difference to me if it's one person or 600 people. When that one person is down and out and sick we've got to take care of it. We can't have people sick and no place to go anywhere on Prince Edward Island.

Our main goal, your priority, should be in government, is your education and your health care. That's the two main goals, priorities, in Prince Edward Island.

Minister, will you assure me that eastern Kings will have walk-in clinics 24/7?

Mr. Henderson: That would be considered an emergency room, basically, so no.

Like, say they have access to the emergency room through the hours that it's open for (Indistinct) to ambulance services. In general terms, we have services in both Western Hospital and Kings County Memorial Hospital, where they have access to services through certain hours. We have ambulance, paramedic services that are – people have access at immediate call. They can call 811 for services, and then they have the 24-hour, seven days a week emergency

rooms at Prince County and QEH, so that's basically the reality of it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Final question. Minister, you mentioned we do have 24/7 emergency. But minister, you close our emergency down in Montague at 10:00 p.m. Is there any chance that you will revisit that and have 24 hour, seven days a week, coverage at the emergency in Montague?

Mr. Henderson: It's not part of our, I guess, highest priorities at the moment. Right now it seems to be working quite well, because I go back to the other issue. Patient safety is a paramount situation. If we can't provide the services 24/7, then we're misleading the public, so things will remain as they are for emergency services in Prince Edward Island.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

We've talked a lot about the geographic aspects of this recommendation in this bill, but not very much about the change in services in basic medical services. I'm wondering that in my district there was a doctor who recently wanted to set up a primary health care centre with a nurse practitioner incorporated. Would that sort of change the – still be possible under the new regulations?

Mr. Henderson: I don't think it'd be the premise, but maybe Nichola can add more to that.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: The focus of this is if a physician is going to change their primary focus of the service that they're providing. If you've got, say for example – and I don't want to be ridiculous – but if you've got a family practitioner that's been seeing everybody who suddenly wants to just do pain management, that's a significant change in their practice type.

It's not when you're talking about allied professionals, as long as it's still a family (Indistinct), if he was given that position as a family practitioner, was going to continue as a family practitioner. Bringing in other allied professionals, that in my opinion would not be a significant change because it's the same types of service they'd still be offering.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, thank you for that clarification.

Mr. Henderson: As you can see, hon. member, the impact that would have on that community if a family doctor who has patients that says: Now I'm not taking people anymore.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, absolutely.

Mr. Henderson: Right now we don't have a lot of authority to control that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I just wanted to make sure that the incorporation of allied professionals was not going to be hampered by this bill.

Given that consultation is such an important part of this government's mandate, I'm surprised that this is on the floor now, being asked to be passed by this Legislature, when you're still waiting on word back from the medical society and the college of physicians and surgeons.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: We can't finalize any type of regulations until we've got the ability to write them. It's not uncommon to just enable things in the act prior to – because before you can do your regulations you have to have the ability to do it in the act.

The fact that it wasn't in the act, that's why we've brought the amendment forward now. We have written to the med society committing to fulsome consultations on the process. They've got the draft regs. That's not uncommon. I've done that many times on other pieces of legislation.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: They will have an opportunity, then, to be consulted on the drafting of those regulations once this (Indistinct).

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, and I think we've had feedback and dialogue already from physicians, and I think there's things that they've suggested that we can only agree with and strengthen.

But without the legislation I can't go onto the next step, to the regulatory part of it, so that's the reason we're doing it.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: We actually sent draft regulations out to the medical society. I'm thinking it was prior to Remembrance Day. It said that this is what we're proposing, can you give us some feedback? Because they're the ones, obviously, their members are the ones that are going to be impacted.

Then the ask came back and indicated that they would be meeting on January 17th and that they'd be providing us some feedback at that point, and there may be a bit of toing and froing at that point. It depends on what their feedback is.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, it's my understanding that the College of Physicians and Surgeons is tasked with giving doctors the license and privilege to practice on Prince Edward Island, and as such they're the ones, as well, who vet the people that are being recruited so that they check their references, for example, to make sure that they're qualified. They make sure they do a background check, those sorts of things.

But I can think of one example where potentially there was a physician that slipped through the cracks there, and I was wondering if you entertained giving yourself – I shouldn't say yourself – the Lieutenant Governor in Council the ability to make regulations that would allow that council to

act as a final check whenever a doctor was hired, on top of what the College of Physicians and Surgeons do.

Mr. Henderson: I'll ask Nichola to answer that.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: When we create the council – the College of Physicians and Surgeons – we are delegating authority to them to license physicians. Responsibility is incumbent on them to ensure that all the requisite checks are done, the standards are met, the qualifications are there.

I'm not aware of any other province that would provide Lieutenant Governor in Council with some residual power to second guess or oversee decisions that are made by that college. It just simply would not be appropriate with respect to that matter.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.
As I said, I can think of one example where a doctor did slip through the cracks, and I just think the Lieutenant Governor in Council, as the representative of the people who, of course, are the ones who are paying for the doctors and the College of Physician and Surgeons, I don't think it would be a bad idea to have them as a final check. I know you disagree, you're shaking your head over there, but I'm going to bring that forward as my concern for the record.

Thank you.

Mr. Aylward: I'd make an amendment.

Mr. Trivers: I'm not going to amend it.

Mr. Henderson: Like I said, the college of physicians would be the ones that would deal with an issue of malpractice or complaints within that, so I mean, they're the ones that would take away the license of a – this is really about a billing number issue more than a licensing issue, so I think that's the fundamental realities of that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I'm really interested in 1(w.3), "authorizing the Minister to impose conditions on a participant's participation..." Can you explain that?

Mr. Henderson: I'll (Indistinct).

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Sure, I can.

Those types of conditions would be geographical area, type of practice. Those are the types of conditions under this act that the minister would be authorized to impose.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Are those two conditions that you spoke about listed somewhere in definitions or in the regulations?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Conditions aren't – as I indicated earlier, the minister can impose conditions on initial licensure when somebody is admitted into the plan, and those conditions include: restricting the geographical area; restricting the duration – so it could be for a locum, for example; and restricting validity to claims for basic services. You're sort of framing up the practice. It's what the agreement that the government enters into, or Health PEI enters into, with a physician, the parameters of that would be the terms and conditions that could be imposed on the billing number.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: What you just read there, is that in regulations?

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: That's in the act.

Leader of the Opposition: That's in – okay.

Nichola Hewitt Solicitor: Yeah, it is. It's in section 8(4) of the act.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

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

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Just a couple of questions, minister. As you know, it's important that you and I are working together, I know, for our area. How many billing numbers again are there in West Prince area?

Mr. Henderson: West Prince there are 12 billing numbers as there is in Kings County, geographical region.

Ms. Biggar: Right, because as you know, Tyne Valley used to have two designated billing numbers.

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yes.

Ms. Biggar: Is there any other area which that no longer occurs? From what I understand they are in a regional allocation.

Mr. Henderson: That's correct, yeah. Currently, that's our issue that we're trying to deal with her today. Currently, we have 12 billing numbers assigned to physicians to practice in West Prince, but we currently have one that is not practicing in West Prince.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, I'm aware of that.

Mr. Henderson: That restricts our ability to recruit for somebody to fill a vacancy because technically there's a vacancy there. But once that individual is recruited, they are recruited to a region and they would decide where they practice within that region. Once again, if it's a fee-for-service doctor they can set up their own clinic, which we've seen in Tyne Valley in the past. Or they can come inside our own facilities that we have and the billing practice is a little different in those particular cases, or they can be a salary doctor and we assign them to spend so many hours in Tyne Valley at that clinic. Same with nurse practitioners where this goes on.

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

Ms. Biggar: When we look at the eastern region of Prince Edward Island, is that the same allocation or are there designated billing numbers –

Mr. Henderson: No, they're allocated by a region and they have 12 as well, of which there is a vacancy in that area. Whether that position goes to Souris or Montague or somewhere within that region –

Ms. Biggar: If a community wants to be designated to be affiliated with another region, is there a mechanism to do that?

Mr. Henderson: I would have to say I'm not aware of that. I mean, once again, we do have the regions as they're outlined. If one area wants to separate from one region and go to another, I guess it's always possible. That would be a bigger discussion, I think, from a government perspective and as a departmental perspective.

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

Ms. Biggar: Do you have the figures for the Tyne Valley catchment area of how many are on a waiting list? Not just for Tyne Valley but catchment area?

Mr. Henderson: I don't have that number right now. I don't think it's significant, though, as far as people that are on the patient registry from within that catchment region.

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

Ms. Biggar: There was, I think, something that we've been working on together, minister, is a third nurse practitioner for West Prince area, where you would be able to designate a nurse practitioner full-time to each one of our health clinics that are there. Do you have any update on where that may be?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, the reality on that is is that we've just hired a second nurse practitioner. We had a complement of two nurse practitioners in the West Prince region of which one is full-time working away. One left not too awfully long ago. I believe December 12th there is a new person moving to the community and setting up practice, and they will be split between Tyne Valley and O'Leary, as the previous position was split between O'Leary and Alberton.

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

Ms. Biggar: We were able to recruit, actually, from one area to the other for the Tyne Valley clinic. Dr. Montgomery is there. Just for clarification, is his position classified as a full-time position?

Mr. Henderson: No, it's not. I believe it's a .8 position as it stands right now. He also does other duties as a coroner and different things of that nature.

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

Ms. Biggar: In terms of succession planning for the community, what would the steps need to be?

Mr. Henderson: The first issue would be, if any physician decides that they're thinking about leaving their practice or retiring, they usually inform our department that they're thinking about giving up their practice on a set date. Then that kicks into gear issues around recruiting and trying to attract somebody for those positions.

If a physician came to us, let's say as a fee-for-service, and is looking at a transition to have another physician come in with them, then we will try to accommodate them to deal with that transition. That's part of this issue here as well. Doesn't mean that we couldn't issue or allow a transfer, like I said before, from a person who is thinking of going to another community to take on a practice and we know that there is a vacancy coming. Then we'll work that out with them. It's just about that transition.

I didn't really answer your other question on the third nurse practitioner that we'd like to see for West Prince. Just something that I've been advocating for, but if we're still going through the process of finding the resources to fund that position I think it's one of those things that may be in front of Treasury Board in the near future. We will look at for next fiscal.

As you're aware, we've made a commitment as a government to have 20 nurse practitioners practicing in the province through Health PEI. I think we're at 18 right at the moment. Some of those positions are

kind of still temporary, I believe. The one with the cancer society is a temporary position, but hopefully the long-term will get them into permanent positions and get those other two positions up and operational somewhere across the Island. I'd like to see one in West Prince. There are pressure points all over the Island for nurse practitioners.

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

Ms. Biggar: That was my question, minister. If and when the other two nurse practitioners are funded, will you make a commitment that one of them will be in West Prince?

Mr. Henderson: I'll say that that's my desire at this point. But once again, as minister of a department, I have to still look at the overall priorities. You look at the situation – if we have two nurse practitioners and they are filling the void – right at the moment we don't – then we'd look at that.

Another issue comes back, too, the physician complement. If we wound up having a 1.2 position, say as an example, in Tyne Valley that might precipitate less need for a nurse practitioner.

These things change weekly, almost. But I would say that that's a desire from me to have three. I think it would provide more continuity from file transfers. That's another issue we run into is the issue of electronic medical records. Nurse practitioners have to be affiliated with a family doctor and they have to have accessibility to the files and things of that nature. That's why I would say three would make a lot more sense and provide a lot more continuity under the circumstance where we are with EMR.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you. I want to raise this because we have a unique situation in the doctor that services our community, also serves Lennox Island First Nations. Could you explain how that funding piece works? That is a concern for First Nations that they continue to have service as well.

Mr. Henderson: That's complicated. In most jurisdictions physician services to Aboriginal people on reserves is usually kind of separated between the federal and provincial government. Prince Edward Island, my understanding at the moment, it's kind of a morphed system. It's mostly provincial, but we do get some supports for certain contracts that deliver certain outcomes in the Aboriginal population.

My understanding at the moment, Dr. Montgomery, if he's spending time at Lennox Island he's providing services that are paid for by the province.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, minister.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd just like to ask a question on something that's continually confusing to me and that's how the number and the distribution of the billing numbers are determined. Who controls that? Is it the government, is it the college, or is the combination of the two?

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) province, but it's been somewhat of an historical designation across the province. I guess that's what the previous minister sort of looked at, trying to reassess that. That gets complicated again, as well, as far as: Do you take billing numbers from one area and assign them to another?

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) like rezoning schools.

Mr. Henderson: That's a pretty good analogy, hon. member.

The other reality: Do we add more billing numbers in? If you add more billing numbers in that increases cost, too, and you have to make sure that you're having accessibility to where the services are needed. We also find that there are a lot of people travelling all over the Island for where there is service.

As an example, West Prince, and people working in the Summerside area, at the tax centre, they may choose to take a physician in Summerside because it's more convenient for them in that regard.

We don't really restrict Islanders where they want to access their services. I mean, they make their request on the patient registry – they take any one anywhere in PEI or do you just want a certain region, and we don't have catchment areas for people to say that you have to go to this doctor if you're from this area. We don't do those things. We try to provide as much convenience.

That's where the whole issue of, in history, billing numbers have sort of gotten to where it's at today. At one time people did usually always access their physician in their home community. They weren't working as far from where they live. That's changed today so that's a real complicated one, I guess, is the best way to say that. You'd have to wish me God speed to solve that one.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

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

Mr. Aylward: Carry the bill.

Mr. Currie: He doesn't want to hear what I've got to say.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Mr. Currie: Going to get it now. I know I just picked up some conversations about health care. I had the opportunity to be the health minister of the Province of Prince Edward Island and got a real appreciation for the pressures and the challenges that health care is in, not only in our province but across the country and the impact.

If you look at our health care budget when we came in, it was \$370 million. Today we will be exceeding \$650 million. I really think that all of the Members of the Legislative Assembly have to really start to think a little differently when it comes to health care because it's got a huge impact on budgets. Today we had question after question on more in respect to services that are needed in the public school system and we've got – the reality of health in Prince Edward Island is no different than anywhere else in the country.

We've got an aging population, we've got acute costs that are tripling, and we need to provide good quality acute care in our

facilities. It was no different back in the day and I want to compliment Chester Gillan, who was the former (Indistinct), and I've got a lot of respect for Chester Gillan. He did a tremendous job and I often run into Chester Gillan, and I'll tell you, he was one of the good guys.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. Currie: He was one of the – Robert Mitchell beat him. He was one of the good guys.

But I think that as a government we're very pleased that we expanded scope of our pharmacists who are doing exceptional work, and we have to continue to evolve how we access primary health care. As a government we have made some significant changes. I think if we're not evolving health care we're going to face some significant challenges in respect to the fiscal reality of the province because health care sustainability is the issue. I know that we've got a – the premiers are meeting in Ottawa right now, and the top issue of mind is the fiscal discussion about how the federal government supports the provinces.

I just want to commend you as the minister, and I know that you're a very capable minister, very proactive on primary health care, particularly in rural communities, and you stood by me as the minister during some very difficult situations that we were cleaning –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Currie: We had some big challenges. We had Master Agreement violations when we came in in 2007. It was not a good situation. I just want to commend you for the work you are doing. I want to commend all of the health care providers in the system, and keep up the good work. When the opposition get into government in 2030 they can take it from there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: I move the title.

Chair: *An Act to Amend the Health Services Payment Act (No. 3).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Henderson: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Health Services Payment Act (No. 3)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the 19th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Order No. 19, *Private Training Schools Act*, Bill No. 48, ordered for second reading.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: *Private Training Schools Act*, Bill No. 48, read a second time.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Alberton-Roseville.

Chair (Murphy): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Private Training Schools Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Sure.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Chair.

This is an important piece of legislation that will help PEI students and schools to better train people that are required in the industries of today and tomorrow. As we see in many studies across the country and across the world, it is skills training and skills development that will distinguish competition and the winners in the competition. The people that are trained the most and trained the best will get the best jobs in the economies that those people are in, will perform the best.

This bill will analyze or help us to determine to evaluate market demand and salary protection. What I mean by that is we want to work with our institutions, both post-secondary institutions and the training schools, to ensure that students that are taking courses are being trained in areas that their jobs exist in. We see a number of times by a number of students that they go through four or five years of training and schooling and they are put into the job market and there's jobs in those markets, and it is a

concern to not only this government but governments across the world.

The bill also does a constant evaluation for programming. It means that we want to make sure that the programming that is being done at the private school, private training facilities, is again training that is required.

One of the best things of this piece of legislation is the student fund we're setting up. It's a fund that if a school does close down and leaves the province there is a fund there to reimburse the students that are left behind. But we're going to be working with the private institutions to make sure that, number one, the student is protected, and number two, that there is a fund there and we're training people to the work that's there.

There is a great potential, I believe, if we work with the private sector and our post-secondary institutions to have a vibrant business case for Prince Edward Island for training from around the world. We see UPEI now, and Holland College, training a number of people. Foreign students, they pay additional money in order to be trained here on Prince Edward Island. They're good for the university and they're good for our culture.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I'm okay not going line by line if the minister would just entertain a few overall –

Mr. R. Brown: Sure

Mr. MacEwen: – questions. Is that okay?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. Great.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

UPEI and Holland College, were they consulted and did they have any concerns with the act?

Mr. R. Brown: No, I don't think so. We talked to them, at UPEI and Holland

College. We have quite an engagement with those two institutions all the time.

You may ask: Why aren't they under this piece of legislation? They have their own independent boards.

Mr. MacEwen: Right, yeah, but I guess I was kind of concerned about similar programs. Any crossover or anything like that?

Mr. R. Brown: We are working with all institutions to make sure that, one, it's not good having one institution do half a program or half the students and another one doing the other half, and no one's – they're unsustainable. We're working with our private institutions, with our colleges, and universities to ensure that class sizes are proper and that they're sustainable.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, was there anybody in particular that lobbied for these changes, a certain school in particular, or was this a government-driven initiative?

Mr. R. Brown: It was a government-driven initiative. Like I said earlier, if you look at the private schools, it is a good business case available there. Institutions, there is a big international market there.

What I say by international, I mean, we can bring in international students. That only helps the college, which in turn helps the Island students at the same time because it becomes sustainable, that school.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah. It makes the business case for it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: The changes in this act, did we base them off another province's act?

Mr. R. Brown: Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had made changes to their legislation, and a number of provinces have made changes. Yes, we've looked at all of them. That's where the student protection

fund came from. Every other province has a student protection fund. That's an important piece.

You've heard cases where the private colleges have closed and left the province, or left other provinces, and left the students without an opportunity to complete their education.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Minister, part of the act that's changing is the enrollment reporting.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: Did we used to collect this data with the old act or is that something totally new?

Mr. R. Brown: We used to collect it, but it was done in regulation and policy. A lot of regulations have been moved into the legislation. That way it's clear and transparent to all the schools that are out there. Changes cannot be made from one Tuesday to the next Tuesday.

That's important because by putting it all into the legislation, or as much as possible into the legislation, that allows the school to say: I have protection, I know my rights. The students know their rights, and it can't be changed on the fly, more or less. That makes it more viable. Any international students or students who are in that school say: I have legislated protection.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Chair.

I'm just wondering how far down this would go. Say, for instance, we had a company that does underwater diving classes. It's not connected to one of our post-secondary indications. Would they fall under this act?

Mr. R. Brown: If –

Mr. Aylward: It is private, they are private courses –

Mr. R. Brown: – it is a private course –

Mr. Aylward: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: – and you get a certificate afterwards – and it's important, too, that we make proper legislation. Put as much of the policies and procedures in the legislation in order to make the course – and international companies look at it and say: Look, they have a good piece of legislation, we are assured that that student has been trained properly, and has had the highest standard of training possible.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you. What about the Homburg real estate academy or university that they, at one time, were setting up here. Where is that at now? Is that still functioning on PEI? If so, would that fall under this act?

Mr. R. Brown: They didn't get their legislation under the *University Act*. They were denied that. I believe they are doing some training, but it's international training and it's online training mostly.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you. Would this bill cover online training? That's becoming more and more common where institutions are marketing, as well, to do online training. You only have to turn the t.v. on in the evening and you're inundated with different institutions that are trying to sell their online programs.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. No, it doesn't cover online because online is – it's all over the world, it's international. It's only if the institution is located here and students are here on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Aylward: So –

Mr. R. Brown: But –

Mr. Aylward: – the Homburg real estate academy is not operated out of here on PEI?

Mr. R. Brown: I think they're operated out of Fitzroy Street, but it's only a minor

operation in terms of computer programming.

Mr. Aylward: Fitzroy Street is on PEI.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Aylward: Would –

Mr. R. Brown: I –

Mr. Aylward: – they fall under this act?

Mr. R. Brown: – don't believe the institution is on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Aylward: So –

Mr. R. Brown: It's registered in another province, or another country.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you. An organization or institution or business can be registered in Venezuela, but set up a satellite office here and not have to fall under the regulations?

Mr. R. Brown: If they have classes here they will have to file here. If they have classes and students, are in a building, are taking courses here on Prince Edward Island, they have to apply.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks very much, Chair.

What about Study Abroad Canada? Would that come under this bill, this act?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Aylward: Have you had consultations with that organization, or the principal? I think the acting principal right now used to be a legislator here in this House.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, we are working with Study Abroad and we see that Study Abroad is a facility. First of all, it's an excellent school. The principal has done a tremendous job of upgrading the school. We work with that institution to make sure whatever we can do to assist them to bring more

international students to Prince Edward Island.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I noticed there are a few things that will be grandfathered in with current schools. One of the new requirements is a criminal record check for new instructors and new operators. Do the current organizations also have a criminal record checks?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: Again, it's important that we have legislation that companies – when companies are hiring people from these institutions they can look at our legislation, our policies and procedures, and say: We are getting a good student or a good employee.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to follow-up on some of the things that Member from Stratford-Kinlock was talking about.

The way that the act is worded here is that an institution that does not have a physical presence in the province as determined in accordance with the regulations.

By physical presence, does that actually specify classrooms, or are we talking about could somebody have an office here with an administrator in it, for example?

Mr. R. Brown: They have to have classrooms here.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's determined in the – that's clearly laid out in the regulations.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. I have a copy of the regs that will be tabled, also. The regs are all done at this point in time and they'll be tabled for review.

We're minimizing the regulations and putting it all into legislation in order for when companies are hiring people out of

these private schools they're assured that all policies and procedures – and there's a rigorous process here of making sure that the training is up to standard.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's fine.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall it carry?

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

The act now requires a few things like the new student protection fund, an annual student enrollment survey, number of new measures. Does that add any cost to your department? Some of these new measures for records management, that type of stuff, are there additional responsibilities, or additional costs, that your department has to take on?

Mr. R. Brown: There are some additional costs, but we feel that the additional costs are important in order to protect the student. To make sure that the companies that are hiring these individuals are assured that a rigorous process has been done for the students that they're hiring.

It's all about making sure that the companies that are hiring the people out of these institutions are getting the people they want.

That is what today is about, today's economy is about. There are a lot of colleges and universities – or colleges around the world – that are training, that are looking for connections in Canada. Canada has a tremendous higher education system, and a lot of places in the world are looking for connections back to Canada. We see that we want to get in on that because if we can make connections to other institutions around the world that's good for our students here, that's good for our economy here, and that's good for trade.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

That's great, minister, and I quite appreciate the protection fund in there because I think

that's the most important part of this. When you – we are, if we're bringing in international students, or even our local students too, is they have the protection to know that in case something happened, there is something there.

I'm okay with the bill.

Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. R. Brown: I just wanted to say one thing. I really want to thank the staff of the department that are sitting in the gallery there that has done a tremendous amount of work on this piece of legislation. I didn't write it all.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. R. Brown: I move the title.

Chair: *Private Training Schools Act.*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. R. Brown: I move the enacting clause.

Chair: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island as follows.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and the Chair report the bill agreed to without amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *Private Training Schools Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the 26th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Order No. 26, *Municipal Government Act*, Bill No. 58, in Committee.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will now ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker to come and Chair this bill.

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Municipal Government Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Could I get permission to bring a staff member up?

Chair: Permission to take a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Granted.

Good afternoon. Could you state your name and your position for the record?

Samantha Murphy Manager: Thank you. Samantha Murphy, manager of municipal affairs.

Chair: Great. Welcome, Samantha Murphy.

Hon. members, I'll direct your attention to page 7. We were discussing sections 14-15 when we last met.

Shall those sections carry?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to propose an amendment to 15(1).

Chair: Do you have a seconder?

Mr. Myers: I'll second it.

Mr. Trivers: I don't need a seconder for an amendment.

Chair: Do you have third copies of your amendment?

Mr. Trivers: I can provide them to the Clerk for copies. Would you like me to state my amendment?

Chair: Yes, sure.

Mr. Trivers: I move that section 15(1) on page 7 of this bill be replaced with the following substitution:

15(1) A proposal to establish a new municipality may be initiated by:

(a) the Legislative Assembly by passing of a motion;

(b) the council of a municipality; or

(c) a group of at least 30 per cent of the persons who meet the requirements or subsection (6) and whose names appear on an accompanying petition.

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, we have an amendment on the floor. Is there any discussion on the amendment?

Mr. Trivers: Chair, I'd like to tell you why I made the amendment, if you like.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Really, the big concern that has been raised is about giving the power to initiate a proposal to establish a new municipality to the minister which is 15(1)(a). We feel like that is too much power to give just to a single person within the context of municipalities.

We think that if indeed the government does need the power to initiate the proposal to establish a new municipality it should be the Legislative Assembly as a whole that makes the decision whether that happens or not.

The reason for this is the establishment of a new municipality has the potential to impact unincorporated areas, and unincorporated areas, as the minister has said on multiple occasions, are represented by their elected Member of the Legislative Assembly. Instead of having the minister as their representative, we think the Legislative Assembly as a whole, and all the members that were elected to represent those constituents, be given the chance to do it.

The reasoning behind saying it would be a motion, as we know motions are something that we introduce often in the House, something that members understand. They're very clear. They're concise. This was not something that would be required, in my opinion, to be as a bill because it's not actually enacting any laws. Really, it's giving guidance to take a particular action to the government, and that's exactly what we're talking about here.

We're trying to guide the government, in this case to initiate a proposal to establish a new municipality. I think letting the Legislative Assembly initiate that proposal to establish a new municipality through the passing of a motion would be a fantastic way to make sure that those constituents in unincorporated areas that are impacted by such a change would be represented, have a voice. The change would be debated, and it would be democracy at its finest, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you (Indistinct) Chair.

Concerns that I've been hearing about my whole of District 19 area – and it goes to this motion – is: What effect will annexation of

rural communities into large municipalities have on the social and economical cohesion of these annexed areas?

Chair: Leader, you're speaking to the amendment, right?

Leader of the Opposition: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: With that, if – I'm concerned that if the minister has a power, then they won't be taking into consideration these exact points, the social and economic cohesion of the annexed areas.

I have to support the motion, and I think that it gives too much power to the minister and it should be put back onto the Legislative Assembly as a whole.

Chair: Thank you.

Anybody else like to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

This is something that I had previously talked about as well. I am uncomfortable with allowing the minister to have that type of power. I find it heavy-handed and I don't agree with heavy-handed when it comes to government. I believe in governance for the people and I don't think any minister should want to have some absolute power like that.

I said it before, I know government seems to be on this track where they want everyone incorporated. When you talk to the councils of the bigger areas in the city here, they all think that's great too. But what I said before, if you live out in the Launching loop which is in my district and you have an MP who happens to be a Cabinet minister, you have an MLA who happens to be me, and you're saying that you're giving yourself the power to give them a mayor and a councilor for what? This is an area that doesn't have a streetlight and they don't want it. They don't have sidewalks and they don't want it. They don't have water and sewer on a town model because it would be impossible to put out

there because you'd have to run it too far for the amount of people that are there. I have trouble seeing what benefit there is to those people.

The only argument that I've heard – there's two. One is that you'll get more gas tax, which I don't believe because there's a pot for gas tax and it's only a certain size.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Yeah, there may be more gas tax come into that area by chance, but it's going to come from someplace else.

The other argument that I've heard is that it offers you protection so somebody can't move in and say: We're going to put a dump in right next to your property.

Well, government can, if they choose, put their own plan for land use and governance in place. They don't need a municipality to do that. That's where I'm kind of stuck and I don't see how a municipality helps to protect anyone.

The thing with a municipality is that, yes, they can make additional rules on land use or whatever, but government can easily do that. We're 150,000 people. Toronto is able to do it, Montreal is able to do it, Vancouver is able to do it, and they represent way more people in their councils than we do for all Prince Edward Island.

Really, this Assembly here could easily serve as the representation for those areas if government wanted to put land use in. I also said before that it was Angus MacLean who first brought this forward and he put restrictions on land and its use here on Prince Edward Island. Well ahead of his time, he was. Since then there probably really hasn't been a whole lot done on this file.

The Thompson report sat idle for quite a number of years until now and this is where we are now. It's part of the Thompson report rollout, if you will. Government, in my opinion, has an opportunity to govern Prince Edward Island differently. I think maybe where the philosophical difference between myself and this government lies on the issue is that I'm not convinced that having any municipality is an advantage. I'm not

convinced that there's – the risk that's there by having them is that government now has them to download more services to it.

Government can roll into Eastern Prince Edward Island and incorporate into two or three municipalities and how long before government can roll in and say: By the way, now you're paving the roads because we're not doing it anymore? By the way, now you're going to cut the grass along the roads because we're not doing it anymore. Now you're going to trim the branches in the ditches for winter because we're not doing it anymore. Now you're going to plow all the roads because we're not doing it any more.

Government today may say that that's not the plan. It definitely opens up the door for that. My question becomes on a very higher level: Do we need both? If we're going to create mega-municipalities and government is going to start downloading everything they do to them, why are we needed? Somebody isn't needed here and it's either going to be us or the municipalities. That's my honest opinion and I mean that quite sincerely.

I take nothing away from the people who go to council meetings who make decisions for their area, and they do it within the confines of what's allowable for them to make decisions as per government on legislation. Many of the areas would have offered things like streetlights, sidewalks, infrastructure projects, they have their own water and sewer systems, and all great things for those towns to have. Now a lot of them are stuck with the bill of administering those, upgrading those, taking care of those, and being responsible for the safety of the water in their area. There's a cost associated with that and I understand that.

There's also been some great things done by municipalities as far as bringing in recreational-type facilities to their area and keeping them running. I also think that that's important.

I don't think I'd move to the point where I would say take away municipalities that are there. They're there and they're working and they offer what they offer and they're doing great service for their area.

But if we make a move to force municipal amalgamation I don't think that's in the best interest of Islanders and I don't think that that's the best interest of government to put themselves in that position. If people want to come forward on their own and collectively decide that: Hey, we want to be a municipality or we want to have formed together or we want to expand our boundaries and everyone agrees to them, fine. But otherwise I think that it's heavy-handed.

I think that it's probably one of the major snags for me in this bill that will keep me from giving it any easy passage in this Legislature, that will make me want to pound away at it for days and days, is that the minister is giving himself too much power. I understand that the municipalities came forward with this act and it's been worked on for a long time and wanted for a long time, I understand all that side of it. I'm not sure if during their consultations that they asked to have the minister have absolute power.

I think you only have to look around the world to see that people want to move away from that. There's that anti-establishment movement on the go out there where they want government to have less power, and they do. You can all see it and I don't need to give you any examples, but it's happening, it's happening all the time.

Government is moving in the exact opposite direction of the free world and the way that the free world is moving and the people who live in it are now thinking because they're thinking: We want a government that's responsive to us, that's reactive to us, and that isn't heavy-handed.

I absolutely support this amendment and I think that the minister should, too, because it may be one of the major blockages in having this bill pass in this House anytime before Christmas.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, hon. member.

You and I in the past, while this bill was on the floor, have had full and wholesome discussion on that. As I indicated to you earlier before, I have no intentions of trying to change your mind in any way, shape or form. It's been said in media reports that good leaders lead. I know you're a good leader and eventually you'll get to a point where you will see all the aspects of this. You may be looking at a bit of apples and oranges at this point in time. I know this bill has been waited for for a long time.

To another point that you mentioned about the – you have a good federal leader, and there is you, and you don't any municipalities. I want to remind you that many of the hon. members who sit on the floor of this Legislature have municipalities within the boundaries of their districts today and work collaboratively together in a very positive way. To say that you don't need three levels of government, it's working really well today all across Prince Edward Island, the 73 existing municipalities. That's a little bit unfair to say, probably.

I'm not trying to change your mind, but the ministerial powers, as I've indicated before, these are measures of last resort. They're for extraordinary circumstances where they would be utilized.

There are examples, and as I stressed last night as I began the legal question that I asked, it is determined that the ministerial powers would need to be in the bill.

With that said, I appreciate where you stand on the amendment. I understand where you are. I appreciate your comments today.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, earlier on in debate on this bill I had asked about other jurisdictions, other provinces, and whether the minister had absolute authority like you're trying to have.

Were you able to find out any of that information?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes –

Mr. MacEwen: It obviously relates to this amendment that we're talking about. I'd be curious.

Chair: Samantha Murphy.

Samantha Murphy Manager: It's a little bit of a mix. Each province has a slightly different process. They have different requirements, whether there is a study and those sorts of things.

We have three provinces where there are some processes that are purely driven or initiated by residents or the councils. Most other provinces – all others, with the exception of – about nine of them the minister can initiate. In two of those, three of those, the minister actually has final decision making, which is not what we're proposing.

We're sort of in the middle of the pack in terms of the level of authority. At this point, of the bill itself, this is just initiating a proposal, it's not a final decision.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

The jurisdictions that don't have the power, where are they?

Samantha Murphy Manager: With Quebec, it's for restructuring. It has to be initiated locally. With Saskatchewan it depends on the category of municipality that's being proposed, whether it's a rural or a larger-style municipality. With British Columbia, with some of their legislation, it's the voters (Indistinct) restructuring. All of the others, it's those plus the minister has the option as well.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you for that.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

You talked a minute ago, minister, about the federation or words to that affect about the municipalities wanting this or whatever.

In my district I have five municipalities. I

represent part of Summerside. I have Bedeque. I have Kinkora. I have Borden, plus I got Victoria. I've talked to councillors from all five of them.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Pardon me?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: You don't have Victoria.

Leader of the Opposition: I mean Crapaud. You're right.

Ms. Biggar: He's trying to take over your territory.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct) the boundaries are being redrawn (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: Then I'll have Victoria.

Mr. Trivers: You get so many calls from there you think you have Victoria.

Leader of the Opposition: Councillors at all five of those communities have mentioned to me that they can't understand how much power this gives to the minister.

I've five municipalities telling me that this gives you too much power. I have to ask the question: Where or what makes the minister think that he needs this power?

Mr. Mitchell: The power authorized to the minister under this act existed in the previous act, and it's actually been put out in a better way. Where those mechanisms of larger regions coming together, it's more streamlined. It's better as far as the powers of the minister goes as opposed to the three previous acts.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Why am I not getting that same feeling from these five municipalities.

Mr. Mitchell: That's a good question. They are representatives of the federation of municipalities and they can (Indistinct) –

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Chair: Hon. members, the hour has been called.

Mr. Mitchell: 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 had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Municipal Government Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Evangeline-Miscouche.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, December 13th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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