

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Third Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Wednesday, 22 November 2017

SPEAKERS RULING .....	263
MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS .....	265
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS .....	267
WEST ROYALTY-SPRINGVALE (Opening Adoption Records) .....	267
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Al MacDonald Retirement) .....	268
RUSTICO-EMERALD (PEI 4-H winners of Royal Agricultural Winter Fair) .....	268
ORAL QUESTIONS .....	269
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Status of independent office for child advocate) .....	269
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Need for Child Advocate Office) .....	270
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Universal basic income project for PEI) .....	271
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Team monitoring Ontario's income pilot) .....	272
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Universal basic income project for PEI (further) .....	272
RUSTICO-EMERALD (Prime Minister and basic income pilot) .....	273
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Lack of affordable housing) .....	273
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Government commitment to 50 new seniors' housing units) .....	274
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (National Housing Strategy) .....	275
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Perception of manipulation of District 11 by-election results) .....	276
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Recall of Motion No. 1 for debate before by-election) .....	276
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Implementation of blackout periods during by-elections) .....	277
CHARLOTTETOWN-VICTORIA PARK (Status of tender for replacement of Northumberland Ferry) .....	277
SUMMERSIDE-WILMOT (Harvesting of food for food banks) .....	278
SUMMERSIDE-WILMOT (Data collected from unharvested fields) .....	279
MORELL-MERMAID (Federal government interest in RFI) .....	279
MORELL-MERMAID (Guidelines for sexual violence policies) .....	279
MORELL-MERMAID (Oversight of sexual violence at post-secondary institutions) .....	280
MORELL-MERMAID (Timeline for legislation dealing with sexual violence) .....	280
MORELL-MERMAID (Division responsible for sexual violence legislation) .....	280
MORELL-MERMAID (Education and prevention programming) .....	281
MORELL-MERMAID (Collaboration between departments on sexual violence legislation) .....	281

MORELL-MERMAID (Mental health funding for post-secondary institutions) .....	281
MORELL-MERMAID (Per-student funding model for mental health initiatives) .....	282
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS .....	283
PREMIER (Housing Supply Task Force) .....	283
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (Mental Health and Addictions Campus) .....	284
FINANCE (Fiscal Forecast 2017-2018) .....	286
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS .....	288
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT) .....	288
COMMITTEE .....	288
CAPITAL ESTIMATES .....	288
ADJOURNED .....	314

The Legislature met at 2:00 p.m.

### Speakers Ruling

**Speaker:** Hon. Members, on Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters rose in the House on a point of order and asserted that the Twitter account for the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island contained details on the 2018-2019 Capital Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure before the actual estimates had been tabled in this Chamber.

The hon. Member requested that I review this matter to determine if this practice was in keeping with the rules of the Legislative Assembly, respecting the tabling of documents and the Capital Estimate procedure.

On Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters rose in this House on a point of order and requested that I review a matter associated with the posting of a political advertisement in *The Guardian* newspaper for the Liberal candidate in District 11 by-election that included details of the Capital Estimates that should not have been known to the district or the candidate before the advertising deadlines for the newspaper.

Finally, also on November 21<sup>st</sup>, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque rose on a point of order, requested that I review the matter of a major government announcement being made on a cultural strategy for Prince Edward Island being made outside of this House when the House is in session despite there being numerous interventions from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, past and present, that major government announcements, out of respect for the Legislative Assembly, ought to be made in the Legislative Assembly when the House is in session.

Hon. members, it is my intention to rule on all three of these matters today, as all are very much related. I'd ask all members to keep in mind that while the following references are to budget, which generally refers to main budget estimates, this should also apply to capital budget estimates presented in this House.

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states as follows on budget secrecy:

There is a long-standing tradition of keeping the contents of the budget secret until the Minister of Finance actually presents it in the House. Respect for a budget's impact on financial markets has often been used as the basis of questions of privilege or points of order respecting the validity of budget proceedings where there has been a budget "leak". [411]

However, Speakers of the Canadian House have maintained that secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention, rather than one of privilege. [412]

Speaker Sauvé noted that while a breach of Budget secrecy "... might have a very negative impact on business or on the stock market [and] might cause some people to receive revenues which they would not otherwise have been able to obtain ... [it has] no impact on the privileges of a member.

[It] might do harm, irrevocable in some cases, to persons or institutions, but this has nothing to do with privilege. It has to do with the conduct of a Minister in the exercise of his administrative responsibility." [413]

In order that Members of Parliament and the news media are able to respond to the budget speech, a closed-door informal session, or "lock-up", is usually provided for them by Finance Department officials several hours before the actual Budget presentation in the House. [414]

Although questions of privilege have been raised concerning lock-ups, the Speaker has ruled that admission to lock-ups and the nature of lock-ups are not a matter for the Chair to decide. [415]

Joseph Maingot, in *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, states:

Parliamentary privilege is concerned with the special rights of members, not in their capacity as ministers or as party leaders, whips, or parliamentary secretaries, but strictly in their capacity as members in their parliamentary work. Therefore, allegations of misjudgment, or mismanagement, or

maladministration on the part of the minister in the performance of his ministerial duties do not come within the purview of parliamentary privilege. And neither does an allegation that a minister permitted a budget leak constitute a matter of privilege.

*Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, citation 31 provides;

(5) Budget secrecy is a political convention, and if breached, the Minister may be attacked through a substantive motion, but not through a question of privilege.

David McGee's *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, states that:

Certainly, premature disclosure of the Budget has important political implications, though it is not a question of privilege.

Hon. members, guided by these parliamentary authorities, I must find that the serious concerns raised by the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters on the Capital Budget and the assertion that budget detail was provided to others outside of this place do not meet the test of Parliamentary Privilege, nor do they constitute a point of order.

As your Speaker, I am constrained by these limitations on this by Rule 2 of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island, which provides that:

“In all cases not provided for in these rules or by sessional or other orders, the usages and customs of the House of Commons of Canada in force at the time shall be followed so far as they are applicable to this House.”

I have provided these authorities above.

I wish, however, hon. members, to be very clear. I am bound by these authorities, but I am not happy, nor I'm not at all pleased with the events surrounding the introduction of the Capital Estimates last Friday.

There is a disturbing trend that I feel, as your Speaker, that I must address. On numerous occasions Speakers have reminded successive governments that major announcement ought to be made in the House, not outside of it, when the Legislative Assembly is in session.

This is done out of respect for our provincial Parliament collectively and all hon. members individually. It appears clear Capital Budget detail was released to others outside of the membership of this House before the actual document was tabled in the Legislature.

I, myself, witnessed individuals other than members in this Chamber who had possession of the actual Capital Estimates budget document before it was tabled.

I've reviewed the process followed by the Department of Finance in the release of this budget and also note that Government's own press release on the Capital Budget estimates, including a link to the entire Capital Estimates, was posted at 11:45 a.m. before the budget was formally tabled in the House at 12:16 p.m. by the minister.

I can also confirm that all hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly and staff in caucus offices were given advanced copies of the budget at 9:00 a.m. in the morning with a cover letter from the minister.

That letter states that:

The budget was being provided under the strict confidentiality associated with budgets in the Parliamentary system prior to their formal presentation to the Legislature and that members understand that they are not to release this information to anyone, with the possible exception of a very restricted number of resource staff assisting with analysis.

In raising this matter, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters implied that the rules or privileges of this House, collectively, and members individually, had been breached as a result of others, beyond the membership of this House, and specifically the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island, having details of the Capital Budget before members received them.

Hon. members, I've addressed this above from the perspective of parliamentary authorities and I have confirmed with the Office of the Clerk that the budget was not distributed by his office prior to being tabled in the Legislative Assembly at 12:16 p.m. that day.

I've also reviewed the Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island's Twitter account and it appears that Capital Estimate detail was being tweeted beginning at 11:41 a.m. in what appears to coincide with the announcements being made by the Minister of Finance in his Capital Budget statement.

It could also well be the case that the Liberal Party of PEI, and many others, had access to Budget detail. However, as noted above, this does not meet the test of parliamentary privilege, nor a point of order.

Regardless, hon. Members, the foregoing chain of events, last of careful due process, and disrespect to this House is troubling. There are a number of matters which, in my opinion, must be reviewed to ensure the dignity and respect for this place during the Budget process is maintained.

(1) All caucus offices and certain staff in those offices had access to the actual Budget document outside of this House under strict conditions as noticed in the Minister of Finance's letter above. Only the official opposition office and the third party office received the letter advising of strict confidentiality. The government members' office did not receive this letter advising of confidentiality, yet all members and staff in that office, as well as other caucus offices were in possession of the Capital Budget document. This process, and the communication protocols surrounding government's release of the Budget detail, must be reviewed to ensure the respect and dignity is accorded to this House and to all members during the budgetary and other processes.

In government's review of this matter, consideration should be given to the advisability of conducting a traditional lock-up or embargo and emerging electronic communication initiatives must be assessed, and;

(2) The procedure followed for the introduction of the Capital Estimates in future will ensure that the Capital Budget document is presented to the House and made openly available, without restriction, to all members in the House before the Minister of Finance commences with a Capital Budget statement or Budget speech.

Due to the unusually lengthy Minister of Finance Capital Budget statement, which was about 20 minutes last Friday, a full 35 minutes elapsed from the start of the Capital Estimate statement until the actual Capital Budget was tabled in the House. Finally, hon. Members, on the point of order raised by the Member from Kensington-Malpeque yesterday on major government announcements being made outside of the House when the House is in session, I wish to remind government – as have many Speakers past – that it is customary that major government initiatives or announcements, when the House is in session, are, out of respect for the Legislative Assembly and its members, made in the Legislative Assembly. This includes budgets and any major government initiative.

There is no rule to this effect, hon. Members. It is custom practice and an expectation of the House that this fundamental show of respect is observed. Government has been repeatedly reminded of it, yet almost every session of the Legislature there is an example of this disrespect and it is troubling.

If members, in the conduct of your serious responsibilities, on behalf Prince Edward Islanders, if you do not have respect for each other and for this Parliament, then you cannot realistically expect that the people that you work for outside of this place to show any respect for the work that you do and the conduct here on their behalf.

Put simply: Along with everything else, I would like to see more respect for each other and for this place that you work in – for this Parliament.

Thank you for your attention.

#### Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be brief. Welcome those in the gallery – watching from home. A special welcome to Kenneth Murnaghan – recognize the work

that Kenneth has done in brain-injury advocacy, building community.

Two points of recognition; this morning; I took part in the swearing in of Chief Justice Tracey Clements, is the new chief justice of Supreme Court (Trial Division) Supreme Court Prince Edward Island and there were many accolades that made sure recognition of what that achievement constitutes, and of course recognition of the former chief justice, acting chief justice Campbell and chief justice Matheson; other members of the court for the work that they've done through this period.

This evening, I'll take part in the Tourism Industry Association awards gala dinner and I mention, in particular that Pat Smith and the late Erskine Smith will be the recipients of the Premier's Award for lifetime contribution to tourism industry and to tourism and culture in the province through their work with the Victoria Playhouse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise today and recognize individuals in the gallery that are joining us today, in particular Chris Ortenburger. It's great to see you here again. Phil Muise and Kevin Arsenault, and of course Kenneth Murnaghan, who I expect we'll see a lot more of now that he's retired from his advocacy work with regards to the Brain Injury Association of PEI; and Kenneth, thank you very much for all that you've done in the past and continue to do in the future.

I'd also like to send a special shout-out to those individuals that tune in everyday from two facilities in Stratford-Kinlock, District 6, and those would be the residents of Andrews of Stratford and St. John House.

Just in closing, I'd like to send my best wishes for a speedy recovery to Basil Stewart who suffered a bit of a health setback recently and I wish Basil, and all of

his family that is around him providing love and support, all the best and a speedy recovery.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome the guests in the gallery, Chris Ortenburger, Ken Murnaghan, Eddie Lund of course who is back again, and Phil Muise, and particularly Kevin Arsenault, a member of Vision PEI, a group that holds the feet of every single legislator here and makes sure that we have a long-term vision about what the prosperity of this Island can and should be.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

I just want to give a shout-out today to a group of individuals in Kinkora that have come forward and tried to put, what I call, an old fashioned rink back in the community. Janet Payne, of course, is spearheading an idea to put an outside rink back in the area and with that, she's working with a group and has got approval now, from my understanding, of a councillor to further look for this. So, all the best to Janet Payne, Isaac Jay, Brandon McCardle, Jacob Fox, Brady van der Veldan, Nick van der Veldan, Sam Jay, Riley Payne, CJ McCardle, Garrett Murray and Luke Payne for this initiative.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I want to welcome everyone that's here, especially great to see Eddie Lund again and all the visitors that are joining us today. I'd like to wish my sister, Lorraine Robinson, a special birthday today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Great Tory.

**Ms. Biggar:** She's celebrating.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Great Tory, just like her mom (Indistinct) Tory

**Ms. Biggar:** I look forward to celebrating that with her with a special trip she and I and my sisters will be taking this weekend, so I want to pass that along.

Also, I'm looking forward this evening to attending a session with students at UPEI at The Wave tonight to have a great discussion around political issues, so I'm looking forward to that and thank them for the invitation to attend.

I, too, would like to send out best wishes to Basil Stewart and also Nancy Guptill, who has had some medical issues as well, a former speaker of the Legislature here, and I wish her all the best. Beautiful day outside, so I hope we all have a great session today inside.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I welcome everyone into the gallery. The press is here with us today again and all those that are watching from home, especially Syl Hubert MacDonald. He watched every afternoon and Syl is a great guy, and actually he's my godfather, so I said I'd say hello to him someday.

Our temperatures are up and down so often now this time of year. It cools down in the evening and with the rain coming. I just warn everybody to be careful in the evening, especially after dark with the black ice this time of year. Drive with caution, especially when the temperatures go way down to

around zero, minus two, somewhere in there.

I'd like to wish Lorraine Robinson a happy birthday. She's a great Tory just like her mother. I know she'll be attending a fundraising dinner in Tyne Valley this evening. I know we have a guest speaker here with us today going up, I imagine she's looking forward to hearing all the issues that are coming out the House here.

Hello to everyone in Souris-Elmira District 1, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Opening Adoption Records**

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

It's my privilege to speak out in support of something that has affected my family in a very personal and profound way. I speak of open adoption and the pressing need to open adoption records.

My wife and I have been blessed with a daughter through the adoption process. She, like many others who have found families through adoption knows the difficulties and frustrations that can arise when you do not know your family medical history. Sometimes, it's also an emotion urge to know who you look like or maybe the deals of your adoption story.

In our case, we now have an extended family and we are richer for it. An interesting story: after my daughter got access to her records it turned out that her and her aunt work side by side at the front counter of my business not knowing their family connection.

I was excited to hear that the department is starting to move forward in this area of open adoption records, and will be starting public consultation on this in the new year.

I just want to add my voice to the many voices who feel that it should be easier for birth families to connect. Advocates have been fighting for these rights of these families and have been lobbying for an easier access to their adoption records for over 15 years. Some adoptees have gone decades aching to know where and who they came from.

Let's help ease the emotional anguish of adoptees and birth families that need more information. I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this very important change that must come in order for adoptees and birth parents to have the choice to reconnect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road.

### **Al MacDonald Retirement**

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

I'm pleased to rise before the Legislative Assembly to recognize a Tignish native, Al MacDonald, who after 22 years of service as part of the Legislative security team and a decade as our Sergeant-at-Arms, has retired.

As a Sergeant-at-Arms, Al MacDonald, was a vital part of the office of the Legislative Assembly. He was responsible for the security of the Speaker, of the House, members of the Assembly and for the Legislative Assembly buildings.

He also carried to the duty of implementing and enforcing security policies for the Legislative Assembly, the George Coles Building, the building in which we sit today, and the J. Angus MacLean Building.

Furthermore, he was responsible for carrying the mace into the Assembly. Without it, the House would not be able to exercise its rights, claim its privilege or perform its parliamentary function.

In addition, to his dedication to the Legislative Assembly, Al devoted 27 years of his life to the Canadian Military. He served with the Royal Canadian Regiment in Germany with NATO, in Egypt with the UN

Emergency Force, in Norway with the ACE Mobile Force and he served for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Royal Canadian Regiments.

Al retired from the military in 1993, with the rank of warrant officer. In 1994, he and his family moved to Charlottetown. In 1995, coincidentally, on the very same day of the legislative bombing, Al began working as part of the legislative security team. I guess you could say, he came in with a bang.

Thankfully, Al stuck around after his frightening first day on the job, and he became one of the most dedicated employees of this Legislature.

Al MacDonald's career is a phenomenal story. And his contributions to the Canadian military and to the Legislative Assembly are immeasurable. He's served for all of us well over the years, and we are all very grateful for the safety and the security that he provided for us.

It was nice to know that a fellow Tignisher had my back, and I wish him all the best in his next chapter of life.

Thank you.

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

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

### **PEI 4-H winners of Royal Agricultural Winter Fair**

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

I'm proud to rise in this Legislative Assembly today to congratulate two members of PEI's 4-H team who earned first and second placings in their division at the recent Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto. Reagan Bouma, 14, and her calf won the senior calf class, and Megan Vanderkloet, 16, came second. Reagan also competed for grand champion calf and placed second among more than 360 participants.

Reagan is a Grade 9 student at Central Colchester Junior High School in Truro, Nova Scotia, but has strong roots in Prince Edward Island. She spends the summers with her grandparents and uncle at the

Weeksdale farm in Pleasant Valley. I'm proud to say they are constituents of mine, wonderful people, and fine representatives of the dairy industry.

Megan Vanderkloet is a Grade 11 student at Charlottetown Rural High School. She borrowed her calf from her uncle, Bloyce Thompson's farm, Eastside Holsteins in Frenchfort.

Both of these young women qualified for the royal winter fair after competing at the provincial competition in September and are shining ambassadors for the 4-H movement in our province. This was their first competition at the national level, and as a former 4-H'er I know the hard work that goes into getting these calves ready for competition.

Reagan's calf, Asset, was sold to a BC breeder at the Toronto fair, while Megan's calf is now back at her uncle's farm and will soon become a milking cow.

Our 4-H movement is strong on PEI. Bouma's cousin, Parker Mann, placed 22<sup>nd</sup> in the intermediate calf class, and her brother, Kyle Bouma, placed ninth in junior yearling. Kyle Vanderkloet placed 15<sup>th</sup> in the summer yearling class, and the PEI 4-H team placed ninth overall.

I want to congratulate all of our 4-H members who took part in this competition. I also want to praise the 4-H movement, which helps develop leadership qualities, confidence, and self esteem. It helps to shape the morals, values, and work ethics of these individuals, many of whom will go onto take leadership roles in their community, province, and country. The program is family-oriented, community-based, and promoting agriculture awareness to both rural and urban youth.

Again, I congratulate these hardworking young Islanders, and I wish them success in future competitions.

Thank you.

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

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

**Status of independent office for child advocate**

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

This past Monday, as we are all aware, was National Child Day, a day to highlight the diverse and unique needs of children in our great country.

My first question is to the Premier: Premier, what is the status of establishing an independent office of child advocate here on the Island?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, as had been said in earlier sittings of this House, our commitment is to protecting vulnerable children and our commitment is to acting first on frontline services that will ensure that vulnerable children in risky situations are looked after, and we have in sessions of this House put in place a children's lawyer that's on the job, a parenting coordinator who's getting into the role, and a bridge program, all of which – and there are others, that I'll be happy to speak about in further responses, are effective, and they're working and working together, and they are looking out for children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Clearly, the Premier and I see the issue differently. An independent office of child advocate would not take away from the work currently being done to protect Island children. In fact, it would add to those protections for our children.

So again, to the Premier: What would be the harm in adding more independent protection for the welfare of Island children?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we are coming at this in terms of the good that can be done for children. In addition to the measures that I mentioned, there is a supervised access and drop-off sites that have been put in place in 12 different locations throughout the province to be in the aid of families that are in, let me say, family breakdown, or where there are differences that are better dealt with by keeping the child in that supervised access.

I'm proud to say that recently, the bridge program, which has dealt with 80 cases and to the benefit of 155 individuals, was nominated for a national award for public administration and innovation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

If you took the time to listen to Islanders, in particular, in District 11, you would know that this is still a very serious issue that people are talking about.

Over the last year this Premier has launched court challenges of rulings by independent oversight offices, like the Human Rights Commission, like the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

### **Need for Child Advocate Office**

Question to the Premier: Is your distaste for independent oversight the reason why you resist the repeated calls for a child advocate office?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the process of judicial review is very much a part of the whole principle of the rule of law and, indeed, the fact that we have a Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island where I noted, I was there to the swearing in of a new Chief Justice this morning.

The hon. member opposite raises the process by which the Human Rights Commission's decision was taken to the courts under judicial review, but he didn't mention that the courts actually held in favour of the government and its position in taking a judicial review, and that's why we have a rule of law, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Establishing a child advocate was a key recommendation of a coroner's inquest by the jurors into the tragic death of a child.

Question to the Premier: The jurors who heard the evidence in that inquest reached the conclusion that we need a child advocate. Why do you think the jurors were wrong?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the jury did, indeed, speak to a child advocate and they made a reference to measures that would achieve that result for protection of the children.

I'm very proud and our government is very proud of the measures that we brought forward in this most recent session, of in the spring, and in earlier sessions of this Legislature to put in place measures and coordinated and integrated measures that will, indeed, and have, indeed, been able to protect and deal with, and provide service to vulnerable children and families.

Let me mention, also, that in the most recent

session we approved alternative dispute resolution, for family matters, and I'm proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

If the Premier agreed with the jurors he would (Indistinct) – and their recommendation for a child advocate.

Again, question to the Premier: Will the Premier listen to the calls for action and commit today to a timetable for establishing an independent child advocate for Island children and youth?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, what we have said from the beginning is that this is about frontline services; it's about protecting vulnerable children and particularly, children at risk. The very first thing that we put in place and it has been recognized for its innovation, it's the only one of its type east of the Saskatchewan, is the bridge program. There are many people including community organizations, police forces, educators, child protection personnel, justice people, health people, who have not worked together in this way before, and they have brought the benefit of their work. They're meeting twice a week. They have brought the benefit of their work to 155 individuals and we're proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

This House unanimously passed Motion No. 83 calling for this government to partner

with the federal government to establish a universal basic income pilot project for our province.

The Minister of Family and Human Services wrote a letter to the federal minister seeking support for this program, but he said no. Apparently, she has given up.

**Universal basic income project for PEI**

Question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: Why have you given up on a federally funded universal basic income project for Prince Edward Island?

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

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

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

Government believes that every Islander deserves the opportunity for a rewarding and fulfilling life. We are committed, as government, to provide programs and services to help them do just that.

I think I have been on my feet for the last three days in a row and I've been outlining all of the work –

**Mr. Trivers:** Lots of talk.

**Ms. Mundy:** – that this government is doing –

**Mr. Trivers:** Lots of talk.

**Ms. Mundy:** – to provide programs and services to help Islanders meet their day-to-day needs. Examples, such as the transformation of the Child Care Subsidy Program; the implementation of a grandparents and caregivers program, all of these are programs that are designed to help Islanders meet the needs, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to poverty reduction, this Liberal government really likes to talk. Once again, when it comes to a universal basic income pilot, we are seeing no action.

The opposition asked the Premier to get a representative from PEI to sit as an official observer monitoring the Ontario universal basic income pilot. This Premier indicated that the Ontario premier's office was contacted and the request was refused.

This Premier and the Minister of Family and Human Services, apparently, they gave up again.

### **Team monitoring Ontario's income pilot**

Question to the Premier: Premier, have you met directly with your friend, Ontario Premier Wynne, to request that PEI get a spot on the research team monitoring Ontario's basic income pilot?

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

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

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

We are well aware of the Ontario project. I think it was in the House last session that I got up and told the hon. member across the floor the details about the Ontario project. We are keeping a close eye, and I am in contact with my colleagues in Ontario. We're also aware of the project that was going on across the Island this summer; the Working Group for a Livable Income. We are in contact with them, as well. We are receiving input and information back on a basic income guarantee project for Prince Edward Island.

However, we have said from the get-go that we are interested in our own poverty reduction strategy and we announced some details of that just in the House last night.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, this government is sitting back; they're not taking action. They're not pursuing a universal basic income as mandated by this House. This government needs to take action to make

real progress in fighting poverty in this province: enough talking already.

A universal basic income pilot presents such an opportunity for action. The Minister of Family and Human Services may have given up on carrying out action to meet the will of Islanders, but surely with the Premier's close ties to the federal government he must be making progress.

### **Universal basic income project for PEI (further)**

Question to the Premier: Premier, will you outline to the House the details of your conversation with the Prime Minister when you were seeking support for a universal basic income pilot project for PEI?

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

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, I'm actually very happy that we're having this debate here today because there is a raging debate amongst poverty advocates as to what is right.

We've got side A that says: it's a universal basic income guarantee, or the system is broken. There is another side that says: we just need to give more aid. But you know what: neither side is listening to one another, and neither side are listening to the people that are in poverty.

Over here we say maybe there's a plan C and that plan C is our poverty reduction strategy and that is engaging with a poverty reduction –

**Mr. LaVie:** No plan.

**Ms. Mundy:** – advisory committee who is going to go out there and they're going to talk to people about what they need –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Mundy:** – that's what we're doing over here. That's action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, this is about respect for democracy. This is about the people of PEI speaking through their elected representatives by putting a motion on the floor that was unanimously approved by this House. This is about the Liberal government not listening to the people's will.

**Mr. LaVie:** No plan.

### **Prime Minister and basic income pilot**

**Mr. Trivers:** The Prime Minister is visiting PEI tomorrow to deliver the Symons Lecture.

Question to the Premier: Premier, will you commit to personally lobbying the Prime Minister for funding the PEI universal basic pilot during the Prime Minister's visit tomorrow?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I have an opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister occasionally. There are other ministers who are responsible and indeed Minister Duclos has been approached about this. The response, as we all know, was in the public media, is that the federal government would help with information or data. It seemed like that was the limit. What we are doing as a government, as the Minister of Family and Human Services has been spelling out in considerable detail, is what we're doing for Prince Edward Islanders in this province in collaboration with community partners and we are taking action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Lack of affordable housing**

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

Last evening we debated an opposition motion about the lack of affordable housing options on Prince Edward Island. I was

disappointed that the government focused on quibbling over how big the waitlists are, rather than on the people who have been languishing on those waitlists for months and years.

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame.

**Ms. Compton:** Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Do you now regret playing politics with our Motion, rather than dealing with the very real issues of affordable housing facing too many Islanders?

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

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Mr. Speaker, again, and I've stated in the House numerous times that we do believe that affordable, appropriate housing is one of the most important social infrastructures on Prince Edward Island. We have made considerable, considerable investments. Again, I was on my feet for three days in a row, listing out those housing investments that we made. \$400,000 –

**Mr. LaVie:** You still haven't got a plan.

**Ms. Mundy:** – contribution to our home renovation programs to keep people in their homes. \$7.2 million that, yes, we have already started to spend on upgrading and improving seniors' homes across Prince Edward Island.

So, we are committed over here to spending the money and we are committed over here to improving the lives of others, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

This spring a legislative standing committee heard from your department about the urgent need for affordable options, especially in Charlottetown. Last night during debate, the Premier talked about Airbnb, housing stats,

and micro apartments – none of which have anything to do with affordable housing.

Question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: Why won't you and your government focus on the real issue, the lack of affordable housing for vulnerable Islanders?

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

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

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

As I mentioned at the House last week, on October 13<sup>th</sup>, we brought a group of 40 people who are passionate about housing on Prince Edward Island – people who have intimate knowledge of housing needs on Prince Edward Island – and we brought them together to begin to discuss how we can address the housing needs of Islanders.

That was just the beginning –

**Mr. Trivers:** You've had 10 years.

**Ms. Mundy:** – of a bigger, broader strategy. We're going to now put them together with our housing supply task force –

**Mr. Trivers:** Keep talking.

**Ms. Mundy:** – and we are going to deliver a provincial housing strategy that is going to meet the needs of those Islanders that you are speaking about.

**Mr. LaVie:** When?

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

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

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

Back in May, I attended a federal-provincial housing announcement. In fact, it was in Park Royal Court in District 11. That day you committed to have 50 new seniors' housing units in place by the end of the year.

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh! Now we're hearing it.

**Ms. Compton:** It's November 22<sup>nd</sup>, there haven't been any tenders; there haven't been any shovels in the ground for new seniors' housing –

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh.

**Ms. Compton:** – certainly no seniors' housing in District 11.

**Mr. LaVie:** There's the truth.

**Government commitment to 50 new seniors' housing units**

**Ms. Compton:** Minister: Why didn't you follow through on your commitment?

**Mr. LaVie:** No plan.

**An Hon. Member:** You said it.

**Mr. LaVie:** No plan.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

And actually, yes, it was Park Royal Court – and actually, yes, there was a great deal of seniors there that day and they were all very happy because not only did I announce the \$7.2 million that would go –

**Mr. LaVie:** Minister of Finance (Indistinct)

**Ms. Mundy:** – towards victims of family violence, children that are transition out of care, they would also go towards upgrades to seniors' apartments that some of them were living in. \$5.2 million of that would go towards seniors' housing where the need was most. I did not commit to building 50 new units by the end of the year, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Trivers:** Not what you said in the paper.

**Ms. Mundy:** I said that we had \$5.2 million committed to building 50 new units where the need was needed most.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

\$5.2 million, that's a lot of money. It would be great to have some action, rather than just talk.

This was the infamous 'good-news announcements only during polling periods' controversy. What's the hold-up here? Just government waiting for a good-news window during a polling period?

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

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

We felt the need – immediate need – would be too helping those seniors that were in their units already and renovating those and to date, almost \$750,000 of that \$1 million that we committed that day has been spent across 32 communities across Prince Edward Island. So, we did take action. We are now unveiling – and we will be rolling out very shortly – and not through any advocating from the opposition side, but from members on this side.

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh (Indistinct)

**Ms. Mundy:** The minister of Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the –

**Mr. LaVie:** Look what happened to the last minister.

**Ms. Mundy:** – Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park who are in my ear every day –

**Mr. LaVie:** What happened to the last minister?

**Ms. Mundy:** – saying: we need action. And we are acting, Mr. Speaker. You will see RFPs going out very shortly with details on where the need is.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Well, I feel very disappointed that you're going to pick sides here. We all advocate for every one of our communities and our districts –

**Mr. LaVie:** That's right.

**Ms. Compton:** – for affordable housing and everything and else.

**Mr. LaVie:** Don't forget it.

**Ms. Compton:** The throne speech we just heard paid lip-service to affordable housing with vague promises of another task force to study the issue. Affordable housing that didn't even warrant a mention in the Capital Budget.

Minister: Do you remember what happened to the last minister who under-delivered for vulnerable Islanders?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah.

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

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

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

I would never in a million years get up and discuss my predecessor in the House of the people. It is inappropriate and it is unnecessary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **National Housing Strategy**

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

Later today the federal government will be releasing a national housing strategy. Here on Prince Edward Island, we're just getting ready to start consulting about the problem

Question to the minister: Why wasn't this work started long ago so that Prince Edward Island would be ready, with a plan, to actually get something done about affordable housing?

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

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

Again, we have been ready and we have been doing a lot of planning, and we have been implementing a lot of programs, and improving a lot of programs that are helping Islanders stay in their homes.

When I talk to Islanders as well, I hear that they want to stay in their home and they want help doing that and we have been doing just that. We've increased the amount to our home renovation programs. We've just unrolled in the Speech From the Throne – announced a seniors' home program that we will be also coming up with in the next couple of days, Mr. Speaker.

There is a lot of action been taking place. We haven't been sitting and waiting for the national housing strategy; we've been working in collaboration with the federal government on the national housing strategy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) universal basic income. That'd be nice.

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

### **Perception of manipulation of District 11 by-election results**

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

Earlier today you spoke about government's apparent leak of its own budget to the Liberal Party. Yesterday during debate, I asked the Minister of Finance to explain why the fibre optic backbone was such a prominent feature of his Budget address when the project was not even included in the Capital Budget.

A question to the Premier: Given the Speaker's impassioned plea this afternoon for improved – and I quote – 'dignity and respect for this place', are you concerned that these issues and similar announcements might create the perception that government is trying to manipulate the results of the District 11 by-election?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we have spoken in this House about broadband speed; about Internet service in previous sittings, and it was included in the throne speech; it was spoken about in the Capital Budget, and this is a project that will be realized for the people of this province in an appropriate time and it's appropriate to let the House know that we're working on it and that we will work on it with an appropriate business model that will be affordable to users and to taxpayers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

In his response to the throne speech last week, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries said this of the opposition: "I know you critique us on certain days and that's absolutely fantastic."

However, since the throne speech was introduced over a week ago, only members of the government side have had the opportunity to respond.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

### **Recall of Motion No. 1 for debate before by-election**

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Some might interpret this as an attempt by government to avoid legitimate critique and muzzle the voices of opposition members during a by-election.

A question to the Premier: Will you recall Motion 1 for debate before the by-election on Monday?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I thought when we –

**Mr. Fox:** He's giving it to you.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – when we called the Capital Budget estimates for discussion that the opposition would appreciate the opportunity to dig into the issues, and indeed that seemed to take place yesterday, and I think it's appropriate for the people to know what we're doing with their investments, with their resources, with our priorities, and yes, we will, recall the reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I was very specific about before Monday. I didn't hear that in the answer.

During the writ period of a general election, there are strict rules preventing government from making public announcements advertising or using their power and access to public funds to manipulate the results.

### **Implementation of blackout periods during by-elections**

In light of the concerns expressed about government actions over the past couple of weeks, I think we should consider implementing a similar blackout period during by-elections.

A question to the Premier: The Special Committee on Democratic Renewal could easily undertake this sort of work. Will you commit to referring this issue to the committee?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, a by-election is, of course, different from a general election. The affairs of the province must go on. The meeting of this Assembly was scheduled for the 14<sup>th</sup> of November. It was indicated well in advance that there would be a throne speech. It's the custom of this House that there's a Capital Budget that's presented early in that session, and we are going forward with the needs of the people, with the opportunities to move this province forward. What we said in our throne speech, people, prosperity, progress – that's what we're here for, and I believe that's what they'll vote on, on Monday.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

**Mr. R. Brown:** No, not me.

**Mr. MacKay:** Don't blame you throwing the towel in.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Can I have his?

**An Hon. Member:** I'll take it.

**Speaker:** Hon. member, your name is on the list.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Oh, it is. I could use a question then, Mr. Speaker.

### **Status of tender for replacement of Northumberland Ferry**

I've got a question for the minister of economic development: During last June or July, the hon. Lawrence MacAulay announced that there would be a tender coming out for the replacement or – the replacement of the Northumberland Ferry. What is the status of that tender?

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

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

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

Thank you for the question. There was a committee formed, obviously, at the request of the province, and then we moved forward and shortly thereafter, Mr. MacAulay, the federal MP, made the announcement about the ferry, and the tender is in process as far as we know. We can consult with Mr. MacAulay again and ensure that the process is expedited as quickly as possible –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) the answer either.

**Mr. MacDonald:** We've had a tremendous year in eastern Prince Edward Island as far as tourism goes, and that ferry is very important to us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** Hon. member, do you have a supplementary?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** You've got him on the ropes.

**Mr. Myers:** Got him on the ropes.

**Mr. LaVie:** Give it to him.

**Mr. R. Brown:** I'm not on no ropes.

**Mr. LaVie:** He dodged (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** Okay, then we'll go to the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** He dodged a bullet.

**Mr. Palmer:** My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. As I pass by an unharvested carrot field as I walked the Confederation Trail in Summerside these past few weeks, I see opportunity.

### **Harvesting of food for food banks**

Gleaning, or collecting unharvested produce from farmers' fields after the commercial harvest, is complete is an age-old activity. In this age of plenty, where the world produces one-and-a-half times the food needed to feed

everyone, there are still very high demands on food banks.

Minister, are there any incentives for farmers to work with volunteers to harvest food for food banks?

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

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

Gleaning is an age-old practice. I think it dates right back to the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament, where Ruth was gleaning behind the harvesters for Boaz. In that case, Boaz actually left a little extra behind.

Today, on Canada's Food Island, we do harvest the fields and there are opportunities for people to go in and harvest some of the things that are left after the machines have gone through.

There is an incentive, as well, for farmers who want to donate food to a registered charity, that they can receive a tax receipt from that registered charity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your first supplementary question.

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

Minister, what more can be done to encourage the harvesting of these crops here on Canada's Food Island so next season we will not see any of these unharvested fields?

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

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

We also have a program in place, the local food in schools; I announced that a little bit earlier. The tax incentives are some things as well. We do not want or plan the farmers to leave any product behind, but in some cases they do, and in some cases the farmers will allow people to go in and actually glean

behind the harvesters, pick up extra carrots, turnips, whatever it might be, for their own use.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, your second supplementary.

#### **Data collected from unharvested fields**

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

Minister, what data do you collect concerning unharvested fields so we can better understand the opportunity to collect food from these fields?

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

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

We don't actually collect data on what product is left in the fields, but we have the incentives for the farmers to provide that food to the public and allow people to come onto the farms. I would stress, though, that I would ask the people who do want to go gleaning behind a harvester, whatever, that they ask for permission. Even Ruth asked Boaz (Indistinct) harvesters if she could go into that field.

So, we would ask you first and foremost to ask the farmers. I'm sure they would be more than happy, in most cases, to allow them to go there. And again, encourage the farmers that there is a tax receipt available if they want to donate to the registered charity or donate to our local farm in schools project, which we'll be expanding down the road.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

In the thought of working together, perhaps I'll ask a supplementary question for the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park.

The minister of economic development stated that we're in an RFP. We're actually not in an RFP for the ferry. We're actually in the middle of an RFI, and that's due in mid-December.

#### **Federal government interest in RFI**

Can the minister tell us if the federal government has had much uptake or any interest in that RFI?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we had meetings in Ottawa about 10 days ago, and one of those meetings was with the Minister of Transport, the hon. Marc Garneau. We, in the course of that meeting, made it known that we are interested in how that process is proceeding, that the province would appreciate an opportunity when it's timely to do so, to have some – I'll say – some advice and an opportunity to respond or to comment.

The department of transportation is not yet at a point where we've had that consultation.

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

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

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

Thankfully, there appears to be a shift underway in society towards how issues of sexual violence are viewed. A greater emphasis is finally being placed on addressing these issues in our communities, our workplaces, and our public institutions.

#### **Guidelines for sexual violence policies**

A question for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: What guidelines are currently in place for sexual violence policies in Island postsecondary institutions?

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

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

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

Thank you very much for the question. At this point, we met with the student union at UPEI and we've talked to Holland College, and it is a concern of theirs. There is some initial conversations going on, but at this point there isn't any action, but there is something going forward into the future. As I said, there's conversations going on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Oversight of sexual violence at post-secondary institutions**

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

Most provinces have guidelines in place requiring post-secondary institutions to have consistent standards for sexual violence policies.

Question again to the minister: When will PEI enact legislation to provide external oversight of sexual violence policies at post-secondary institutions?

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

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

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

There are some wonderful things going on out at UPEI and with the Student Union. As I had indicated, there are some primary discussions and we're not at a point yet where we can implement legislation, but we're dealing with it and we'll be dealing with it into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Timeline for legislation dealing with sexual violence**

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

It seems to be a theme of this government to say: Into the future. No specific timelines.

Can you give us an actual timeline of when your department will have this work completed and implemented?

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

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

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

Thank you, again, hon. member, for the question.

As I indicated, there is some dialogue happening on this and as we go forward, we'll certainly keep you informed of any progress on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

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

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

### **Division responsible for sexual violence legislation**

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

Has the minister named an actual lead? Who's the lead in your department that's working on this file?

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

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

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

This comes under the labour department and the employment standards and things like that. It's a collaborative effort, as I've said, so it's in primary discussions at this time and as more becomes into this, we'll share it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Education and prevention programming**

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

We know that how we react is important, but also, we must understand how important prevention is when it comes to sexual assaults.

Minister: Will your legislation go even further and include things like education and prevention programming?

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

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

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

As I had indicated, the Student Union are a very bright and talented bunch of individuals. I'm sure when this is all worked out there'll be a lot of things taken into consideration and this is a very important issue. I'm sure it'll be done right whenever the legislation comes into place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Collaboration between departments on sexual violence legislation**

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

I agree with the minister; they are very bright, so let's not let them down. Let's put a lead on this file right away rather than just talking about it. Victims of sexual violence not only suffer physical trauma, but also emotional trauma. Left unaddressed, this can manifest itself in ways that affect a person's mental health.

Question again to the minister: Has he reached out to the health minister on this

file, and what are you doing together to act on this issue?

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

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

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

These comments by the hon. member are very important to this government, and all of the departments have been touched on this and I'm sure if he wants to know what the minister of health is doing on it, he should ask the minister of health. But, we've all discussed this. This has been a topic of importance and it's being discussed. As I said, there isn't any solid legislation to lay out yet, but we're certainly working on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Mental health funding for post-secondary intuitions**

**Mr. MacEwen:** That's a great suggestion, Mr. Speaker; I'll take the minister up on that offer.

We know that the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will often need mental health services to deal with their situations, regardless of whether or not they've actually spoken publicly or reported the sexual assault.

Has the minister of health given thought to direct mental health funding for our post-secondary institutions?

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, once again, mental health is one of our higher priorities within our department and we have done a number of things and one of those issues is regarding having walk-in clinics. At any point in time on Prince Edward Island there's going to be a walk-in clinic open for

any individual who is suffering mental health issues, whether that's anguish and whatever the particular cause would be from.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Obviously you didn't hear me. Has the minister of health given any thought to direct mental health funding for our post-secondary institutions?

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, our first priority in dealing with mental health issues is within the school system. We've added some mental health school nurses in both Westisle and Montague. As we get that across the Island we'll look at other post-secondary institutions or secondary institutions from that point on.

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

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

### **Per-student funding model for mental health initiatives**

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

I'm still not getting an answer. It seems to me that this should definitely be a target demographic for a mental health and addictions strategy.

The UPEI Student Union has asked you to invest in a per-student funding model dedicated to supporting post-secondary student mental health and wellness initiatives. Are you going to, minister?

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, we have a number of services that we provide for any individual out there on Prince Edward Island who has mental health issues. They're certainly welcome to take them to our walk-in clinics. They can present themselves to an emergency room and we'll provide them with the appropriate mental health services at that point.

We're always looking to add on to that, but I want to try to make sure that we can get these services and we're able to deliver those services in a safe and effective manner, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

We've obviously heard countless stories of concern over the past number of years. I'm wondering if the minister is even going to consider this idea.

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, we have a plan that we're moving forward with on our mental health and addictions strategy. As we keep rolling that strategy out we'll be continuing to provide more and more services to all groups on Prince Edward Island, whether that be post-secondary students, whether that's secondary students, whether that's individual seniors and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

This is a target demographic for our mental health problems. I believe both the Alberta and Ontario governments have gone down the road of direct investment. I'm curious to know why the minister just won't say 'yes' or 'no.' If he is considering it say 'yes.' If

he's not considering it, let's be open and upfront with the students at UPEI.

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

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, we're always considering trying to help as many Islanders as we possibly can with any particular service in health care as it pertains to them. We also, as many know, we have some issues that we're trying to deal with regarding our psychiatrists, psychologists. We have to make sure that we have the health care professionals that are able to deliver that.

In the meantime, we have a continuum of care of services that are provided to, at many different locations throughout Prince Edward Island. I encourage any Islander that has a struggle with mental health to avail themselves to the appropriate location.

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

#### Statements by Ministers

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

#### **Housing Supply Task Force**

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is National Housing Day in Canada, an appropriate time to reflect on the importance of housing to support individuals and families to be healthy, productive and successful citizens and contributors to our society.

Our government continues to invest in social housing and we will look at all possible ways to collaborate with municipalities, private developers, community-based organizations and communities on long-term solutions to growing housing demands.

We are moving forward with a provincial housing strategy. Earlier this year, government brought together a co-development group of housing experts, providers and clients from across the housing continuum and to work together to develop a housing strategy.

This team will work collaboratively with a Housing Supply Task Force. This task force will comprise of people knowledge of the housing sector and markets. They will enhance our understanding of market trends, as well as identify opportunities to identify housing challenges across Prince Edward Island.

The establishment of the task force recognizes that an optimal housing strategy must depend on an active market and that government alone will not be capable of capable of responding to all needs.

The task force will also recognize that supply in all of its dimensions is a critical component of responding in a way that also is alert to the needs of affordable housing. This is ultimately an issue of supply and demand and that task force will begin by developing an inventory of current and prospective initiatives to add to our Island housing supply.

The task force will coordinate with government through the interdepartmental economy hub and the social policy hub. Islanders can apply to the housing supply task force to join the housing supply task force through Engage PEI and they can do that starting today, and they can do that until December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

As the Premier said, this is National Housing Day, but you know here on Prince Edward Island I firmly believe that every day is National Housing Day.

Again, I talked about District 11 a short while ago, and all you have to do is go door-to-door in this district and see the hardships that many Islanders in this particular district face; the housing that they're forced to live in, in some cases. But it's not only confined to District 11, it's all across this great province of ours.

It's great to hear that this government's coming forward with a provincial housing strategy. I mean, we're going to have to come up with a new word at some point for strategy, because this government is simply going to wear that word out.

Again, in case after case, whether it has to do with mental health and addictions, whether it has to do with home repair, whether it has to do with opiates, whether it has to do with housing, this government continually comes back and says: Look, we're studying it. We're going to have a taskforce. We're going to have a strategy.

You can have all the strategies you want, but what Islanders are actually looking for is actions.

I've heard just recently this morning from a constituent that is reaching out to me because her 75-year-old brother, who has to survive on OAS and CPP, is living in a home that the windows, basically, you might as well have them wide open because the wind comes through that strong; same with the doors. This individual has applied to the program that this government speaks so fondly about now for the last four years.

This individual has been turned down four years in a row.

**Mr. LaVie:** Determined.

**Leader of the Opposition:** So, whether it's the Seniors Home Repair Program, whether it's a housing strategy, we can study it, we can write reports, we can have a taskforce, but until we actually see some action on the ground and get some firm results –

**Mr. LaVie:** They're not listening (Indistinct)

**Leader of the Opposition:** – for Islanders that are in need, I say shame. I say shame on this government for not taking action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

There are a few necessities that every human being must have in order to live a life of health and dignity: good food, clothing, and shelter. It's one of the absolute fundamentals.

**Mr. LaVie:** And a doctor.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** The strength of a community, of a society, is measured by how well we look after our most vulnerable, and homelessness – and let's not pretend that that is not a problem here on Prince Edward Island, it absolutely is – homelessness, obviously, is devastating for the individuals involved, but it also costs society. It costs society in terms of health care burdens, in the criminal justice system, and in social services.

So providing shelter, good homes for every Islander, is not only the decent and responsible thing to do, it's also the proper thing to do from a budgetary governance standpoint.

Rather than imagine that Prince Edward Island, as the minister has suggested, can develop some novel unique strategy within the current economic paradigm that is somehow going to provide a new successful solution to the disparities in wealth that exist in our society, I think we have to look at the fundamentals of macroeconomics, and I know there's going to be another minister's statement later on the budget, a second-quarter analysis of how things are here economically, and I'll have another chance to talk to that then, but I think we have to recognize that the time for fundamental economic review is here.

No longer is the economy meeting the needs, never mind of all Islanders, of all Canadians and of everybody around the world. Disparities are growing, and it's time for us to take a close look at some fundamental economic principles.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mental Health and Addictions Campus**

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

I rise in the house today to announce that one of the world's leading planning and design firms will soon begin planning a new mental health and addictions campus on Prince Edward Island.

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Following a tender process, CannonDesign Ltd., in partnership with Architecture49, has been awarded the contract to carry out the master program and planning for the campus that will replace Hillsborough Hospital.

This year's capital budget is investing approximately \$500,000 over the next two fiscal years for this work. The mental health and addictions landscape on PEI is changing, demand is increasing, and needs are becoming more complex.

To best respond to the needs of Islanders and their families, now and into the future, our planning for this new campus must consider current trends, best practices in mental health and addictions as well as care for the input from those on the front line.

The master program will look at our programs and service needs; identify best practice service trends, opportunities and challenges; describe key health service and administrative processes that outline human resources required to provide these programs and services to Islanders.

The master plan will outline potential capital and infrastructure options we need to effectively provide these programs. CannonDesign Ltd is expected to begin their work within the next two weeks; the master programming and planning process will take up to one year to complete. This is more than just designing a new hospital. It's more than just bricks, mortar, or even blueprints.

The new mental health and addictions campus will be a multi-year, multi-million dollar investment. As part of its five-year Capital Budget released last week, government has set aside an initial \$55 million for infrastructure development, recognizing that there are more detailed infrastructure plans and budgets that will

have to be developed for the entire project as part of master programming and planning.

Before we put shovels in the ground, we need to ensure we have a plan for what programs and services are needed, and design infrastructure to most effectively deliver those services to Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm very happy to hear that this has finally been decided. Our team has called on this government to replace the Hillsborough Hospital for many years; many concerned advocates have done the same thing. The former minister, Doug Currie, has told the media back in 2014 that it should be replaced; the Corpus Sanchez Report in 2014 said it needed to be replaced; this government's 10-year strategy on mental health, which government got back in the fall of 2015, called for immediate action; this current health minister told us last November that he expected a possible announcement in the near future.

I'm glad it's happened. I know the original tender was issued back in the start of June, and I believe the responses were due the middle of July, and the RFP was supposed to be awarded on August 31<sup>st</sup>. We're hearing it announced today. I'm hoping that we haven't lost the last 10 weeks of work.

If I sound like we want immediate action, that's because that's what we're calling for. I think I heard the minister talk about 500,000 over two years for design. I certainly hope it does not take two years to design it. I know we have a lot of that background information collected already.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) years.

**Mr. MacEwen:** The groups are ready to go. Thankfully, it's coming. Please, let's do it right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's not often you get up to stand in response to the minister's statement and know that you're going to meet it with unalloyed joy, and I'm absolutely delighted, minister, at this announcement.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** The understanding of and the approach to mental health has changed dramatically over the last little while. We've gone from asylums and straightjackets and isolation, and ECT, and all of the horrors of the sort of Victorian idea of mental health treatment to what is currently, in my mind, an overdependence on pharmacological approaches, to I think a more holistic understanding that mental health and mental wellness is more about an individualized approach to whatever is ailing that particular person, and that could of course mean pharmacological intervention, and that's absolutely appropriate and necessary.

But, I think the future of mental health wellness lies in exactly this model: A place where you can introduce not only talk therapy, but exercise and dietary things and life coaching, and all of those elements that not only get people well but keep them well.

I look forward to the arrival of this new hospital, and with it, the arrival of a thoroughly modern and holistic approach to mental health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

### **Fiscal Forecast 2017-2018**

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

Today I rise to present the fall economic update, along with the second quarter forecast for 2017-2018. I'm proud to report that the Province of Prince Edward Island

continues to be on track for a surplus budget.

Total revenues are estimated to increase by \$23 million this fiscal year, while program expenditures are estimated to rise by over \$22 million. That means our estimate budget surplus of \$600,000 is now close to two-times higher than predicted in 2017-2018 operating budget.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

**Mr. Roach:** The increase in the budget surplus is the result of continued strength in the economy and the sound financial management of taxpayers' dollars.

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

**Mr. Roach:** The rise in tax revenues of \$13.6 million is primarily due to increases in corporate and sales taxes. Other revenue increases include: additional federal funding for early learning and child care totaling \$3.5 million; additional revenues under the *Securities Act*; an increase in revenue of \$1.4 million from the Labour Market Agreement; and an increase of \$4 million through Island Investment Development Incorporated.

Offsetting these revenue increases are increased expenditures for new teaching positions; a new Workforce Development Agreement; an increase in expenditures of \$2.7 million related to social assistance, the Disability Support Program; new initiatives for child protection; and an increase in budget of \$16.8 million for Health PEI.

Our fiscal performance is supported by a strengthening economy. Some highlights include:

Population has reached 152,000 people;

The number of new full-time jobs has increased by 2,500 over the past year;

Labour income is growing at 4.5%, the second fastest amongst provinces in the country;

The value of retail sales advanced by 8.4%, second fastest amongst the provinces;

Housing starts have increased by nearly 44%.

Much of this growth is thanks to the business community and its entrepreneurial spirit which is driving the progress in our province.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** These key indicators are a direct result of our government's plans to grow the economy and rejuvenate the population.

I want to assure the members of this House and through them, the people of the province, that our government is being responsible and prudent in the way expenditures are being managed. We will continue to invest in strategic priorities such as health, education, support for families, and in measures to further strengthen the economy.

The return to balance has been a steadfast goal of the Premier and our government since we first took office. That goal is built around a deep respect for the resources of Island taxpayers. I am pleased to say that we have achieved that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Great.

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

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

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

Well today's fiscal update by the Minister of Finance is another attempt to rosy the picture around the province's finances. He bragged once again about balancing the budget. Well, that's the operating budget and it's the first time in 10 years that your government has actually done the job that they were elected to do. That's not the whole picture though, is it?

Balancing the operating budget is one thing while we hear in the Capital Budget it's spend, spend, spend. During the Capital Budget estimates we learned the minister included many big-ticket promises in his

Budget speech, such as Internet backbone, but the millions of dollars for these promises can't actually be found in the Budget book.

This government has played a game for years around how much of their spending and revenue actually crosses our desks in the Legislature. The Auditor General has raised this concern repeatedly in her reports about MLAs not having an opportunity to scrutinize the true fiscal picture of government.

So while the minister is so happy to bring forward an update today, it certainly doesn't tell the whole story. After the second quarter closed at the end of September, this government approved for themselves over \$31 million in special warrants – that is, it's extra spending, not budgeted for. This amount is not captured in this update, but rest assured the minister knows the actual state that we are in today – he's just not prepared to share it with Islanders.

The minister is also cherry-picking which Crown corporations are shown in the update, just like in his Budget book. This is another action which the Auditor General repeatedly took him to task for – sprinkling top-line balance sheets that only account for a select few government agencies. Certainly isn't transparency and certainly does not tell the whole story.

The minister also used this opportunity to amortize capital assets for his creative balance sheet. This means the minister is putting a value on every highway, every building, every bridge in the province and claiming that is a credit against his program spending. This does not reflect reality, as the minister does not account for the capital expenditure while taking credit for the capital assets. And also, when was the last time a province ever sold-off a bridge or a highway to tweak the balance sheet? Mr. Speaker, Islanders deserve better from by this minister and this government.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** That's the truth.

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

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

That all sounds very nice, Minister, but I think I described the surplus that was predicted during the last budget debate as a sliver of a speck of a shave and now we have two slivers of a speck of a shave. It's still a tiny, tiny amount. But the bigger thing here is – and I alluded to this in my response to the first minister's statement – but the big myth, the big delusion that we all – or most of us, anyway – buy into is the fact that if the economy is growing, then all Islanders are doing better and that's just simply not the case. That's not just true for the Island – you could extrapolate that regionally, or nationally, or globally.

Growth is touted as the sole measure as to whether an economy is doing well or not, but we have to ask some questions. We've had phenomenal growth, globally, for decades and yet more and more people are struggling. So, we have to ask: Growth for whom, and growth of what, and growth at what cost, and growth to what end? We need to think about the wellbeing of our entire community here – from top to bottom and from tip-to-tip. The minister may bray proudly about the vigor and the strength of our economy here, but simultaneously this afternoon we've been debating homelessness and poverty.

Too many Islanders are scratching their heads when they hear the minister of how great things are and they're saying: If things are so good, why do I feel so bad?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

**Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a second quarter forecast for 2017 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Roach:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the economic update 2017 for the Province of Prince Edward Island and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

#### Orders of the Day (Government)

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 2<sup>nd</sup> order of the day be now read.

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

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

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

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

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

**Chair (Casey):** Hon. members before I bring us into committee of the whole to discuss the Budget, I would like to bring your attention to the gallery and introduce you to Tyler Sawyer, who is a Holland College student from Nassau in The Bahamas. He's studying marketing and advertising. I first met Tyler at Salute! at Holland College, which was a fundraiser for the military resource centre, and he also took part in We Day at Holland College. He's a

young leader to watch in the future and I'd all like you to join me in welcoming Tyler Sawyer to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

Hon. members, we are now on page 7 of the capital expenditure under agriculture and fisheries.

Minister of Finance, do you have somebody you'd like to bring to the floor?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, I do. Jim Miles, stranger to the floor.

**Chair:** Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

**Some Hon. Members:** Granted.

**Chair:** Thank you.

We'll just wait until he – good afternoon, could you state your title and your name for the record?

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** Jim Miles, Executive Director of Fiscal Management for the Department of Finance.

**Chair:** Great. Welcome.

We had a considerable amount of questions on this section, the \$50,000 expenditure. I think there were 54 questions yesterday. Does anybody else have any questions before we move on?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah, I think we finished talking (Indistinct)

**Chair:** No, that list dissolved.

Hon. members, just before we get into the questions, if you could direct your questions to the Chair, I'd be happy to add your name to the list just to keep it orderly.

I have a question from the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Question to the minister of agriculture: Do you know of any work that's being done out there with farming companies to move to electric battery technology to operate tractors or that kind of move? To get away from biofuels?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I know several of the different manufacturing companies, they're always looking at that; electrical tractors and stuff and there are actually tractors right now, if you go out, it's kind of unbelievable; they don't even need a driver. They run on their own. They're not cheap, yes, I don't think there are any that are solar paneled or anything like that, but they're working on a lot of the equipment to update them, to bring them as modern as possible, and cheaper to run, of course. If they can find cheaper fuels, whatever that may be, they certainly are working at that all the time.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** There used to be a couple of companies on the Island that did some work with used fryer-fat oil, in the recycling of it, and cleaning, purifying it. Is there anybody still doing that in the province or that being used in farm tractors anywhere?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Not that I'm aware of at the present time. I know there were several individuals looking at the possibility of that. They didn't get any grant through my department, but I think there may have been grants available for someone to try that. But, it may fall under another department.

There are people trying and being innovative in so many ways it's amazing.

**Chair:** The Minister of Finance would like to make an intervention.

**Mr. Roach:** Just to follow-up, I am aware of an individual, a fisherman, who uses that in his old diesel truck with great success. Every time he drives by though, it smells like french fries, but it is working.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have any more questions?

**Mr. Fox:** Go to somebody else first, and I'll come back.

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

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

Minister, I noticed there's nothing in the Capital Budget for cold storage. Is there no cold storage being built in the western part of the Island?

**Mr. Roach:** I think if it's a private cold storage, there's nothing in capital for that.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair. There's nothing in the Capital Budget so, the government is not building anything either for the fishermen?

I can't hear you.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** We would certainly entertain that through possibly a loan or a grant or a bit of both.

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

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

Only if it was private?

**Mr. Roach:** Yeah, like, it's not our asset, so it wouldn't be capital.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Thank you, Chair. Was government ever approached to build cold storage in western PEI?

**Mr. Roach:** And own it?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah.

**Mr. Roach:** No, not that I'm aware of.

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

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

Minister, there's nothing in the Capital Budget for holding facilities for holding lobsters?

**Mr. Roach:** No.

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

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

Was the government ever approached in the western part of the Island for holding facilities?

**Mr. Roach:** Not for government owned, no.

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

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

Even if it was private and the private sector was looking for say, third party, federal, provincial and their own, would that be a capital in your budget?

**Mr. Roach:** No, that would generated through a loan or a grant.

**Mr. LaVie:** Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Roach:** Certainly, if there was an interested entity out there from the Member from Souris-Elmira, they could approach the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and I'm sure he'd be glad to have that conversation.

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

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

I'll ask the minister of fisheries now on the floor: Has your department even been approached for cold storage or a holding facility in the western part of the Island?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There have been discussions with regards to cold storage. I haven't got the specifics on exactly where they are. There was an RFP put out as well a while back. Again, that's not something that falls under the capital here. But we can discuss, however, with our department, discuss what we could do. Maybe it fits under some of our funding, that sort of thing, but it's not a capital issue, no.

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

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

We had a discussion yesterday with the \$30 million fibre backbone, and I just had a few questions on that.

**Chair:** Hon. member, does this pertain to agriculture and fisheries?

**Mr. MacKay:** Yeah, the farmers, the fishermen, use GPS navigations –

**Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. MacKay:** – and they need good high-speed Internet.

The first question I have: Is this \$30 million backbone, is this going to be completely and solely owned by the province of PEI and that any entity that's interested would be able to, I guess, patch into that or enter into an agreement with the province on the usage of it.

**Mr. MacKay:** Chair.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** So how much money is coming from the province itself for this project?

**Mr. Roach:** We're still negotiating on that total amount.

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

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

You announced a \$30 million fibre backbone and you don't know how much money you're going to put into it yourself?

**Mr. Roach:** Like I said: we're in negotiations with our federal counterparts. Similar to what we did on the cable, the cables that came across to Prince Edward Island. But we're committed to that backbone.

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

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

It's under my understanding when Bell Aliant come to education, economic development committee the number that was being thrown around to put high-speed Internet across Prince Edward Island was in the vicinity of \$200 million. If that number is accurate, how can the province do it for \$30 million?

**Mr. Roach:** I'm not sure, to be honest with you what Bell Aliant were talking about, whether they were going to put it on each and every road, whether they were intending on, you know, wiring directly to every house, so I certainly can't comment on Bell Aliant.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** You had mentioned it's somewhat of a partnership like it was with the underground cables. I'm trying to recall, so last year with the cables, was the provincial money not in the capital budget, their portion of it?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The funding for the cable itself was financed through the PEI Energy Corp. We knew

what the project was going to cost us, which is what we budgeted for through the PEI Energy Corp, but then our negotiations with the federal government enabled us to get 50% of the cost of that. The federal government put \$70 million in so what Islanders are actually paying back for the cable is only, and I shouldn't say only, but rather than having to pay \$142 million through fees back from the energy corp over the cost of that project is going to be \$70 million pay-in and paid back by Islanders and it would be a similar kind of arrangement that we would be doing through the PEI Energy Corp for the cost of the backbone for the fibre Internet.

The cables have fibre in them, as well. That's another bonus that we have; having that fibre already installed in the cables will be a great savings to PEI, as well.

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

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

Minister, what federal program are you trying to run this backbone through?

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Chair, there are two possibilities. One would be the federal-provincial build Canada program or its equivalent with the ministry of infrastructure and there is a program with, what I call industry Canada, I said that is called Connect to Innovate.

As we did with the electricity transmission cables, government's approach to this is to make it clear that we have an initiative, come to think of it with the cables, we were talking about it back in about 2005, with a clear idea of what it is that would be the best to do, with the fibre backbone. It's very timely to put this out in a way that we can then pursue the best arrangements in terms of the provincial taxpayer and the business model that will accompany it.

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

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

By the sounds of it with the two different programs, you haven't even put an application in, yet? We don't even know what program it's going through.

**Chair:** Who is answering the question?

The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Chair, we have met with the two ministers responsible and this is entirely appropriate in the way to move forward. I know when we were talking about the cable we were getting all kinds of brainwaves from the other side and urges to be getting moving and action and immediately, and everything at a time when, indeed, we were doing our best to even see a federal minister. It wasn't that easy, I'll tell you in those days. This is exactly in the best interest of taxpayers, is to be pursuing discussions with the federal government in a way that they will be ready for the proposal and ready to receive it on the terms that are the most favourable to Prince Edward Island taxpayers and to the users of the fibre backbone.

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

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

Premier, you made a \$30 million announcement and a promise, without an application, and going on the word of a federal minister, without any approvals, and we don't even know what kind of money provincially you're putting in, yet? Am I right in saying that?

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Madam Chair, we will put in the amount that is the most favourable to Island users and to the business model that goes with this. We have a very good idea of what the upper limit of that is, and we are determining whether there may be a more favourable arrangement.

Let me say because of the tenor of the questions that somehow we are ahead of ourselves or that somehow we should have just kind of raced across the finish line before we knew, for sure, what is the suitable for Island taxpayers and for

ultimately the delivering the service on the most suitable terms. I know that's the way the opposition like to do things and keeps telling us to do stuff immediately.

Just about every time, I think about the manors, last year, for example, how many times we were told to get those done immediately. Well, we ended up \$12.1 million to the good for Island taxpayers. I think –

**Mr. Trivers:** Whole bunch of people sitting in hospitals –

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – it's very important –

**Mr. Trivers:** – with no long-term care beds.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – that we understand that, in dealing with a federal partner, a cooperative federal partner, that is, indeed, at this point, at less than two years into their – approximately two years into their mandate responsible for, on the order of, \$300 million of federal-provincial positive, timely, strategic investments in infrastructure that we acknowledge that it is a partnership and that you move when your partner is ready to move and we have found a very cooperative and open partner in the federal government and one that understands what is of, in the strategic interest, of Prince Edward Island. They get the idea of how we are doing well. We're proud of that.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Premier.

I'm struggling with the idea of you announcing a \$30 million project and there's no commitment or no application has been put in for the funding, and we don't even know, from the taxpayers' perspective how much this is going to cost the taxpayer, nor do we know where the money is coming from. Could you tell us where the money is coming from for this project, Premier?

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** The point was made yesterday that the parallel and, indeed, it's one that works well for Islanders for our

growth as a province for the business model is for this to be done through a Crown corporation where the provincial component will be, and I'm quite confident of that, will be a fraction of the total cost. The users will get the benefit of that. Then, in turn, the component that will be for Islanders will be paid for through competitive fees on a competitive model when they use the service.

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

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

I guess my final question here: We have been fighting over this, or I should say, discussing, for the last two years on the high-speed Internet for all Islanders. From what I've just heard there is a bit of discussion, but nothing has been finalized yet and we've had this brilliant announcement that has happened over the last two weeks.

**Premier:** Would you be willing to bring some of this info back and, as the cost and so forth, and let taxpayers know in an open and transparent way what this is actually going to cost the Island taxpayer, and how it is actually going to be structured instead of just discussions with the federal minister at this time?

**Chair:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Chair, the design and the model would be something that I'm sure could be addressed, but let me say that this is much more than a discussion with federal ministers. They're very receptive to being a partner in this and let me remind the member opposite that he came in here today talking about \$200 million, and now we're talking about 30 and what might be half of 30, so this is being done in the interest of Island users and in the interest of our growth and with the view that effective and competitive broadband in all parts of the province, will in fact be, the first province in this country that's offering that at the speeds that are involved.

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

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

And certainly, if we can provide high-speed Internet to all Islanders for 30 million, I'm going to be more than happy for that, considering we had a contract for Bell Aliant for \$27 million that you guys signed in 2008 that didn't provide that. I'll certainly be more happy to congratulate you when the time comes when the service is provided. I'm skeptical why and how we can do it for \$30 million when nobody else seems to be able to do it.

So, I hope one, all Islanders end up with high-speed and we don't run into the same position we did with a Bell Aliant contract, and on the other hand, I hope that it is done in an open and transparent way and everybody has a chance to be able to provide that service.

Thank you.

**Ms. Biggar:** Chair?

**Chair:** Did you want intervention to this, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, or do you have a response to this –

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**Chair:** But I have you on the list, but do you have a response to this?

**Ms. Biggar:** No, I have a response to that.

**Chair:** Thanks.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** I just wanted to make a commitment that as soon as we have that information we will be happy to bring it back and share it with you. We are very encouraged by our negotiations with the federal government on the sharing of that expense that will be incurred through the PEI Energy Corp. As soon as we have that information finalized I'll be happy to bring it back.

**Mr. MacKay:** Chair?

**Chair:** Thank you.

I'm going to go to Member from Borden-Kinkora –

**Mr. MacKay:** I just –

**Chair:** Do you have just one more?

**Mr. MacKay:** Just one more.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, minister, for that. But I'm just wondering why you would announce it without any details to bring. So, basically, you have no details right now but you made a \$30 million announcement. It just doesn't make any sense.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) I said, we will have some information, so I'll go back and find out what's there for you, hon. member, and for the House.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Well, thank you, Chair.

Staying on the same line of questions, I've got to – you've opened the door. With this grand plan, who's going to be in charge of setting the rate for access to this fibre op network?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll pass it off to him. He's involved in this, as well.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The fibre backbone is Internet exchange sites that will be constructed. It's a foundation of fibre across Prince Edward Island. The RFP for final project design has just gone out, and once we receive that back we'll have a better understanding of the whole process that's going to be in place.

What this is designed for is to give better access to all Islanders, especially in rural PEI. That's where our concern is right now.

As you know, our economy's doing extremely well, and to ensure that the small businesses in rural PEI and our population growth in rural PEI can be maintained by providing services within to those communities.

The RFP for the final project design should be likely after this. I think they have roughly 18 to – 6 months –

**Mr. Fox:** Eighteen months or sixteen months?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Six months. Four to six months for that RFP that I just spoke of – return around time to have the final package ready to go.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** So you're telling us now it's going to be six months down the road possibly before anything's even signed or agreed upon. Is that what you're saying, minister?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** The total project time is 24 months. Does that make an answer to your question?

**Mr. Fox:** Total time is 24 months?

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have another question?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes, Chair.

Here's a question for you, and I'm very much aware of the two fibre op cables that come across in the power cables. The question being is: Where are those fibre ops ending right now? Are they ended, or are they actually hooked up into a network?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** At the moment, they end at Borden.

**Mr. Fox:** They end at Borden, so they haven't been hooked up to anything?

**Ms. Biggar:** No.

**Mr. Fox:** Okay.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have another question?

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah.

**Chair:** I'd ask you to come through the Chair.

**Mr. Fox:** Yes, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Fox:** I'm interested to know why we're putting the debt of this to the energy corporation.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Sorry, Chair. We've done the same thing with the cables. The cables basically were going to allow us to expand. It's a capital investment. We're looking at the best possible usage and management of this. We want to oversee it.

We presently have an existing system right now that I think was previously mentioned several times in the House, likely by myself and people on your side, that's at capacity. When I say capacity, I think there's 48 strands of broadband in those cables right now – 12 were designated for the province. The remainder is of that supplier and other ISPs who have to buy into that.

What we're trying to do is we're trying to build a foundation where we can allow ISPs of every level, larger corporations, small private ISPs, to interexchange at those points to allow them – and when that happens, what's going to take place is we're going to see a decline in likely fees, and we're going to see better coverage across the Island.

The market will tend to eliminate the higher costs for fees –

**Mr. LaVie:** What a genius.

**An Hon. Member:** Great.

**Mr. MacDonald:** It's a win-win for everybody, but it's a win-win for especially rural PEI and the customer.

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

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** Chair, Minister of Finance, how much debt has already been transferred out of government into the Crown corporation of the energy corp?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah, I'd like to hear that answer.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Actually, last year, Madam Chair, the energy corp had a profit of over about \$9 million, \$8 million – so, that is a very viable corporation and able to handle these kind of transactions, and so we're very confident in the work that the energy corp is able to do.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

That's like comparing – I think it was last year that one of the ministers went and said that we made \$15 million in IIDI or Finance PEI, but we wrote off \$16 million.

The question being to the Minister of Finance: How much debt has been placed out of government into the energy corporation?

**Chair:** Minister?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, the way that that works in a Crown corp is that's ratepayer debt, not government debt or taxpayer debt. It's the user, and that's being paid off.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

**Mr. Fox:** What is the debt? What is the debt of the energy corporation? I understand how

the ratepayers, it's the responsibility of the ratepayers, but what is the debt sitting on the books of the energy corporation?

**Chair:** The hon. minister of transportation –

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, we'll – I'll take that.

**Ms. Biggar:** It's in the annual report that comes out every year.

**Mr. Roach:** It comes out every year. I know.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I was going to comment, as did the Minister of Finance, that the annual report of the PEI Energy Corp comes out every year, so it's public –

**Mr. Fox:** But what is it?

**Ms. Biggar:** – if the member over there – it's been tabled in the Legislature. I'm sure if you check at the Clerk's office you can probably get it.

**Mr. Fox:** So you don't know right now.

**An Hon. Member:** Well, you don't know either, obviously.

**Mr. Roach:** Chair, I would be more than prepared –

**Mr. LaVie:** That's why he's asking it.

**Mr. Roach:** – to go and look that up for him and bring it back to him.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have another question?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes, I'd actually like to know what the debt is to today's date, so that's what I'm actually looking for.

A question, Chair, to the actual Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: Back a minute ago, the Member from Souris-Elmira questioned about any capital expenditures in regards to cold storage. It's my understanding that \$2 million was transferred over from the McCain fund into

the provincial government and that you're sitting on that, right?

So some of that money was allotted to, or awarded to, a company to put in a cold storage within Borden-Carleton area region.

Is that not capital money, and if it is, what's the status of it?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** The McCain fund was set up for regional development when they closed, and we have a full committee that oversees that, a committee made up of ACOA, made up of the town of Borden, made up of my office, and there was one other person on there and I forget who it was.

There's been no money transferred. That money's being held for dispersals based on the awarded projects, which you know very well about, and one of them is the cold storage facilities, and I believe it could be the apple growers – no, I'm sorry it's Allan Lowther – I forget the name of the company. So, there's been no money – I don't know what you mean.

**Mr. Fox:** Chair, we're wondering what the status is of that project that you announced with cold storage.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** With that \$2 million, you're worried about the cold storage. Is that the question?

**Mr. Fox:** I want to know what's going on with that allotment.

**Mr. MacDonald:** They've investigated and they're still, as far as I'm concerned and as far as the committee, the last I've been told is that they're pursuing the cold storage. It's a private business; it's hard to tell them what to do.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah. I have an agriculture question here about the \$50,000 – I don't think we talked about that yet.

**Chair:** Yes we did – yesterday.

**Mr. LaVie:** Yes we did.

**Ms. Biggar:** Too much?

Did you have a chance to explain what that equipment is for and what it will be used for?

**Mr. Trivers:** It's a drone.

**Mr. LaVie:** We talked about it yesterday.

**Mr. Trivers:** And a plotter.

**Ms. Biggar:** It is just the drones that you're talking about?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** So there's no other equipment?

**Mr. Roach:** Also, the large-scale plotter. The one that they currently utilize is worth between \$10,000-\$12,000 for the new one, but the one that they currently utilize is no longer – it's older, no longer able to be repaired.

**Ms. Biggar:** Okay. So, do you find that those are –

Excuse me. Sorry, Madam Chair.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Just in regards to those drones, you see a lot of – I believe I saw a picture – it was mentioned by the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment – the great work that's showing up by the agricultural community as a result of using those drones. It really shows, the work that's being done. Will these new drones increase the clarity of the picture for that?

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** Well, the new drone is going to have this multi-spectral thermal camera on it. It does not have that on the other

drones. It could do the surveying work before, but now in the camera picture, they'll be able to look at heat-loss in the soil when it's flying over, or water within the soil – to measure that sort of thing as well – to get a complete picture when they're doing the picturing and planning and plotting for the farmers.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. McIsaac:** Yes. It's absolutely terrific what they can do with this and it's not a whole lot of dollars for the amount of work it's going to do with \$38,000 for the drone and for the camera. We're really excited about it and we have the staff in place and the expertise in place to really work hard with our farmers on the whole project.

**Mr. Trivers:** Need to publish the data now, though.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora. Do you have a question related to agriculture and fisheries?

**Ms. Biggar:** Carry.

**Mr. Fox:** I'll see.

**Chair:** I have nobody else on the speaking order.

Shall this carry? Carried.

Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct).

**Chair:** Yes, carry the section. Sorry. Thank you.

Hon. Members, we'll move on to page 9. Capital Expenditure. Communities, Land and Environment.

I'm going to read the section first and then we'll get into the questions.

Capital Expenditure – Communities, Land and Environment – 2018-2019 Budget Estimate.

Equipment. "Appropriations provided for equipment purchases." Laboratory Equipment: 150,000. Field Monitoring

Equipment: 25,000. Forest Fire Vehicles: 70,000. Total Equipment: 245,000.

Total Capital Expenditure – Communities, Land and Environment: 245,000.

Hon. Members, I would ask you if we could direct our questions to the Capital Expenditures that are listed here.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald and then I'm going to go to Souris-Elmira.

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

I'm just interested in breaking down the lines even further. Laboratory equipment is a fairly abstract term, same with field monitoring equipment, and forest fire vehicles. Maybe the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment would like to break those down – maybe even provide us with a website link where that's published on his website.

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

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

Certainly I'd be more than pleased to break down these three lines of expenditures from our department.

The laboratory equipment at \$150,000 – it's actually one piece of equipment. Technical gear of that nature is usually quite expensive. The name of the gear that it is – it's a near-infrared feed analyzer and that's for analyzing forages, mixed rations, chicken feed, and mineral mixes for dry matter, protein, fiber, carbs, fat, and mineral – and I certainly don't want to pretend today that I know all the testing that they do with it, but it's a fairly extensive used piece of gear that is part of the lab.

The second gear: the field monitoring equipment will be mostly a water-level monitoring. It's to replace some existing and to add some new. Certainly it will be in order to keep up to measuring that we will need once we get the new water act brought in so that we can determine levels in streams – the monitoring system – and enhance what we have in place now – and to bring all the gear up to, basically, the same standard. \$25,000 is not a lot of money for a gear of

that nature when you're talking of the work that it has to do.

Of course, something that I'm really pleased with is our forest fire vehicle expenditure. This is something, hon. members, that you will see in the capital budget over the next five years as we replace one truck per year. The truck that's being replaced this year is – I'll say – our carrier trailer unit with the tractor and trailer for hauling out the smaller gear, Muskegs, and things of that nature.

I know the Member from Souris-Elmira, with his firefighting background, did extensive lobbying over the last couple of years for this. I know he fully understands the need of upgrading and updating those fire trucks.

A little contrary to comments yesterday in a statement from the Member from Borden-Kinkora, we certainly have to be cognizant of our forests on Prince Edward Island. We have a significant number of forest land. Anything could happen – such as happened in the western provinces the last couple of years – Nova Scotia last year as well.

Actually, in 2016, we designated 500 hectares of private land to our *Natural Areas Protection Act*. That's a lot of forest right there on its own. Last year, as well, our staff enrolled 22 new land owners into our private land program. That's significant over the – how things have died-off over the last few years. With that completed forest work, we're going to have over 250 hectares of private forest land. Actually, last year alone, we planted over 444,000 trees and that's not even counting the trees through the watershed program. So, that's in the tens of thousands more.

In actual fact, as was kind of mentioned, we're not doing very much. 500,000 trees – half a million trees last year alone really, in the last year-and-a-half – planted with collaboration with private land owners. We have to understand: a lot of our Prince Edward Island holdings are with private land owners and we work with them collaboratively.

So, we need to upgrade our forest fire truck contingent so that if something – and God forbid it ever happened – that we would be prepared. We would have them strategically

placed where they need to be and go out and come back – something of that significance. As I said: the Member from Souris-Elmira knows full-well how important that is and, no doubt, will be lobbying me for one of those trucks to show up in the Souris area as well.

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

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

Thanks, Minister for that overview.

**Mr. LaVie:** A lot of information.

**Mr. Trivers:** The near-infrared feed analyzer – I'm just a little curious in communities, land and environment why you'd be buying equipment to analyze feed. I would think that would be under agriculture and fisheries. Maybe you can let me know what exactly they might be using that for and maybe it's for the fish feed? I don't know. I'm not sure – If you could answer that.

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

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

Our testing lab is shared by agriculture and communities, land and environment. It's a shared service. In this particular case, this is a piece of gear that's responsible from us and (Indistinct) responsible under agriculture. It works well. It's a good system. I don't know if you've ever toured it, but I'd certainly be open – you should take a tour of it. There's a lot of –

**An Hon. Member:** Big spot.

**Mr. Mitchell:** It's huge. It's, I'll say, nationally renowned in the work that it's done and we take work from other regions of Atlantic Canada to go in there and we do their work as well.

**An Hon. Member:** Totally accredited?

**Mr. Mitchell:** Totally accredited as well.

As I said earlier, I'm not going to pretend that I know the specific work that this machine does, but it's significant and we do

a lot of this – types of things of this nature. It's a state-of-the-art facility.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance has a comment.

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, certainly.

Just to follow-up along with what the minister just said, was sharing it with the minister of agriculture. This, I guess, does a lot of work with what's in the soil. It is a somatic cell counter. It also does analysis of carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur. That's what it does within that; part of what it does.

It also used as a cell counter for raw milk within the agriculture part of it. It's kind of a multi-purpose unit that's shared with the other minister.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes, and thank you.

In another part of your explanation Minister of Communities, Land and Environment – and Minister of Finance, thanks for expanding that out, as well – you talked about the 440,000 trees that were planted last year.

I was thinking when I saw this section, you might actually have the purchase of trees and seedlings, or even bigger than seedlings as a capital expense, but are they all included in operating expenses then?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Yeah, that's a normal course of business, so they would be under those expenditures of normal operating expense.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** I talk about those (Indistinct)

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

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

The other thing is, and, minister you did mentioned that the new Water Act is coming in, and there's been a draft out. I know

you've been working hard all summer apparently and I guess there are going to be lots and lots of changes to the draft, I would presume, with all the work and the big delay.

One thing that you've promised will be in the Water Act is a lot of monitoring of water throughout the province and a lot of registering of various of ways of water extraction, whether that be irrigation ponds or all different types of wells. You have to look at the levels of streams and discharge rates; all kinds of data you have to collect.

When I look at \$25,000 as you mentioned, really not a lot of money in field monitoring equipment. It makes me wonder whether you're going to have enough equipment to adequately implement the regulations, or I should say, the legislation itself of the new Water Act, and adequately measure the water usage in our province to make sure that this precious water is looked after properly.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Hon. member, you have to keep in mind this is not a new practice. This will be an enhanced practice. We have been doing this for a number of years now where we go out on monitor water levels. Not only water levels, in other areas we monitor air levels, we monitor, you know, events that are going on in rivers and estuaries all over. This is just a continuation of that program.

As I know you are well aware of the abundant available data that's on our website in regards to all of those aspects; in regards to our levels and in regards to our air quality, in regards to, you know, events regarding anoxia and things of those natures. That is well documented and posted online on our website. This is just an addition to that.

I alluded to the fact that you're going to see fire trucks over the next number of years. You're going significant asks for more gear as you move forward; get a better understanding of where we need things and what we need to have, and new technologies, too.

I think you can expect to see more lines of this nature moving forward in future budgets.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** I mean it sounds like, really, you're not going to be implementing all the gear you need to adequately monitor water as per the new Water Act in this Capital Budget. In fact, it's going to be out in the future.

Is that because you've actually delayed the passing of the Water Act to the fall session and now you need a whole bunch of time to develop the regulations before you can purchase the equipment to actually implement the legislation?

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** As you know, when acts become laid on the table, as with the *Municipal Government Act* last year, regulation needs to follow before they actually get turned on. Although, it is my full and absolute intention to get the Water Act presented on the floor of the Legislature in this session to get it moved through, hopefully, with your assistance and cooperation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> reading, until we have our regs established. Part of those regulations, as you know, and others that are probably watching today, we made the full commitment that we will have public consultation on those regulations so that everybody has a good say of how that looks.

That's going to take some time. I indicated that back, you know, in the spring when we were out doing our public rounds of consultation. This is the draft act, the act, and once we get this finalized, and we're going to make some changes based on what we heard in those meetings, it will be some time yet, before the act will actually get turned on because we want the full regulation to accompany it.

Same thing with the *Municipal Government Act*, it has gone through the 3<sup>rd</sup> readings, it's sitting there to be proclaimed and that's to be done by the end of this year because we

will have those regulations in place that have been consulted with the stakeholders that need to be. Same thing with this act.

That gives us some time, which you will see, be able to question me further in about 12 months time on lines that you'll see in the capital budget next year.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, do you have questions related to –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) I just wanted to say that the fact that it's going to be at least another year before you have the money in the capital budget for all the equipment you'll need to actually enact the Water Act and its regulations is symptomatic of the fact that you delayed the Water Act and it's going to take longer in this fall sitting of the Legislature to go through it because we – you haven't shared any changes you made to the draft with the general public or anyone here on this side.

To me, if you're being open and transparent, and really wanted public consultation, would do that, then we could see the capital budget increased. We would already have the regulations be starting to be developed even before the Water Act was passed, but –

Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Hon. member, the delaying the Water Act is (Indistinct). It's delays that we add the things that we heard in the second round of consultations. I expect that the day that I lay it to you, the ink will not even be dry. You'd better wear some gloves that day.

We're still working on it. It's a fluid document. It's moving along –

**Mr. LaVie:** I like those words.

**Mr. Mitchell:** – so be ready.

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

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

When the minister first started, and I couldn't hear him clearly.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct) his fault or yours?

**Mr. LaVie:** His fault.

**Chair:** Hon. members, the Member from Souris-Elmira is having trouble hearing the minister. If we could just pay attention and we'd be able to hear what the minister has to say.

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

You were talking about forest fire vehicles. Did you say you were buying a vehicle, or what were you buying there?

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

**Mr. LaVie:** A forest fire truck?

**Mr. Mitchell:** Actually, hon. member, as you may have heard me on the floor of the Legislature earlier in other sessions; we are replacing all of our vehicles, the six trucks. The first truck, the first pair that we're replacing is the tractor-trailer and trailer part that carries our smaller gear the Muskegs and the six-wheelers and all that. That's what we're replacing first.

It was the oldest. Actually, it was you that questioned mostly the age of those vehicles in previous sittings of the Legislature.

The plan in place is to replace one per year until they're all replaced over the next, well, five to six years. Correct.

This is, the first one is not one of the water-carrying ones, it is the trailer to get the things in that we need to get in.

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

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

So you never started with the trucks, fire trucks themselves, yet?

**Mr. Mitchell:** That's right. So you will see, as I said, you will see it again another line for the next five years as we replace each vehicle.

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

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

When are you anticipating that will start?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** This time next year, you will see we will be looking for a support for another vehicle, then you will see that every fall for the next number of years until we have them all replaced.

When we're looking at these vehicles, we don't have to fully reinvent the wheel here. Other jurisdictions are using what is the most practical vehicle today to get in, to get in quick, to get in areas where it's not the easiest to get in, as you would full well know attending some of these fires. A great big, huge truck is not the probably the best truck in some cases. Smaller-carrying capacity truck to get in, hit, and get out is maybe better. Those are things that we will be establishing with other jurisdictions over the coming months, as well.

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

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

No, and I understand where you're coming from because we work with the department, our fire department, and all fire departments work with the department of forestry when we're fighting forest fires.

A lot of their equipment is aging and getting old. We understand that. Your workers understand that. Your firefighters understand that. We all understand all the equipment is aging. We work with what we have. The truck we have, we work with that.

What'll happen, your six trucks, what'll happen when you replace one? What'll happen to that one truck?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** I guess, hon. member, we've had some discussions, and I can't think of the gentleman's name – you probably know

him, the Leader of the Opposition knows him well, a gentleman who does some work in collecting old fire gear and taking it south to Mexico. We've been talking about that and looking if that would be an option, and an option that your side of the House would support as well.

The trucks are old. They're hard to get parts for around here, but they apparently have no problem in getting parts or making parts to make trucks of these nature work well in their situations that they need.

We're in discussions like that. I think there's a possibility for a win-win as far as the people from Mexico and the people from PEI doing a good deed for our neighbours, so that's just one thing that's on the go.

**Mr. R. Brown:** We're going to wait for NAFTA.

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

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

I look forward to getting these trucks replaced, for sure, and your equipment, for sure, because anybody that works in forestry deserves great equipment for the work they do, because it's not easy work what they do.

Now I'm going to make a suggestion, not a question, minister, because our department did it themselves when we bought a new, say, Jaws of Life, Hurst Tool, and we donated our old ones to the Central Kings Fire Department because some departments are better off than others, and I'm not saying I'm well off but I'm in better shape than them because of my tax space, so we donated it to Central Kings.

What I would suggest is go to your own departments and your own in Prince Edward Island and people like Central Kings could use that truck, or – you know, it's not only Central Kings, but that's what comes to my mind because they're our mutual aid department.

But anytime you have equipment like that, radios, or any equipment, check with your own departments before we – because there is definitely departments on Prince Edward

Island that are not as well off as some because of the tax space they're in, right?

So, if I make a suggestion that: Look at the departments like Central Kings when you disregard some of your equipment, please.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** I certainly have no trouble committing to having those conversations. I'm sure our good folks out at forestry probably have had some of those conversations already. We're early days yet on the redo of the vehicles, but I'm sure those discussions are ongoing.

As I said, I know that your department up there usually has a truck that you take care of us for us, so I'm sure that will continue into the future, and I know you'll be lobbying for that –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** Yeah, thank you very much.

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

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

Minister, my questions are on this lab equipment that does the water testing. How old would the current equipment be there now? Do you know?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** (Indistinct) I could probably find out some of that here. If you recall, I think last year or the year before, I can't remember which budget it was, but the mass spectrometer was replaced. I think there's a fairly substantial rotation of gear after so many years that they do respond.

I'd have to get that for you and see what kind of forecast there would be of future gear that needs to be replaced out.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, minister, and thank you, Chair.

Minister, how many water tests are done a year with that equipment? Do you know that?

**Mr. Mitchell:** No, I mean, that's a number that I don't have off the top of my head, but I know there's a significant amount they do there of all kinds of testing. I could try to get a breakdown of what they do to present to you.

**Mr. MacKay:** That would be great (Indistinct)

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

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

One more, I'm just curious as well how often that equipment breaks. Obviously, they do quite a bit of water testing, but I've seen in the past that somebody's trying to sell a home and the equipment is broken and water tests aren't getting done in time, by no fault of anybody's, obviously.

But I'm just more curious how often the equipment is broken, how old is it, and so forth? The cost of maintenance in keeping it up, obviously it's important as it's mandatory to provide clean water tests now when a home sells, so I just want a little info if you could and some of the costs that might be in the Capital Budget on maintenance for that equipment.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Yeah, well I know they get fully accredited for the gear that's in place.

I think, probably, what would be useful would be to kind of get the lab to do up a synopsis of what they do, how many they do, how many things they do, and what the gear state is, and probably present that back in a package form if that would be reasonable.

**Mr. MacKay:** That sounds great.

**Mr. Mitchell:** As quickly as we can have it done, but in a reasonable time, I guess, too, as well.

**Mr. MacKay:** That sounds good. Thank you, minister.

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

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

As you well know, and you agree, watershed groups do some amazing work on the Island and generally it's accepted that it is a 10-to-1 return on every dollar spent on a watershed group to what they're able to provide.

So especially on the environment side here in the Capital Budget, I'm assuming there's going to be some substantial projects that watershed groups undertake where they're reinforcing stream beds and banks, when they're replacing culverts, these sorts of things.

I'm assuming that any capital dollars for that sort of thing, replacing culverts, would be in the transportation and infrastructure part of this Capital Budget, but can you give an overview of the sort of projects that you know that are planned that you're funding out of communities, land, and environment for watershed groups coming up this year?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Hon. member, your question is actually quite timely. Just last Saturday, the watershed alliance held their biannual AGM, I guess you could say, the two-year in Hunter River, just around the corner from you there.

A great conversation had by all watershed groups about what a great (Indistinct) to the point of as we were looking at doing the funding a little differently this year, performance base is a big part, every watershed group – I believe – every watershed group has increased their performance level, so therefore when they're doing the points score for the funding, every group has significantly increased the capacity of what they're doing.

That's good news. That's what the goal was. That's what's going on. As we move forward, I have indicated to all of the groups, too, that I will continue to work on their behalf to see when and how much and how soon we can increase some funding to them.

Obviously, they sit today at 1.12 million; very proud of that. That's a 10-fold increase from just back in 2007, so they are very appreciative of our efforts to get them funding where we can.

But they understand some groups are based on working, some groups are based on connecting with tourism and showcasing what they're doing to the public. Some are just cleaning what they have and trying to sustain.

So they're all at different levels, but the good news is they're all working to get better, and they're all looking to get better so that the regions there are good. We do have one new watershed group that's looking to come in that, again, will affect the funding formula.

They're a very collaborative group of working together for all great reasons for the Island. I agree with you fully. For every dollar spent there's many dollars that are driven back. But, those conversations are continuous to try to help them with whatever programs they're trying to work on, whatever funding they need, and it's been a great relationship, I guess, is what I'll have to say.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** No. I'm glad it's a great relationship and I'm glad you're having great conversations and that they're happy, but my question is: How come there's no Capital Budget expenditures budgeted in this budget for watershed groups?

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** I don't fund them with gear. I think we loan them some monitoring gear, but we don't fund – we don't give them gear to work with. They do that purchase. They go out and raise funds and their volunteer groups. I don't provide that. They do that on their own.

We have an envelope of money that we work with to say, (Indistinct) core funding that, you know, here's what you're going to get based on what you did last year. If you do more, we'll have to readjust it.

I don't provide them with any physical material needs. They'd establish that on their own.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** I guess my point is the just over \$1 million in the operating budget, I don't think is enough. Whether it's grown 10 times since 2007 or not, I think with a 10-to-1 return, more funding is needed, and I think that helping them out through capital expenditures would achieve the same purpose and give you the same returns, and so I think you should consider going to the watershed groups and asking them.

You mentioned what gear they need. I'm thinking it's, what infrastructure do they need help purchasing to improve our environment, streams and waterways?

That's just my suggestion. When I don't see any money in the Capital Budget, when we know there's such a big return on money that's invested in the watershed groups, I question why. Why aren't we spending money there?

Especially because, Islanders are so passionate about their environment, especially their water.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, do you have a response?

**Mr. Mitchell:** Just point to that.

When we talk about your \$1.12 million that does not include other things that we provide as far staffing support. Staffing support, you know, in regards to EDA programs, student programs, that's a significant – another influx of dollars. They seem to be quite happy with that part of it. That's what they need. They need boots on the ground, not shovels that we provide; boots on the ground. We're working with them on that.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Hon. Minister of Finance, if it would be you or the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, but can you explain to me how it works with gas tax revenue for unincorporated areas?

**Chair:** Hon. member, we're talking about three pieces of equipment. I'm trying to get the – we've gone through about 15, 20 questions now, I'm just trying to focus the conversation on the Budget, the capital expenditure budget, and it has been going great, so if I could ask you to –

**Mr. Fox:** Wait, to hold that question?

**Chair:** If we could. Hold that question for another time, but we're trying to – it's three pieces of equipment that we have here, so if you have any questions on those, I'd be happy to direct –

**Mr. Fox:** No. I'll wait.

**Chair:** You're good, thank you.

**Ms. Biggar:** Carried.

**Chair:** Shall that –

**Ms. Biggar:** Carried.

**Chair:** – department carry? Carried.

Thank you.

We're going to move on next to page 11: Capital Expenditure for Education, Early Learning and Culture.

**Mr. Fox:** Chair?

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, you had a question?

**Mr. Fox:** Yes, well, I – you just told me you were dealing those three pieces of equipment, I thought I was going to have a chance to ask that question to the minister prior to going to capital – actually passing of the actual line in capital, total capital expenditure.

**Chair:** We –

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

**Chair:** No, I actually read that line at the beginning and I had nobody else on the list. Did you have other questions?

**Mr. Fox:** I had the one question.

**Chair:** Okay, sorry. Oh, shoot. The minister left.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Chair:** Sorry, hon. member, I thought you said you were going to hold –

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

**Chair:** – questions.

**Mr. Fox:** I mean it to him.

**Chair:** Thanks.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora has a question.

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

Minister, can you explain to me how capital budgets or how the gas tax revenue occurs within an unincorporated area?

**Chair:** Excuse me, we just – I just asked you to focus your question on these three pieces of equipment and you said you would hold your question. We passed the budget. Did you have a question related to these – the Capital Budget?

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** I think the minister (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) favourites.

**Mr. Fox:** We asked one question to the minister.

**Ms. Biggar:** It has nothing to do with (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** It has to do with communities, lands and environment, which takes care of –

**Chair:** Well maybe –

**Mr. Fox:** – unincorporated areas.

**Chair:** Yes, but it's not related to – we have a whole Budget to get through here. Could you hold the question for another time?

**Mr. Fox:** Well, I can say, I can ask the question, Chair.

Is there any gas revenue, or gas tax revenue that comes into the province in unincorporated areas that has to do with laboratory equipment, field monitoring equipment of forest fire vehicles?

**Mr. Roach:** Oh.

**Chair:** It's okay.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Good question.

**Mr. Roach:** Oh.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** No, hon. member, there is nothing that applies –

**Ms. Biggar:** Gas tax (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** – on any of those to that.

**Chair:** Thank you.

We're moving onto Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Thank you, minister.

Hon. members, I'm going to read the budget estimates. I'm probably going to read right through the whole thing and then we'll ask – then you'll be able to ask questions on all parts of it, if that's okay minister?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes.

**An Hon. Member:** What page are we on, Chair?

**Chair:** We're on page 11.

**Mr. Trivers:** Might as well read the total (Indistinct)

**Chair:** 2018-2019 Budget Estimate.

Equipment: "Appropriations provided for equipment purchases." Trades Training

Capital: 250,000. Classroom Technology: 2,525,000. Public Archives and Records: 82,000.

Total Equipment: 2,857,000.

Capital Improvement-Schools: "Appropriations provided for school construction and Capital improvements." School Construction and Renovations: 21,390,500. Capital Repairs: 2,000,000.

Total Capital Improvements – Schools: 23,390,500.

Capital Improvements-Culture: "Appropriations provided for culture infrastructure." Museum and Heritage Sites: 150,000.

Total Capital Improvements – Culture: 150,000.

Bus Replacement: "Appropriations provided for the purchase of new buses." School Buses: 2,050,000.

Total Bus Replacement: 2,050,000.

Education, Early Learning and Culture: 28,447,500.

I'll open the floor for questions.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

Minister, I want to let you know what I'm guessing that the staff is doing in the Mount Stewart school right now. We're expecting a big rain tonight and guess what they do every time it rains now, minister. They go to the gym and they set up buckets on the floor. Every day it rains in the Mount Stewart school they set up buckets –

**Mr. Myers:** Need a by-election.

**Ms. Compton:** Need a by-election.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No, we don't. Not out there.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. MacEwen:** Do I have to resign and have a by-election to get that roof fixed in

Mount Stewart? Buckets on the floor right now preparing for tonight's rain.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. member, I would point you to the capital repairs line item on page 11, at \$2 million. That \$2 million each year is used to do things like replace roofs, boilers, whatever the case might be and the PSB and the French Language School Board put forth their budget priorities to do that work.

Mount Stewart Consolidated roof replacement is listed as number five on the PSB's list. There is probably a pretty good chance that we would get through to number five in the next year depending on the different project allocations. I do note that there are a number of roofs that are in similar shape. I guess that would be the most that I could tell you about that for certain at this point in time.

It's number five on the PSB list and, in addition, there would be the French Language School Board's list that would have to be combined in with the PSB list. Those are, kind of, constantly evaluated and re-evaluated by those two entities.

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

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

Minister, will you table that list?

**Mr. J. Brown:** What's that?

**Mr. MacEwen:** Will you table that list?

**Mr. J. Brown:** That list is actually part of the – there was a PSB letter that went and my understanding is it's part of – I don't have the whole list is the reason why I said so I –

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – can't commit to it –

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct) money.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – but I can see –

**Chair:** Hon. member –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – what I would get –

**Chair:** – could we come through the Chair –

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** – so we keep it under control here?

**Mr. MacEwen:** Chair, could the minister table the list that he's got in front of him?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not going to table the list I have got in front of me because it's got my notes written all over it, but –

**Mr. MacEwen:** That'd be even better.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'll see what I can bring back to you, hon. member.

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** Would the minister come out tomorrow morning and help me clean up the mess that's on the Mount Stewart gym floor? I'm not even joking.

How many other spots are putting out buckets tonight for the rain? How many other schools are doing that right now? Mount Stewart is fifth on the list, what's the other four schools? Are they putting out buckets tonight?

**Mr. Myers:** Kings County Memorial Hospital is.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I would suspect there might be others that might have those worries as well, hon. member, in all honesty. We heard those stories through the school review process last year. That is where this list comes from.

**Mr. Fox:** And you haven't – if you heard the school review (Indistinct)

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

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

The principals are the ones that are having to lobby for this stuff. The principals shouldn't be having to lobby to keep rain off of the kids' heads.

You just said: A year to get this done. That's a year of putting buckets out for the rain, and you say there's probably – and don't get me wrong, I know there's four other serious ones, there's probably a dozen quite serious situations. Why can't we just do it?

Mount Stewart has let the department know about this long ago. What's the problem? Why can't we pick up the phone, call the contractor, and make it happen?

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** The rain is flowing down on the gym. They're putting out buckets. Why isn't that just like – if I'm running a company, you fix it when it leaks. It fixes; that's what the budget's there for. Why are we taking – you know, do we have one crew going around fixing all the rooves in gyms?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. members, as I'd indicated the two bodies that are responsible for prioritizing these fixes are the Public Schools Branch and the French Language Schools Board.

**Mr. LaVie:** It's you.

**Mr. J. Brown:** They have prioritized them. They have indicated –

**Mr. LaVie:** It's you.

**Mr. Trivers:** Don't pass the buck.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – that these are the things that needed them, and we indicate that here's the budget envelope to deal with them. In this year we've increased the budget envelope to deal with those to \$2 million, and it's our expectation that that money will be well-used to deal with those.

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

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

What's preventing them from doing the projects all at once? The money, you say, the money has been increased. There's \$2 million there. Why aren't we doing them all? Why does the Public Schools Branch or whoever you want to blame, why are they doing them one after another after another?

I can call someone tonight to go out and fix that roof if you need help.

**Ms. Compton:** Send them the bill.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to be clear, there's a budgeting process that we're going through right now to set out the allocation for all these projects one year after the next. There's a significant list of projects that need to be undertaken, so I appreciate that the hon. member has got a school in his district that has an issue that is fairly urgent, and I would say to the hon. member –

**Mr. LaVie:** Not fairly; it is.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – I've got a couple of schools in my district that have issues that are fairly urgent –

**Mr. LaVie:** Well fix it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I can tell you that the hon. member next to me has a got a school in his district –

**Mr. LaVie:** Fix it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – with an urgent issue.

**Mr. Myers:** He's get brand new schools (Indistinct).

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's not for me to go out there and say that we're going to fix this today and this one tomorrow, or whatever the case might be.

**Mr. Fox:** Why not? You're the minister.

**Mr. J. Brown:** There are organizations that are put there in place to arrange for that to happen, and they're doing their work.

This year, we spent a significant amount of money doing that. Next year, the amount will be more significant, and that amount will be set in place over the next five years, and we're happy to have had that increase and hopefully we can make some substantial steps toward dealing with some of the aging infrastructure that we currently have, particularly within the Public Schools Branch.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) back he'll fix it.

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

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

Can the minister call the Public Schools Branch tomorrow and tell them to just do this? I understand there's a process in place. We've got the budget there. Get the stuff done. They've let you know long ago, all these other schools are just as important. I know I'm talking about Mount Stewart because it's the one that's the most pressure in our area right now.

But I agree with you; there's schools all across. Do it. When it's – something's happening now, let's not wait.

You said the possibility of a year. Can you commit today that that's going to be done before the Christmas break?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Hon. member, I would remind you that we're dealing with a Capital Budgeting process here, so once we get this money allocated, we can then say to the Public Schools Branch you can go ahead and you can go out, I presume it will be a tender to have that work done.

The next thing would be they'd need to get somebody lined up to do the roof. We all know there's a lot of that kind of work going on around Prince Edward Island right now, and once that could happen, then we would go forward with it.

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

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

Minister, we're talking about next year's Capital Budget. It's in your Capital Budget this year to fix it. They've let you know this year. Why can't we fix it in this fiscal year? Are you telling me that we have to wait for this to get approved so we can spend it next year?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Waiting for it to freeze so that it doesn't leak anymore?

**Mr. LaVie:** Replacing the floor by then.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yes, thank you Madam Chair.

The answer to that question is that there is ongoing priorities related to Capital Expenditures to do repair projects. Hon. member, I would note to you that just as I look through a couple of them, at Morell Consolidated this year we spent \$71,688 replacing an oil tank.

**Mr. LaVie:** A roof is priority (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you for heating Morell school.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Well, Morell Regional High gym floor replacement, \$139,250 for it.

**Mr. Myers:** A gift from Brighton.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, you know –

**Mr. LaVie:** Got a leaky roof, he's talking about (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Hon. members, I can't hear the minister.

**Mr. J. Brown:** The priorities were set for it. We have \$550 million worth of schools on Prince Edward Island. That's a lot of infrastructure to keep in good shape, and we can all appreciate, we all have homes, we can appreciate that there are projects that need to be done on them, and we get them done as quickly as we possibly can to ensure

that the value that we have invested in that infrastructure is there for the long run.

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you.

I would hope that the effort to go into the announcement of the new Sherwood school this week, at least a portion of that effort, will be put into making these school fixes a priority.

I understand if something needs maintenance, something needs to be replaced, a piece of equipment that's not running properly, but we've got holes in the roof. That's what needs to be fixed now in all of these schools.

Will you please – what I'm hearing today is a year out. Can we commit to this year's budget to fixing that school?

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame, should not (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. member, again, I would point out you're very aware of the budgeting process here. The budget for this year has already been committed. We all went through the process of doing that this time last year, so the PSB will set out the priorities for this current year. I just mentioned some of them in your district, and the school that you have referenced is getting very close to the top of that list. As the budget permits for the current year and for the next year, that school will be dealt with in due course.

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

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

Minister, we've seen a special warrant done this year for increases in the French school up east. You just said that there's no more money left in the budget. Why can't we just say we're fixing it this year? You could find – don't give me that. You could find money for everything.

The Minister of Family and Human Services said a year ago said: Do you know what, we're going to do a grandparents' program within our mandate. Then six months later on October 19<sup>th</sup> we said, do you know what, we're going to do that within six months. And then recently, they worked hard and they got it done and it's done now.

I know we can make it happen with the stroke of a pen, whether it's the PSB or you. Can we get these leaky rooves fixed? I can't believe we're going to wait another year to fix a leaky roof with buckets on the floor.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Shame, shame.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would remind the hon. member again that it's the Public Schools Branch and the French Language Schools Branch –

**Leader of the Opposition:** You're the minister.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – that make the decisions –

**An Hon. Member:** Going after the school boards.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – as to how these resources are allocated. As far as priorities go, you've made reference to Sherwood school, which was built originally in 1956.

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah, a long time.

**Mr. J. Brown:** The process to have Sherwood school renewed probably began –

**Mr. Myers:** Is the current rule (Indistinct) –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – six or seven years ago.

**An Hon. Member:** There's buckets everywhere.

**Mr. J. Brown:** There are significant issues –

**Mr. LaVie:** Fix it.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – with Sherwood school. They need to be fixed. We can't do –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) shouldn't have to (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – a renovation there, so we're very happy to see new infrastructure being allocated to that population. We have addressed a number of other needs, in what I would say, is a very efficient way. We're doing renovations to add classrooms to three schools for less than the cost of a new school, which I think is a great investment of Prince Edward Islanders money.

And, as a matter of fact, hon. member, we're doing a renovation to a school in your district so that we can put an early years centre into that school –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and again, it's a very effective use of dollars down in that area. I can tell you that the PSB, in particular, has been excellent to work with us to determine where these dollars will be best spent, and we see that we have a great capital allocation for the next five years in terms of its magnitude and in terms of the impact that it will have for Prince Edward Islanders, and I'm very proud of that, hon. member.

But that takes a lot of work to determine where our priorities are, and there are a lot of other priorities that haven't made the list going forward that other communities would like to see dealt with, and it's a matter of trying to figure out what's needed right now, what makes the most sense. To do that in a logical way and the Public Schools Branch has done that, and the French Language School Board does that as well.

Thank you.

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

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

Minister, I want to leave with one final comment to those of us in here and those watching from the Mount Stewart and surrounding area.

There was a sink overflowed on the third floor of this building in the opposition office before, and it leaked down to the second floor where the Liberal caucus is.

That got fixed. That wasn't in a budget, and it got fixed.

**Mr. Myers:** The next day.

**Ms. Compton:** Immediately.

**Mr. MacEwen:** It got fixed. The Mount Stewart Consolidated School gym – we're talking about another year. That's disappointing. I want it done now. I want these other schools done now. If we can fix the leak in your ceiling, why can't we fix it in the Mount Stewart school gym's ceiling?

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Good question.

**Chair:** Do you have a response to that?

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** I do.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, Hon. member, while I expect that the fix that you're talking about probably falls within the transportation, infrastructure and energy budget, I would note – and this seems to be a big issue from across the floor – I expect that it was –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** We're talking about water and kids.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and operational expense to fix that and this is a Capital Budget expense. The two are very different. You're talking about a very small expenditure to fix that issue. We're talking about big dollars to replace a roof, and we need to look at those.

**Mr. Myers:** I saw it leaking (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – We're not putting Band-Aids on those kinds of things anymore. We're dealing with them in a way that we should be dealing with them. We're doing it logically. We're having the Public Schools Branch put priorities on things and we're working on them.

**Mr. Fox:** So you can't make the decision.

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

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

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

Just looking at the school construction and renovations and I notice there's quite a few different numbers of the five-year capital plan. I'm wondering what the \$21 million for next year's allocated towards.

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

**An Hon. Member:** Good question.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madame Chair.

So there'd be a number of different projects that would fall within that envelope for next year. In that would be included: the completion of Three Oaks Senior High; we would have the *École La-Belle-Cloche* completion; we would have some work on the Stratford additional classroom space; we would have some work on the L.M. Montgomery Elementary School additional classroom space; and the *École-sur-Mer* additional classroom space; and the Morell & Area Early Learning Centre project.

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

**Mr. Myers:** In 2019-2020, there's \$5.6 million. Can you tell me what that's allotted for?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madame Chair.

2019-2020 was the question?

**Mr. Myers:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Brown:** 2019-2020, there is a small clean-up piece related to the Three Oaks expansion; the Stratford additional classroom space would have an allocation in that time period; the L.M. additional classroom space would have an allocation in that time period; West Royalty will see the

addition of classrooms that will begin and there will be work in that time period; Sherwood Elementary will see some work in that time period; *École-sur-Mer* will see some work in that time period; and that looks like it'd be it.

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

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

So, the following year, 2020 and 2021: there's 14.997 million. Can you tell me what that's allotted to?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry. So you're asking about the 2019-2020 years and the 2020 and 2021 years?

**Mr. Myers:** I'm at the 2020-2021 now.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay.

Sorry. Can you repeat your question again? So, you want to know what money is being spent in 2021.

**Mr. Myers:** On the school construction and renovation; 14.9 million.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay. So 2021, we would see – bear with me a minute here – West Royalty additional classroom space; the Sherwood School replacement; and that would be it.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

So, what's the total envelope for the Sherwood school?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** The total envelope for Sherwood school is estimate to be \$19,244,000.

**An Hon. Member:** Wow.

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

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

So, \$19 million and you don't expect to open it until 2021, but you announced it during an election campaign. Is that the case?

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

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** It's part of the budget.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Was there a question in all that?

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) answer. (Indistinct) have an answer.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, I'm not sure what the question was, but the work on Sherwood school will be next year. There's a lot of work to be done, as the Member might be aware of. There's a planning committee that first has to be put in place to plan for the construction of a new school. That school in particular, they could not do a renovation and there's an issue with it –

**An Hon. Member:** Call the hour.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – in that –

**Chair:** The hour has been called.

Minister, I'm going to get you to read this in red.

**Mr. Roach:** Madame Speaker, I move the Speaker take the Chair and that the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

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

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration the grant of capital supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the Committee be adopted.

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

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

**Mr. McIsaac:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.

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

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