

# 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

Thursday, 23 November 2017

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS .....	315
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS .....	317
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Passing of Jack Sark) .....	317
SUMMERSIDE-WILMOT (Business Excellence Award for Young Millionaires Program) .....	318
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Purple Ribbon Campaign) .....	318
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (The Lobster Barn) .....	319
ORAL QUESTIONS .....	319
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Referendum and Election Act) .....	320
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Recommendations for change to Election Act) .....	320
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Public consultations and DR committee) .....	321
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Respect of current fixed election dates) .....	321
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Raising of taxes on Island small businesses) .....	321
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Letters to Bill Morneau) .....	323
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS (Raising of taxes on Island small businesses (further) .....	323
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Government relationships with Morneau Shepell) .....	324
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Taxpayers' dollars spent on Morneau Shepell services) .....	324
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Publicly tendered dollars to Morneau Shepell) .....	325
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Dollars paid to Morneau Shepell for advice on pension cuts) .....	325
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Former finance minister working for Morneau Shepell) .....	326
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER (Review of former minister to ethics commissioner) .....	327
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Occupational health and safety inspections in food processing plants) .....	327
LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY (Exemptions for farm workers) .....	328
WEST ROYALTY-SPRINGVALE (Locating defibrillators in public places) .....	328
WEST ROYALTY-SPRINGVALE (No mandatory requirement for defibrillators in sporting facilities) .....	329
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Access to post-secondary education) .....	329
TIGNISH-PALMER ROAD (Parental contribution requirements for student loan assessments) .....	330
BORDEN-KINKORA (Expensed night in hotel) .....	331
BORDEN-KINKORA (Failure to post expenses of departments) .....	333
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS .....	334
HEALTH AND WELLNESS (Universal Influenza Immunization Program) .....	334

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM (Tourism Industry Reaches New Heights in 2017).....	335
COMMUNITIES, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT (Water Act).....	336
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS.....	338
INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT BILLS .....	339
BILL 13 – Water Act.....	339
MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT.....	339
PRIVATE MEMBERS BILL .....	339
BILL 100 – An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act.....	339
SECOND READING AND COMMITTEE .....	393
BILL 101 – An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, Bill No.101 .....	340
MOTION 9 – Calling for the PEI Legislature to show its support for proposed new federal tax changes .....	357
GEORGETOWN-ST. PETERS .....	357
BELFAST-MURRAY RIVER .....	361
ORDERS OF THE DAY (GOVERNMENT) .....	362
COMMITTEE .....	363
CAPITAL ESTIMATES .....	363
ADJOURNED.....	392

The Legislature met at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests

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

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

I want to welcome all you in the gallery – Eddie Lund; John Ployer, a former Page here and anyone else – and those who be watching via the Internet or whatever – special shout-out to the great district of Vernon River-Stratford.

The day started off with a wallop with that snow, but it's a little recognition of what's coming down the road. We lost school my way for the day. Things are shut down in Montague as well. Things are really good now – we, as well today, have the pleasure of having the Prime Minister in the province, which is absolutely great and our Premier has the opportunity to thank him after his speech and Question Period, so that's great.

I want to wish everyone a great day here in the Legislature.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, always a pleasure for me to rise here in the House today and as the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries alluded to, the Prime Minister is in town today. I believe he arrived last night and that could be what the cause of the big wind was last night. I'm not sure.

I'd also like to recognize a couple of individuals that have joined us here in the gallery today. Bobby Gillis is joining us in the back row of the gallery. It's always great to see you, AKA Maple Leaf Bob.

Of course we have two individuals – they didn't want to be named here today, but they're taking up the front row and they're very, very important individuals within our PEI PC Youth organization. So, I welcome you here today.

I just want to remind everyone: after the experience that we did have this morning with the road conditions – that's only the first of what's potentially to come here throughout the next few months. I remind everybody to slow down, drive according to the road conditions, and stay safe out there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm sharing Islanders' excitement in having a national leader here on our Island today and I'm going out to meet Elizabeth May later tonight.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Welcome everybody in the gallery and the former Pages, of course. Eddie Lund, people of District 16.

I had the opportunity today to speak to the tourism industry's AGM at the Delta. I can tell you the enthusiasm that was in that room was fantastic. We're closing in on our one million overnight stays.

I also wanted to recognize the Premier's award last night. I know he spoke of it yesterday from Pat, and the late Erskine Smith, and daughter Emily, and son Jon, who's also involved in Victoria. Essentially, Victoria's a great place that's really advanced itself over the years in the tourism industry and it was just recently the Lobster Barn – their lobster roll was just recently mentioned in *Fedora*, which we were

recognized world-wide with. So, I just want to do a little shout-out to Victoria and kudos to them for making such a great destination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'd like to recognize Najam Chishti of Charlottetown, who was recently named one of the top 25 immigrants in the Maritimes for his community service and leadership. Mr. Chishti grew up in Karachi, Pakistan before eventually moving to Charlottetown in 1979 and has volunteered his time to organizations like Canadian Parents for French, PEI table tennis, the Muslim Society of PEI, and the PEI Multicultural Council.

While I'm on my feet, I'd also like to congratulate a constituent, Adam Brazier for the fantastic work that he did coordinating things at the Confederation Centre today – he's the artistic director there; also, the Young Company, and in particular, Nadine Haddad for the performance that they had there today at that event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise today and welcome everyone to the gallery and those that are following along at home.

I'll give a shout-out to John Ployer, who is not only a constituent of mine, but he is a neighbor to my mom and dad. I know his mom well, I knew his dad really well – his grandparents. I remember his great-grandfather, John. When I was a kid, I remember him baling hay in the field next to me and I watched with great amazement. His grandmother Marion used to have me down to have cookies there one time, so when I was very little I used to walk down

through the fields to get cookies during the day. Nobody feeds me cookies anymore, so I guess that's why I look back on that so fondly. Nobody offers me cookies anymore.

Last night, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting for late emersion in the Montague family of schools. There was good attendance there and there were representatives from the school board and from the department who gave a presentation and talked about the next steps; great engaged group of parents out there looking to make this happen.

Anybody who is following along at home that's interested in late emersion and you're in the Montague family of schools, there is a deadline, I think, of December 6<sup>th</sup> to fill out a form to at least show the department that you're interested for next year.

If you have a child in grade 6 who's interested in exploring the options for late emersion in the Montague families next year, the cutoff is December 6<sup>th</sup>, and they're looking to get 25 to kind of get this started. It's not a full commitment; it's a commitment that you will explore this a little bit further and let them talk to you and tell you what it would look like so you can make a decision later.

So, anybody who's interested in that, you can actually call the Montague Intermediate School to get that information.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I welcome everyone back today, especially those in the gallery. I'd like to say hello to everyone back in Souris-Elmira, District 1

There's one individual I'd like to say hello to, it's Ben MacDonald. Actually, Ben is with the Central Kings Fire Department, the deputy chief, and this morning we had a call around 7:00 a.m. in our district, but our district has mutual aid with Central Kings, and while the work is being done on the bridge in Fortune, Central Kings is covering

the other side of the bridge for us, so it worked out perfectly. They were dispatched at the same time we were, and Central Kings covered that call for us this morning as we were en route.

I'd like to give a big shout out to all the resident care workers here on PEI, the hard work that resident care workers do. There's one resident care worker I really want to give a shout out to, and that's my daughter Natasha. She works out at the Prince Edward Home, and Natasha was nominated for Excellence in Person-Centered Care, and it's a good nominee. Natasha's great at her work. She gives a tour of the facility out there, and she works in the brain injury department. You got to be a special person to work with these people, and Natasha is a special person, and I know that in my heart, and a big congratulations to Natasha and I wish her luck in her nominee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise in the House and welcome all the colleagues, everyone watching from District 18 Rustico-Emerald, and of course everyone here in the gallery. It's great to see you. I know John Ployer; he's a friend of mine, and also a great 4-H'er, and I believe he was a winner at the Dundas Plowing Match this year, as well. He was showing off his plowing skills, so congratulations on that.

I was able to attend the Symons Lecture today, and it was a great delivery of a speech today. Sometimes I may not have 100% agreed with the content, but some I did agree with was really, I believe, that our prime minister made a great case for a universal basic income. I think if the Minister of Family and Human Services and the Premier worked just a little bit harder, they might be able to get that funding we need so much here on the Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It certainly is a pleasure to rise and welcome all into our public gallery today. Eddie Lund is back. It's always great to see Eddie. But another friend of mine's in the gallery today, Ben MacDonald, and it's good to have Ben in. Ben usually tries to make a visit in at least once or twice a sitting, so it's great to have him in. Ben's background in our wind energy on Prince Edward Island has proved us well over many years, and I'm sure you're checking out those windmills today. They were probably shut down because of this high wind. That's the case when winds get that high. It's best to have them not spinning and causing less problems for everyone.

Also, too, I want to say hello to all residents of my wonderful District of Charlottetown-Sherwood. A couple of days ago I mentioned how busy everybody was out getting their Christmas decorations and how good it was looking, and unfortunately because of that wind, a lot of my neighbours have their things all strewn all over the yards today. I wish them well in getting it all back up and in the air and on the trees where they had it a few days ago, and I'll try to get my own done this weekend myself, Mr. Speaker.

#### Statements by Members

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

#### **Passing of Jack Sark**

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

I stand today to commemorate and acknowledge the passing of a significant Islander and leader, Jack Sark.

Jack Sark served as the Lennox Island First Nations Chief for 26 years, from 1972-1998. Lennox Island is the home of the Lennox Island First Nations, of the Mi'kmaq people. Jack was instrumental in the development of a number of new programs for his community that continue to benefit residents

today. That will leave a lasting legacy of his leadership for future generations.

Thanks to his determination and passion, the community established the John J. Sark Memorial Elementary School. This was one of Jack's most significant contributions, as a school was needed after a fire destroyed the previous one. He was equally passionate about the areas of health care and agriculture. He was a great leader, advocating tirelessly for the members of his community and breaking ground in ways that may not have happened had it not been for his leadership.

Jack Sark paved the way for Lennox Island's continued success and sadly, on September the 27<sup>th</sup> of this year, at the age of 83, he passed away. His contributions extend far beyond Lennox Island, in particular to my community of Tignish, as he had a home there. I grew up with his boys and saw how active Jack was within our community. He not only contributed greatly to Lennox Island, but his legacy will continue to be felt in West Prince and, indeed, all of Prince Edward Island.

I would like to recognize his contributions to the Lennox Island community and to Prince Edward Island. He will be remembered as a great Canadian, a great Prince Edward Islander, and most of all, an extraordinary Lennox Island leader.

Thank you.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

### **Business Excellence Award for Young Millionaires Program**

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

I am pleased to stand in the House to congratulate a young Summerside community member, Isaac MacLean on being awarded the business excellence award for the Young Millionaires Program.

The Young Millionaires Program is a summer business and entrepreneurship program for youth aged eight to 16. The program is designed to assist youth in

discovering more about the world of business and help them get started in a business of their own.

Isaac MacLean took part in the Young Millionaires Program this past summer, and he decided to put his artistic talent to use by selling watercolour paintings of Prince Edward Island scenes. The paintings were available in bookmarks, various sized canvases, and post cards. He's continuing his business by selling at craft fairs this fall.

The excellence award was presented at the Summerside Chamber of Commerce breakfast in October, and is awarded to a young entrepreneur who overcame obstacles; has shown personal growth; has reached their goals; has shown creativity in their product; has demonstrated excellent communications with their customers; and has found a product worth developing.

Isaac's hard work was easy to see and there is no question that he is a well-deserving recipient of this award. It is fantastic to see the youth in our community thriving in business and learning skills early on that will help them succeed as future entrepreneurs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Purple Ribbon Campaign**

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

November the 25<sup>th</sup> is International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the official launch of the Purple Ribbon Campaign.

The Purple Ribbon Campaign against violence was initiated by the PEI Advisory Council for the Status of Women in 1999 to remember the 14 women who were murdered at *L'École Polytechnique* in Montreal on December the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1989, and to raise awareness about violence against women.

The theme for this year's Purple Ribbon Campaign is: Don't stand by, stand with. Everyone has a part to play in preventing violence against women. We all need to be a voice against bullying, abuse, racism, physical, emotional and verbal abuse and violence. Collectively, we must become conscious of our own offhand comments and start to realize that our words, sometimes meant to be funny, actually hurt and sometimes degrade individuals or promote racist attitudes.

A better, less violent world, a more respectful and tolerant world, can start with you and I, and everyone in this Legislative Assembly. I would note that the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women has been responding to the *Globe and Mail's* research regarding sexual assaults. Many women do not report these violent crimes because they are not being believed.

PEI was shown as having one of the highest percentages of unfounded cases in all of Canada.

We need to do better to support men and women who have been victims of sexual abuse and assault, and to assure that action is taken against their abusers.

It is a small thing to ask to show that we stand for the elimination of all kinds of violence in our society today. I would simply ask that we proudly wear our purple ribbons and be ready to tell those who might ask that we stand against violence.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Lobster Barn**

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

Many small businesses on PEI depend on the short, frantic burst of activity that is summer on the Island, particularly the numerous restaurants scattered throughout our tourist destinations.

In District 17, Victoria by the Sea is an increasingly strong magnet for the thousands of people who flock to PEI, and perhaps there's no other community on our Island that's more transformed in the summer season than Victoria by the Sea.

The Landmark Café, over 20 years in operation by the Sauvé family, has rightly earned its reputation as a favourite eating place, for both tourists and locals, and the chocolate factory and Beachcombers restaurants also have their devoted followers.

But this afternoon, I want to shine a light on a relative newcomer to the culinary family in Victoria, the Lobster Barn. Situated on the wharf, this eatery is owned and operated by twins Jackie and Jenny Myers.

For eight years, they have established their reputation for serving tasty food in a casual and warm atmosphere. I lost count of the number of times that my wife Anna and I were out walking our dogs on the beach with a thought that we would go and enjoy a meal at the barn, only to look up and see a lineup stretching far out onto the wharf. We learned that if you want to get a seat in the Lobster Barn, you have to make a reservation, and that's as true at the end of October as it is in the middle of July.

Bob Gray, a food writer for *The Guardian* said this about the lobster barn: Good food, good value, good service, and good fun; and that pretty much sums up this special place, and also explains why it has risen to be at, or near, the top of the rankings of the best places to eat on PEI.

So, to Jenny and Jackie, enjoy a bit of down time during the quiet months, and here's to your past success and to many more years of great fun and food in the Lobster Barn.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

### Questions by Members

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

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

As we've all heard, a referendum on electoral reform will be held alongside the next provincial general election, which is scheduled to take place in October of 2019.

### **Referendum and *Election Act***

A question to the Premier: Do you plan to hold this referendum under the *Election Act* as it is currently written?

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

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

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

The Premier did address this the other day. We do plan to have a referendum. It will be in conjunction with the next provincial election, and the whole idea of it will be debated here in the House before we go forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Recommendations for change to *Election Act***

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

The 2015 report of the Chief Electoral Officer noted that the *Election Act* has not seen any substantial changes in nearly a quarter of a century, and that report contained 44 recommendations for changes to be made to the act.

Again, a question to the Premier: How many of those 44 recommendations have been implemented so far?

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

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

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

We hope to have a good debate on this whole topic coming into the New Year and the spring session. We'll deal with many of those issues at that time with a great debate from all three sides of the House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I don't believe, and the gentleman across just more or less confirmed, that these proposed changes have not been referred to the legislative committee for public input, nor have any of the 44 recommendations been put in place yet.

So, again, a question to the Premier: Will any of these 44 recommended changes be made before the next election in October of 2019?

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

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

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

I believe we're going to have a great debate on this whole topic. I think it's very important, very interesting to all the people across the province. They expect those results to come from this House from all three parties and beginning in the New Year, we'll deal with whatever issues it may be, so that when it comes to the next provincial election, this will be a ballot question that everyone across the province will have a say in.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, neither the *Election Act*, nor the elections financing act have been modernized in many, many years. New legislation for the referendum will also be needed.

#### **Public consultations and DR committee**

Again, question to the Premier: Will the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal be leading the public consultations on these laws that need updating before the next election, which is to be held in October of 2019?

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

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

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

Again, the promise and commitment was made that we would have this debate in the Legislature, we would have the question asked at the next election. If there are changes needed to legislation, I'm sure they can be made before that time. We introduce legislation here every session – gets passed in the session, goes forward as law. If there's need to be changes in that area, I'm sure they will be looked at, brought forward, and dealt with by all parties of the Legislature.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I was referring to public consultations and not just debate here in the House, so it sounds like there's not going to be any public discussion.

Under the provinces' fixed election date, Islanders will be going to the polls in October, 2019, but Islanders have already seen this Premier disregard our fixed

election date laws when it suits his political agenda and interest.

With all the work piling up: referendum legislation, updating the *Election Act* and the election financing act, it's important to have all of these pieces in place before Islanders go to the polls.

#### **Respect of current fixed election dates**

Question to the Premier: Will you commit to respect the current fixed election dates of October, 2019 to allow proper time to let Islanders have their say on these very important democratic reforms before you send Islanders to the polls?

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

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

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

I can assure you I'll not be sending anybody to the polls, that's for sure. But we will state very emphatically: we are going to have a debate on this issue. It's going to be dealt with here. People will have their say. I know when I'm at Tim Hortons in Stratford, we discuss lots of issues. This is one of them. People do want to know what's going on; they want to know what we'll be debating; they want to know what the question will be; and long before the election is held, that decision will be made. Everyone in this House will have an opportunity to help in what that decision may be and what the question may be as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### **Raising of taxes on Island small businesses**

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

A question to the Premier: Why were you so afraid to take a stand with the federal government over their plans to raise taxes on Island small businesses?

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

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

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

In this province we've had the opportunity to hear from lots of businesses. I've attended a number of meetings myself and I, myself, have spoken to a number of businesses and heard the concerns and certainly heard the concerns that were shared with me from other MLAs in this Legislature.

We support some of the concerns that the Island businesses have and we have sent a letter to the minister of finance – Minister Morneau in Ottawa.

Thank you.

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

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

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

So it's great to hear that we're sending letters in lieu of picking up the phone, or phoning them, or maybe talking to the Prime Minister when he's in town, or any other opportunity that you could have to actually show Ottawa that you're not pleased with them calling Island businesses 'tax cheats'.

When my colleague from Belfast-Murray River here raised the issue, Premier's response was that it was a federal matter and he washed his hands of it.

Question to the Premier: Why was your first instinct to leave Island businesses, farmers, and health professionals twisting in the wind to fend for themselves?

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

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

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

As all Islanders, we listened to the announcement that was made. It is a federal tax, it's not a provincial tax and even around our caucus table we had concerns with what's in there and we have raised that with

the minister of finance. In fact, in the next few weeks I will be meeting with the minister of finance myself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

When we tried to have this tax-grab brought before committee, the government MLAs tried to run interference. The education minister tried to interfere with bringing people forward, the Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point tried to interfere with bringing people forward.

Question to the Premier: Did you order your MLAs and try to prevent this issue from making it to committee because you weren't interested in it?

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

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

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

If I recall, the federal government ran consultations across the country on this and that they did continue. It's my understanding that the federal government has said that they will relook at this and they will extend the date on it.

I think this is probably most appropriate place, right here in this Legislature, to have a discussion and a debate on this.

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

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

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

We've heard from the finance minister that that he's only now just planning to go to Ottawa to talk to the finance minister – maybe it's a job interview, what do we know? Nobody has gone to date. It's been such a long period.

Do you know what? I give credit to the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park. He was down when the Charlottetown chamber met about this issue. He showed his face. Not a single cabinet minister came down to support the Island businesses who were being called 'tax-cheats' by the Prime Minister and Bill Morneau.

Government's attempt to keep this issue from the committee predictably failed and we heard from a very informative and relative accountant here in Charlottetown who said that this was basically a tax-grab and it was going to hurt Island businesses.

Question to the Premier: Were you just trying to avoid trying to have to take a stand against Ottawa for Islanders?

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

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

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

was really please to be able to attend that meeting with the Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce and, as a matter of fact, I was sitting directly behind the Member from Belfast-Murray River during the entire session. I did have the opportunity on that day to hear from many businesses and I took their concerns to heart. With respect to the meeting with the federal minister, Minister Morneau, those meetings are planned well in advance. That meeting with him was probably planned back at least a month and a half, maybe two months, ago.

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

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

### Letters to Bill Morneau

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

Island taxpayers are getting really sick of this government not standing up to the Prime Minister and Bill Morneau. There used to be a time when Island governments went to Ottawa and fought for Islanders. You guys just seem to be going along with whatever you're told to do. It's embarrassing.

Obviously the Premier didn't want to rock the boat with his Ottawa friends and their attempt to tax grab. He actually wrote two letters to Bill Morneau: one was an extremely soft one and the second one was a moderately soft one.

Question to the Premier: Why did it take you two letters to try to get your point across to Bill Morneau?

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

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

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

I think it's tremendous that the Premier did send two letters and I think that shows that this government is interested. We're very concerned. Our Island businesses have done extremely well over the last number of years. They're growing, they're doing well, we've supported them through this growth period, and we'll continue to support them. We'll support them at the table when it comes tax talks in Ottawa.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So the finance minister wants to take all the answers on this file, I'll ask a question to the finance minister.

### Raising of taxes on Island small businesses (further)

Question to the finance minister: How much money did you stand to gain by Justin Trudeau and Bill Morneau's greedy tax-grab from Island businesses?

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

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

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

I would remind the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that this is not

finalized by any means. There are still a lot of discussions that are taking place. We have not, nor are we going to, start putting any kind of a value on a tax bill that doesn't exist yet.

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

**An Hon. Member:** Good.

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

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

It's funny you can put phantom numbers around a fibre optic network that you have no idea how much it's going to cost to build. Phantom numbers are okay when you're giving phantom numbers. You can't give phantom numbers that matter to Islanders. There's a reason why you didn't go to Ottawa and stand up for Island businesses. It's because you guys need the money. You guys can't get control your own spending, so you need the money. You're desperate to get the money so you won't stand up for Islanders because you stand to fill your own pockets with money.

Question to the finance minister: Will you admit to the House today that the reason why you don't stand up for Island businesses is because you, yourself, stand to gain from it?

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

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

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

I think we all heard that question. No. My answer to that question is: No.

We have worked extremely hard with Island businesses. We work well with them from tip to tip on this Island. That's how we've grown our economy here. That's why we're doing so well in moving forward as an Island. That's where we get our dollars to be able to reinvest, and there's no false numbers or phantom numbers around here. I assure you of that.

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

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

### **Government relationships with Morneau Shepell**

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

Question to the finance minister: How many departments or agencies of government currently have ongoing business relationships with Morneau Shepell?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) job interview too?

**Mr. Roach:** Mr. Speaker, I don't have the answer to that, but I'd be more than willing to check within our departments that may have some sort of contact with that service. I'll ask that question and bring it back.

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

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

### **Taxpayers' dollars spent on Morneau Shepell services**

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

Morneau Shepell is a leading, national HR firm and the family business of the federal finance minister.

Question to the finance minister of PEI: Would you happen to know how much Island taxpayers have spent on services from Morneau Shepell?

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

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

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

I have not talked to each and every one of the departments in PEI, but I'd certainly be willing to go back through my finance department to look at what services may be provided and bring that back to the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'll save the finance minister that work. According to written questions between 2009 and 2017, Island taxpayers have spent at least \$1.1 million to Morneau Shepell.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Publicly tendered dollars to Morneau Shepell**

**Ms. Compton:** That's what we paid to them.

Question to the finance minister: Was there \$1 of that 1.1 million paid to Morneau Shepell publicly tendered?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

I know that there is a process in place, but particularly when it comes to – and I don't know what the business is, I've never sat down and read that – I know that there is a process that takes place, whether it's investments of some of our investments, or whether it's our pension programs, but that's something that certainly would follow a process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Not one penny of that money was tendered.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Ms. Compton:** One of Morneau Shepell's specialties is pensions. In fact, Morneau Shepell was Wes Sheridan's main advisor when your government cut the pensions of current and retired public servants and teachers.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Dollars paid to Morneau Shepell for advice on pension cuts**

**Ms. Compton:** Question to the finance minister: How much did your government pay Morneau Shepell for advice on how to cut the pensions of current and retired public servants and teachers?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

I know that when it comes to our pension, that they are run by an independent advisory board and I would have to go back to my department and –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – look at perhaps, some of the notes that came out of those meetings –

**Mr. Myers:** I see nothing (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – and see what would apply and what I could bring back to this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Well, no answer. I can share with you. Between 2011 and 2014, Morneau Shepell was paid \$477,779 by this government, by your government, so it looks like the business of cutting pensions pays well.

Question to the finance minister: After you paid Morneau Shepell all of that money to

help you cut pensions, shouldn't their bill have gone down?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** I know that I didn't have any direct involvement in that file at that time, but I don't know and I don't necessarily agree with the assertion of the Member from Belfast-Murray River that it was all about the pensions being cut. It's my impression, from what my memory recalls at that time, it was about ensuring that our pensions –

**Mr. Myers:** Now he remembers.

**Mr. Roach:** – were solid and stable in the future.

**Mr. Myers:** You can't remember, can't remember.

**Mr. Roach:** Regardless of the market and how that market may fluctuate, my recall on that is that the pensions today are doing very well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Again, according to responses to written questions that you gave the House, the biggest single payment to Morneau Shepell came during the 2014-2015 fiscal year when Wes Sheridan and the Premier were finance minister; over \$500,000.

What work did they do for government that cost \$524,086 for 2014-2015?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** Don't worry. We know where that money went.

**Mr. Roach:** During those years, I was a minister of a separate portfolio. But, as I said earlier, I will return, talk to my staff, and see what information on that I can bring back to this Legislature –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** Calling the house doctor.

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

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

In Wes Sheridan's last year as finance minister, your government paid Morneau Shepell over \$500,000 and six months later, Sheridan is working for Morneau Shepell.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Ms. Compton:** Quite a timely coincidence.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Former finance minister working for Morneau Shepell**

**Ms. Compton:** Question to the finance minister: Did this cozy arrangement raise any red flags for you, or did the Premier say: This was money well spent and let's just go with it.

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

I've had no conversation with the former minister about when he was going to leave politics or when he was going to retire but, if I recall correctly, any MLA that leaves this

Legislature, I believe it's in the agreement that they are not allowed to take any kind of a job or placement –

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, half a million dollars will last six months.

**Mr. Roach:** – with any business or with any company until six months elapse –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) in the safe until he got there.

**Mr. Roach:** – and then they're allowed to move on and take whatever –

**Mr. Myers:** He just put it in the safe until he got (Indistinct)

**Mr. Roach:** – appointment they want after that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

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

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

In media interviews, after landing his new job, Wes Sheridan credited the work he did with Morneau Shepell on cutting public sector pensions with giving him the experience needed to pursue a private sector career with Morneau Shepell; experience bought and paid for by Island taxpayers in untendered contracts and pension cuts.

#### **Review of former minister to ethics commissioner**

Question to the finance minister: In light of this cozy relationship, and Wes Sheridan's conduct on the e-gaming scandal, did you refer any of these matters to the Premier or the ethics commissioner for further review?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

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

I'm not prepared to comment on any comments that a former minister has made after they left this Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### **Occupational health and safety inspections in food processing plants**

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

A question to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Given that farm workers are exempt from the protections of virtually all other workers received under the *Employment Standards Act*, does the minister agree that occupational health and safety inspections are critically important to protect the wellbeing of farm workers?

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

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

The safety of our farm workers is of utmost importance. I think we have, in our agriculture community as well as in our fisheries community, employers who are very conscious of that. We need the workers there. We encourage anyone who wants to get a job in agriculture; it is a growing area, as is the fishery, and safety in the workplace is of utmost importance.

Thank you very much, 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.

I have to agree with the minister. But it's come to our attention that certain large food processors on the Island receive advanced notice of occupational health and safety inspections, allowing them to prepare for it, essentially to cheat inspections.

When will this government end this practice and bring in random and unannounced inspections?

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

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

I'm a little thrown off by that type of comment. I've never heard of any cheating such as that. We're very conscious of the need to have worker safety. We've involved worker's compensation with the workers since that time, and that's proof of the point right there.

If you can bring forward some of the comments, proof of what you're saying, we'll certainly check it out, that's for sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### Exemptions for farm workers

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

The main reason for exempting farm workers from normal protections is to accommodate small family farms, but the blanket exemption that we have on PEI is used by large operations as well.

Other provinces have found ways to accommodate small farms without the blanket exemption on all farm workers that we have here. New Brunswick, for example, limits the exemption to small farms with three or fewer employees.

Why is this government still allowing large agricultural operations to avoid providing the same working standards for their workers as are guaranteed to other workers on PEI and other parts of Canada?

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

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

I know we work with the federation, with different farm groups, and we brought – worked with the Workers Compensation Board to meet with farm groups, farm organizations, and farmers themselves to make sure that their employees are covered under workers compensation.

A lot of them were covered under WCB before, but now it is in place for that, and we think that's very important, because again, we find the labour force needs to be covered, and we think this, the workers compensation piece, is a strong piece for that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### Locating defibrillators in public places

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

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Emergency health situations can be very scary for bystanders witnessing someone in distress or in need of medical assistance. Time is of the essence in these situations, and there is a need to act fast.

In order to expedite health in the case for heart attack or stroke, the first step is to locate a defibrillator to provide a quick response.

Minister: Is your department close to offering a defibrillator registry that could assist in locating the nearest AED in such situations?

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

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

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

As the hon. member has been a big advocate for many topics and issues pertaining to health care, he is correct in saying that our department is in the process of developing an automated external defibrillator registry,

and we have now purchased the software to put information into that, and we will be sending out letters to municipalities and sporting and recreation facilities across this Island to see if they would like to volunteer to add their particular defibrillator to the registry, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your first supplementary.

### **No mandatory requirement for defibrillators in sporting facilities**

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

Minister, community rinks are important locations for these AEDs. Can you tell the House if these community rinks are required to have these defibrillators?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, there are many defibrillators out there across this province, and we have actually had programs to allow some support for defibrillators, especially in recreational sporting facilities. There's not a mandatory requirement to have that from our government perspective, but once we do know that there a lot of sporting facilities that do have these defibrillators, and we want to make sure we have a registry and that we can identify where these locations are for these particular defibrillators, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, your second supplementary question.

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

Can the minister inform the House if all of the emergency staff and dispatchers have completed the enhanced training for EMD protocol?

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

**Mr. Henderson:** Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity, probably about a month ago, to go out to our Island EMS headquarters and dispatch location and take a look at some of the issues that are pertaining to AEDs and the protocol for when a 911 call comes in, and yes we have now – all our staff are trained at Island EMS, as well as a number of Health PEI staff are trained in this and operational, but we have to wait until we get the map.

So all the protocols are in place to handle the response of that nature, but we just now have to have the map so we can accurately make sure that those Island EMS staff can dispatch where the information to where these AEDs are located.

**An Hon. Member:** That's good.

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

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

### **Access to post-secondary education**

**Mr. Perry:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that getting a postsecondary diploma or degree is more important now than ever. As MLAs, we have a responsibility to ensure we are making higher learning as accessible as possible for our youth by removing barriers.

My question is to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: What is your department doing to ensure that all Islanders have equal access, or have access to, postsecondary education?

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

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

Thank you very much for the question, hon. member. I'd certainly like to inform this House that the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning is doing all they can for students to achieve in the secondary education.

We've done many programs and we've put out \$30 million in provincial and federal student loans. With the help of, and the

lobbying of, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road we initiated the Career Connect this year, which is very useful for students to help them reduce their loans to get an education. We came out with some programs called Team Seafood, Team Construction, and Team Youth Trucking which provide a bursary after these students have finished this during the summer months, and it's great for the industries, and it helps them get a feel if that's what they'd like to do into the future.

We also have the Graduate Mentorship Program, and I got an email from an individual just a couple of weeks ago thanking our department for what a great help that was, and she got fulltime work in that in her career of studies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your first supplementary.

#### **Parental contribution requirements for student loan assessments**

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

I want to thank the minister for that, and I know, speaking with many parents and students across the Island, they're very appreciative of what this government is doing to help them with their postsecondary education.

However, you did mention one of the barriers, and that was student loans, and the existing barrier, in fact, with student loans is when the students are applying, the income of their parents is taken into consideration, and whether that's willingness to pay, or if they're not even able to financially contribute to their child's education. I know it's been a priority of the student unions here on PEI, and they've mentioned that this barrier still remains.

Will the minister consider eliminating the provincial portion of the student loan assessment that takes into consideration parental income and the expected contribution from parents?

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

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

Hon. member, to your question, there's many things that we do, as I had indicated earlier, and we do talk with the other provinces and our federal counterparts, and we have been able to come up with some things to help students, like there's the one-year relief after they graduate to pay back their student loan, and only about 25% of students need parental assistance, and out of those, 17% require only about \$1,000 from their parents, so I mean this is something that our department can certainly look at, but at this point we're just looking at it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, your second supplementary question.

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

I thank you, minister. But we want to make it accessible to all Island students.

New Brunswick has recently removed the parental contribution requirement for their provincial portion for student loans, and I think we should follow New Brunswick's lead on this.

Additionally, I want to ask if you will speak to your federal counterpart about moving this from the portion of the federal assessment for student loans.

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

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

To the answer to your question, it's certainly something we can talk about, but let me remind this House that enrollment at UPEI and Holland College are up considerably this year. UPEI has the second-lowest tuition in Atlantic Canada, and as I said earlier, we've done what we can for default in payments to help our students.

So anything we can do to help students get an education, we'll do our best.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### **Expensed night in hotel**

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

I'm so glad the Premier could join us this afternoon.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh.

**Mr. Fox:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's expenses from last month were posted on the website yesterday.

Premier: Why did you expense to the taxpayers of PEI a night-stay for a wedding reception in New Brunswick?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I was in Moncton the previous night to make a speech to the Atlantic Political Science Association and, indeed, I'll note that I didn't charge for the bridge for that trip and the further night, the Saturday night, was the wedding of the Premier of New Brunswick and my view, Mr. Speaker, was that I was invited because I was the Premier of Prince Edward Island. It actually didn't end up costing that much – it was about \$120 or \$130.

**Mr. Myers:** Not much to you.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I was there in my capacity as Premier.

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

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

Well I can tell you, that money means a lot to Islanders.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier billed Islanders to stay at a fancy inn, which bills itself as a private, fully equipped vacation resort.

**Mr. Myers:** Oh.

**Mr. Fox:** At a time when Islanders are asking for affordable housing. The Premier's billing taxpayers to attend a wedding reception.

Question to the Premier: Why did you bill this expense?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Part of the work of Premier –

**Mr. Myers:** I am entitled and entitled to my entitlements.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – part of the work of Premier is, indeed, is to have relations with other governments. Indeed, I spent quite a bit of time today with the Prime Minister and I think that's something that will be to the benefit –

**Mr. Myers:** Couldn't afford a hundred bucks.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – over time to the Province of Prince Edward Island and we have very good relations with the other provinces in this region and we work together. Mr. Speaker, that was the case. I will say that my expenses for everything that's being talked about here; personal expenses, travel, is about less than a half compared to what you would find if you compared for the previous 10 years to when I became Premier.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Fox:** We have over 150 Islanders waiting for long care nursing beds. This government refused to act on this critical situation. Meanwhile, we have the Premier who's expensing a wedding weekend stay at a fancy resort.

Question to the Premier: Why did you expense this?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, that was an opportunity to be there and I believed at the time, and I still believe, that I was invited in my capacity as Premier –

**Mr. Myers:** Why? Because he doesn't like you personally?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and I invite all hon. members – they're obviously looking very closely every time I expense something – I'd be interested to see what the total was for that month or the month before for my travel, but I think you'll probably find I'm the cheapest and the most parsimonious Premier that's ever served in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well, we have schools across PEI with leaky roofs, resorting to buckets and towels on the floor – no money to fix them, according to the minister, but the Premier bills us for a wedding reception.

Why did you bill this expense?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure it was as recently as last Friday that the opposition was saying we were spending too much in the Capital Budget, although I will note that it's the biggest number we've seen for education in the Capital Budget in a very long time. For those investments, and for the maintenance, and for the work that we're doing to keep up schools in all parts of our province and we're proud of that.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Heard that for three elections now.

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

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

Since this Premier took office, Island children have been waiting years and years to see a child psychologist, yet the Premier bills us for personal wedding trips.

Why did you bill this expense?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, since the same question has been asked four times, I'll add something that might be of interest to the hon. member opposite: I hitchhike from Moncton to St. Andrews that day. I was very happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** I'm not sure if he thinks it's a joke to him or –

**Mr. Fox:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't actually believe that the Premier thinks this is a joke, because it's not a joke. We're talking about taxpayers' money. We're talking about a Premier who made a quote: We're running a very tight ship and a responsible ship – Premier Wade MacLauchlan, 2016.

We continue to take the Premier to task for failing to recognize poverty across PEI and take action, and instead the Premier drives through the province – according to him, he hitchhiked – on his way to a wedding weekend at a fancy resort.

A question to the Premier: Why did you bill this expense?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, let me add further on the point of our fiscal management, or our approach to both the revenues and the expenses in our stewardship as government. The Minister of Finance produced yesterday the second quarter report that showed that, indeed, our surplus is up modestly and that we're using

those resources for the needs of Islanders, and previously produced through the blue books a report that our deficit is very small for the previous year, and we're proud of that and we're doing a good job of running the affairs of this province.

Thank you.

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

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

**Mr. Fox:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a simple question: If this was your cousin's wedding, would you expense that?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**An Hon. Member:** It wasn't.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I often remind the premier of New Brunswick that his earliest ancestor, Michelle Gallant-Haché did indeed live and is buried at Rocky Point, but to the best of my knowledge, we're not cousins, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Premier MacLauchlan:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Well, when we caught the Premier on his first-class train trip last year, he said – again I will state it – we are running a very tight and responsible ship.

Yet, questionable expenses keep on coming up by this Premier.

A question to the Premier: Why did you expense this trip?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, following that great discovery last year, I in fact tabled in this House my expenses from the time that I have become Premier and in comparison to two previous premiers. I

invite members to have a look at that, but just to be sure that they didn't miss it, I'll table that again tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, your final question.

### **Failure to post expenses of departments**

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

Late expenses, missing expenses, and inappropriate expenses: Last month's expenses were due online yesterday. The ministers and deputies of workforce, health, education, environment, and family and human services all failed to post their expenses and follow the rules.

**Mr. Trivers:** Shame, shame!

**Mr. Fox:** Premier, a question to you: Why can't your government follow any rules, even your own?

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to remind the House that those requirements of posting those automatically and for ministers and for senior officials were brought in after I became Premier –

**Mr. Trivers:** All talk and no action. (Indistinct).

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and those are done regularly on a timely basis –

**Mr. Trivers:** Got a problem.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and if it's the case that there's something needed to be signed, or something because we're in the House, I'm sure it's going to be up there before the end of the week.

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

**Premier MacLauchlan:** We're proud of the openness and transparency that this

government has brought in, and we intend to, and we do, live up to it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Statements by Ministers

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

**Universal Influenza Immunization Program**

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

For the first time ever, we have a Universal Influenza Immunization Program, which means every person living in Prince Edward Island of any age can get a free flu shot at the location of their choice.

Our government is providing coverage for both the vaccine and the administrative costs to deliver the vaccine.

Every year many people get the flu along with complications such as pneumonia. Some even require hospitalization. This doesn't have to happen.

The flu shot is the first and best defense against the flu and the complications that the flu can cause. We encourage everyone to get their flu shot. I even got mine.

Approximately 51,000 doses of influenza vaccine have been distributed to pharmacists, physicians, nurse practitioners, public health nursing, and health care facilities.

Early indications are showing a very good uptake of Islanders getting their flu shot. Immunizers have three months to report their data, so we won't have exact numbers until later in the New Year.

Our flu campaign continues until Christmas, and even after Christmas the vaccine will still be available from most providers. It takes approximately two weeks after getting the flu shot for your body to mount an immune response, so people are encouraged to get their flu shot soon. We know that the flu is starting to circulate on Prince Edward Island, and in fact the Chief Public Health

Office posts a weekly flu summary on our website, and it shows that we have already seen eight lab-confirmed cases of influenza in the province.

Flu shots are available at physician and nurse practitioners offices, pharmacies, and public health nursing clinics across PEI. The flumist is available for children aged 2 to 17 at public health nursing clinics.

I encourage the members of this house, and all Islanders, to get their flu shot. It will protect you and lessen the chances of the flu affecting your family and your workplace, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for this statement.

It's great news that we're encouraging so many people to go out and get this flu shot; the announcements about the more affordable, the free flu shot. I think it's important about expanding it out into the communities as well. I know when it comes to Morrell, there's good uptake out there.

I'll be honest. I wasn't much for the flu shot. I just didn't take the time until we started having kids 10 years ago, and then you realize how important it is for family members. It wasn't just myself and Anita; it was my parents, her parents; everybody started realizing: Do you know what? We need to do this. Education is key. It educated us. We started doing it. Again, I encourage the minister to keep it up. The education part of it; get it out into the public. Keep going out into the small rural communities and I thank the efforts of the department for doing this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Of course, I support this announcement. It's a good public health policy and it's great this is now available to all Islanders free of cost.

We all know here on Prince Edward Island how rumors can turn into plausible stories and then they suddenly become accepted truth and sadly, that happens in the wider world as well and old wives tales can mature to take on the sheen of plausibility and authenticity. Unfortunately, vaccines have suffered from this over the years and with no plausible evidence whatsoever to connect the use of vaccinations to – well, there are all sorts of rumors and things out there, but autism is the most commonly cited one.

It's a real shame. It's a dreadful shame that without any scientific evidence whatsoever, vaccines are vilified like this. So, this is a great announcement. Vaccines do an enormous amount of good all around the world, and we're seeing with some – maybe it's because of the anti-vaxxers, I'm not sure, but with a reduced use of vaccinations but there's been a resurgence of several diseases, most specifically measles.

That's a real problem, so thank you, minister, for this and this is a great announcement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Tourism industry reaches new heights in 2017**

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

As I talked earlier, the tourism industry is holding their annual AGM. The tourism industry, once again, is proving its vital importance to the provincial economy, job creation and entrepreneurship.

2017 will go down as the fourth-straight record year for tourism in our province. The numbers are impressive to say the least. It is very likely that we have already crossed the 1 million overnight stays threshold for the first time ever in the history of tourism on PEI.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Great operators.

**Mr. MacDonald:** As of the end of October we had just over 984,000 overnight stays on the books. We average about 23,000 stays last November 2016. That's an incredible accomplishment for this industry, which has worked so hard for so long to make Prince Edward Island one of the world's top vacation destinations.

In fact, as you may already know, Fodor's recently ranked PEI as the 11<sup>th</sup> best place in the world to vacation in 2018, placed between Belize and Taipei. That speaks volumes about what our province has to offer visitors. There are other impressive numbers to share as well.

We are projecting visitation at 1.56 million, and spending at \$447 million. Again, these are both records and the results are being felt across the Island, virtually every sector of the industry and every region of the province saw growth in 2017, as did all our entry points which is great news for rural PEI. But, we cannot stand by and expect this momentum to continue without the hard work necessary to maintain it.

We are working with industry on new product development like experiential tourism, soft adventure, indigenous tourism, and early and late season events. We are cultivating emerging markets, and expanding culinary tourism. We are collaborating with operators and industry associations across the province on a new governance model that will improve collaboration, reduce duplication and create a unified voice. We are also exploring the creation of a tourism management committee, creation of a tourism hub, funding model improvements, and tourism membership consolidation.

These proposed changes, coupled with incredible momentum in the industry, will help us sustain this industry far into the future. I want to thank all the operators, industry associations and workers who do so much to make this industry so successful. Their innovation and hard work benefit all Islanders by creating jobs, improving the economy, and providing opportunities for entrepreneurs. It is this willingness to work together that shows why our tourism industry, and Prince Edward Island in

general, is mighty, and I look forward to further collaboration with our industry partners as we strive to continue to break records.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Certainly great news for Prince Edward Island; reaching on 1 million visitors and it doesn't surprise me at all. We live in one of the prettiest country sides in the world. We've got some of the friendliest people, and some of the hardest-working tourism operators in the country.

**Mr. Trivers:** Great entrepreneurs.

**Mr. MacKay:** Great entrepreneurs, great hard-working people and great country side.

One thing I hear quite often is people say how friendly the people are, and another thing we hear is how well people keep their properties, tourism operators as well and people notice that and they pick up on it. They go home and they tell their friends, and I think this is just the start. I think we're on a big boom. We've put ourselves on the map as a province, and I think there's a lot of good years yet to come here on Prince Edward Island. So, keep up the great work, Islanders.

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 is, indeed, a great announcement. We sometimes get carried away with arbitrary numbers and 1 million is great, but it's not an arbitrary accomplishment. The tourism has been on the rise here for some time now and it's such an important part of our economic success and of our culture here.

Speaking of culture, I think people are drawn here in part because of the uniqueness of our place, of our character, both in terms of our society and our geography, but also our culture. There was a great announcement the other day, whether it was made inside or outside the House, but there was a great announcement on support for culture, and meaningful support for culture. I think that is going to pay dividends and further support our tourism industry in the years to come.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### Water Act

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental responsibilities of government is to protect our Island's water supply for future generations. Prince Edward Island is the only Canadian province that depends entirely on groundwater for our drinking water. So, it is important that our water has strong legislative protections.

I am pleased to announce that today, I will table Prince Edward Island's Water Act; the first of its kind in our province's history.

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** The act will provide water security, offer guidance for government decisions involving water management, and put legislation in place that will allow water challenges to be effectively addressed.

This legislation is the product of many months of consultation with Islanders. Since the release of our draft Water Act back in March, we had four regional public meetings; West, Central, Charlottetown East, more than 100 online comment submissions and 10 public presentations.

From our engagement process, we heard 10 key public concerns: No hydraulic fracturing; high-capacity wells for irrigation; wording clarity; watershed management support; nitrate, pesticides, land-use management; water export and bottled

water; public input; multiple wells; penalties, and burden of proof.

We've addressed each of these concerns in the final version of the act, and I want to thank all Islanders for their feedback and input into our new *Water Act*.

Public engagement has been key in the development of this legislation, and the consultation process has been one of the most extensive in the province's history. Consultation will also continue throughout the development of our regulations, and I want to thank the environmental advisory council for hosting consultations, and in particular their chair who is here today, Dean Stewart, and also in the gallery is Art Smith, EAC member, who is with us as well.

I also want to thank our staff for the time, dedication, and hard work that they have put into the creation of this act.

This *Water Act* is an historic piece of legislation. It will protect the quality and quantity of our Island's water, and it will ensure that our water supply is healthy and sustainable now and well into the future.

Islanders can find the *Water Act* and supporting documents online now on our website at [www.princeedwardisland.ca/wateract](http://www.princeedwardisland.ca/wateract)

Thank you very much.

**An Hon. Member:** Great.

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

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

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

It's so great to finally hear that the *Water Act* is going to be brought to the floor. And I must commend the minister and his team for all the great work they've done, and the environment advisory council as well.

It has been a good process. And it is a process that in many ways I think the rest of the government should look at and perhaps even consider modeling. It had great public consultation, and most of the information

was posted online. And so I was really glad to hear that.

It was almost good right till the end. This spring, we had the draft *Water Act*. It was going to be brought to the floor of the Legislature, I'm almost positive of that. And yet, it didn't come and we waited a whole summer when what I'm hoping are substantial changes were made, because we had to wait.

I think this process can be improved even further. For example, a couple of weeks ago, a month ago, two months ago, an updated version, an updated draft of the *Water Act* could have been provided. I mean, if the changes are as substantial as the minister has said since the draft came out, then it would have been nice for all of the interested groups to view it, and make no bones about it, Islanders are passionate about their water. They believe in the precautionary principle. They know that 100% of our water comes from our groundwater, and that's why it's so important that this *Water Act* is brought in and does the right thing.

That's why it's surprising, with the amount of work that has gone into this *Water Act* and the amount of concern that Islanders show about their water, that this minister sometimes lets things like large irrigation ponds be built that are being filled by multiple wells, go through when he could enact regulations, set policy even before the *Water Act*'s in place, and take no action.

The minister's right. This is a groundbreaking moment, and I do congratulate the minister for getting this *Water Act* to the floor of the Legislature. I really look forward to viewing the final version. I must say I certainly hope that there is something limiting hydraulic fracturing in the final version of this *Water Act*, because that has got to be the number one concern of Islanders, and if that's not in there then the *Water Act* will have missed the mark.

And I have to admit that the cynical side of me makes me wonder why fracturing wasn't included in the draft from the beginning.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Perhaps this was meant as a red herring so that, in a showcase speech, to say ah, look, we are listening. Now we have brought fracturing into the act. I certainly hope it's there.

At any rate, Islanders are people that look for the long-term. That's why they know how important it is to protect our water. That's why I believe they believe in the precautionary principle. That's why Islanders are willing to take short-term pain for long-term gain; a good conservative principle.

I really do look forward to seeing the final version of this *Water Act*. I expect we're going to go through it clause by clause with a fine-tooth comb to make sure that it does indeed protect our water well into the future.

Our water is something that can't be squandered.

Right now it's one thing that's kind of bothering me, and I hope the *Water Act* addresses this, is that over 80% of the high capacity wells on our Island, the freshwater high capacity wells, are for non-agricultural uses, but yet all of the focus is on a moratorium for agricultural high capacity wells, and so the *Water Act* had better address how we're going to look after our water when it comes to commercial high capacity wells and municipal high capacity wells.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I want to salute and applaud the minister for this announcement, and also Jim Young, who is sitting here in the gallery, for his work, and I know there's been tireless work by Jim and many other members of the department in bringing this bill forward today.

I know it's taken a long time. Indeed, it's taken a long time. But, as they say; good things come to those who wait and I think

this is a good thing. I think there are many good things in this act.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct) wait till you see it.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Well, I heard the minister say that some of the main issues surrounding hydraulic fracturing, for example, appear to be addressed in this according to the minister's remarks. We shall see. And that will be an enormous relief to a great many Islanders.

Again, I want to thank you for your work on this, minister. It's fundamentally important to so many Islanders, and I think both the process by which this act has come forward with some really significant consultation, meaningful consultation, which is not in my experience, always the case, but in this case I think there really was truly meaningful consultation where Islanders were asked and listened to, and that makes me very happy.

I also hope and I think there may be some novel ideas in this bill about how we can move forward with further and other pieces of legislation on this Island. I think this is a groundbreaking piece of work, and again, I salute and thank the minister for it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

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

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table Public Expense Disclosure Report, dated October 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table Annual operating expenses for the Office of

the Premier of the years 2015-2016 and going back as far as 2005-2006, that would be 10 years previous, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

May I note that my expenses in 2015-2016 were less than one quarter of Pat Binns, and he was serving 10 years previous, and I'm not discounting anything for inflation?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) Pat Binns.

**An Hon. Member:** Charged for weddings.

**Leader of the Opposition:** What I was thinking, what I would do is compare (Indistinct).

**Mr. Myers:** How many weddings did Pat Binns (Indistinct) charge to Islanders?

**Mr. Roach:** Didn't take him long to get tired of you.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) zero.

Reports by Committees

#### Introduction of Government Bills

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled the *Water Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, that the same be now received and read a first time.

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

**Clerk:** *Water Act*, Bill No. 13, read a first time.

**Speaker:** Hon. minister, an explanation please.

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, the *Water Act* will provide water security, guide

government decisions involving water management, and allow changes to effectively be addressed well into the future regarding our water on Prince Edward Island.

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

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

#### Motions Other Than Government

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

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

I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the same be now received and read a first time.

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

**Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin):** Bill No. 100, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*, read a first time.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

This bill, which is a complement to government's public interest disclosure and whistle-blower protection act, will create basic whistle-blower protections for employees in the private sector on Prince Edward Island.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the 10<sup>th</sup> order of the day now be read.

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

**Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin):** Order No. 10, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*, Bill No.101, ordered for second reading.

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the

Opposition, that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

**Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin):** *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*, Bill No.101, read a second time.

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

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

I will call on the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road to come and Chair this bill.

**Chair (Perry):** The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled Bill No. 101, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes. Sure.

**Chair:** Promoter, would you like to start with a general statement about the intent of the Bill?

**Mr. Myers:** Sure. I guess the basic intent of the – everybody knows the issue around school busses being passed. It was funny, there was one this week Corey Tremere had on Twitter and it seems to always be happening. I don't know if it's always in the same area. I have a sense that there's a problem on Route 2 when there's a passing lane there and stuff, but for me, I have a big concern over how we can best deter this – strictly at a safety for children who are coming home, or even getting on the bus in the morning.

My children are older now that they can be more careful, but now that kindergarten is part of the school system, you have kids as young as just five standing out at the gate and when the bus stops that they have to cross the road, it's a big excitement for them and sometimes they dart out. If somebody's

passing the school bus, I think it's just a matter of time before there's a bad accident and something really bad happens. The same, I guess, when coming home.

I know that government has brought in changes in this Act, and I know that it is something that government has been aware of and we talked about cameras on busses in the House here before, too, and better ways to help crack down on this. There's an awareness campaign done by government, that didn't seem to work. I guess we're just looking at: Can we turn up the heat so we can stop this from happening and we can make people understand that this isn't cool? If you don't understand a big, yellow bus with flashing lights is a no-no, then I'm not sure what else we can do besides raise the penalty that goes along with it.

I think this is a step. I'd like to see government maybe have a closer look at the whole process around that and see if there's a way to really crack down on people who do it. It's unfortunate that you have to even have a law – that people don't understand that they shouldn't do it. It's unfortunate that we have to talk about: Does raising the fine help the situation, or does taking their licence from them? I don't know what all the different avenues would be. It's too bad that we have to, but apparently we have to because I continue to see people talk about it on Facebook, on Twitter and it's right across Prince Edward Island.

I know a year or two ago, somebody had posted a video on their Facebook page and they had – it showed it happening right in front of their house. That's basically it. I think everybody understands the issue and what we're getting at. I guess I'll take questions on it.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you.

In terms of the fines that have been implemented in the past under the *Highway Traffic Act*, that does fall under my department as you probably know hon. member.

Have you done any kind of background research in terms of the number of incidences that have occurred in the –

**Mr. Myers:** No. I think we had asked you in the spring. I think there was only one that was even charged. It was – which is an issue too, probably.

**Ms. Biggar:** Certainly, it's an issue. I agree. I would like to make a couple of points –

**Mr. Myers:** Sure.

**Ms. Biggar:** – and then maybe make some suggestions as well –

**Mr. Myers:** Sure.

**Ms. Biggar:** – if you're open to that.

I would like to point out for Islanders that are listening that PEI does have the highest fines in Canada at the present time. In addition to that, if you get the fine, you can lose up to eight demerit points. We have additionally put in, for graduated drivers, for stages one and two: that they can have their drivers' licence suspended for 30 days if they're convicted of going through a bus stop with red lights going.

I know it's a tough job for law enforcement, for the Public School Board, for parents – a concern. Certainly, Islanders in general are concerned. I think it would be important for us to get some more information.

What I would propose is that we work together to maybe bring this to committee, and get law enforcement in, and have some real good discussion around this. I think there's nothing wrong with the bill, but maybe there are other options that we could have discussion on with our enforcement – get some other input from whomever else we decide should come to this discussion.

I think it's a great way for us that we, we could work together on coming up with a solution and suggest that if you're open to that; to working together, that we could bring this to committee, and have a real good discussion on it, and come up with some solutions in conjunction with our enforcement and police chiefs. I think it's important to get their input, as well because

they can tell some stories, I'm sure, too, that are sad.

**Mr. Myers:** I'd be in favour of that, I mean whether or not the end result is higher fines or steeper penalties of any sort, the awareness is probably the most important thing to me. If the public has more awareness then maybe more people will stop doing it.

If it is a topic that has been talked about, you know, I'm not blaming law enforcement –

**Ms. Biggar:** No.

**Mr. Myers:** – I know they have a really tough job, and I've never done it myself, so I can't even speak to that side of it. If there are some problem areas that we know of that bus drivers can report back that, maybe, we have law enforcement in that area at that time more often and start cracking down on it because, as you all know, I'm sure you all live in an area where there is a spot that people get caught from time to time for going too fast. Once that starts happening everybody seems to know and slow down so it's Prince Edward Island, the word really trickles fast if somebody gets charged, especially if it's a high-fine charge for something. It becomes the buzz of the community. There seems to be, then, an understanding of: I can't do this –

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah, and I would point out that our highway safety officers work in concert with RCMP or police forces so, I think it would be a great discussion that we could have at committee.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah. I think (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Okay?

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Okay, wait for one second here (Indistinct)

Next, on my list I have the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

I'd like to thank the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this bill to the floor. I think it's a very important one.

This is a common issue in District 18 Rustico-Emerald. Route 2 runs through the district, and it's a main artery, of course, in the province with lots and lots of traffic, especially during the rush hour periods in the morning and the evening. It's typically in that morning rush hour period where there are children on this busy highway waiting to catch the school bus. Some of the areas we're talking – we're not just talking a two-lane highway, it can go to three, sometimes four lanes.

I know it's particularly confusing for new drivers when they get there. Sometimes they blow by the school bus with the lights flashing because they don't interpret it properly. In fact, it's to the point where, I think, not even cameras on school buses would be enough, as we discussed in the House, but we should even look at things like photo radar. Myself, that's something I'm going to – there's a lack of RCMP presence. I don't think we have enough RCMP officers in this province. I'd like to see that the highways services division brought back in for the RCMP, as the Member from West Royalty-Springvale had brought up in this House before that they would pay for themselves.

I just wanted to thank you, again, for bringing this there. I hope that increasing the fine to \$2,000 would help to deter people from doing this and help them drive more carefully.

I would also like to see the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy really step up to the plate here. I mean, she has known this has been a problem for a long time and so, I would like to see some further action taken by this. Perhaps, her idea of bringing this to committee for further discussion is a good one. I would expect that she will be there and have some good ideas and take some action, as well.

Member, I really thank you for bringing this. I wonder, in your opinion, do you think that the doubling of the fine is going to be enough to deter, especially, the cases where there are new drivers from taking this illegal action? Do you think doubling the fine is going to be enough to deter new drivers?

**Mr. Myers:** That's a good question; and probably no. The answer is probably no, unfortunately. Like, I had said to the minister, it's kind of an awareness thing. If we can up the ante by us having this discussion today, if we can take it to committee and hear from people who specialize in law enforcement and schools; drivers, whoever it is that, that particular committee would see fit to call forward, then, maybe that awareness would start to grow and people would understand – and I do understand that the area you're talking about, I do understand, is an issue and I can totally appreciate why.

I know we talked about, in the House here before, cameras and I think the minister might have told us, maybe, in the spring that the quality of the cameras wasn't necessarily there. I know from having a camera, a dash camera in my car, that it is very hard to pick up the license plate number off the video.

The one I have in my car would be high-def picture, so it's a very good view of everything, but you still can't see the license plate. There are, still probably, some issues away from – on the enforcement side that government can't yet take because the technology hasn't probably caught up to the area where it has to be.

To answer your question: probably no, but the discussion here might help. A big fine does get around the community. If somebody gets a \$2,000 fine for passing a school bus, it gets around the coffee shops and, you know, where people talk and communicate to one another. You'll hear them say: did you hear such-and-such got a \$2,000 fine for passing the school bus? That, itself, becomes a deterrent because nobody else wants to be, because \$2,000 is a lot of money, nobody wants to be the person who has a \$2,000 fine.

**Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Minister, since some of this was directed to you, did you want comment, also, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy?

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

Actually, I wanted to table a document that

does show what other jurisdictions are doing, as well.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, that'd be great.

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll just table that while we're in committee. I do wish to make a motion that we do bring this to committee –

**Chair:** Do you have a seconder to that motion?

**Mr. Myers:** Do you want to speak first –

**Ms. Biggar:** The Minister of Finance –

**Chair:** Have a discussion on it –

**Mr. Myers:** And if it passes, this is over, so you want to speak first?

Don't want it to get off the floor without you having your say.

**Mr. Roach:** No, Chair, no, it's all good.

**Ms. Biggar:** No –

**Chair:** Can we a discussion –

**Ms. Biggar:** – it's all about working together –

**Mr. Myers:** Well –

**Ms. Biggar:** – on this.

**Mr. Myers:** – it is a hot seat here.

**Ms. Biggar:** Oh, I'm well aware of that.

**Mr. Roach:** Minister.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you.

As I said, you know, thank you, Mr. Chair, speaking to the motion, I think it is important that we have the discussion –

**Mr. Roach:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Pardon?

**Mr. Roach:** I think you're speaking to the amendment.

**Ms. Biggar:** No, there's no amended motion. It's a motion that we take it to committee. So, I'm speaking to that –

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

**Ms. Biggar:** No?

**Chair:** Okay.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) no motion.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes, oh, they told me I had to make a motion now –

**Chair:** We're going to continue with discussion –

**Mr. Roach:** Okay, perfect.

**Ms. Biggar:** Could I get clarification, Mr. Chair?

**Chair:** Okay –

**Ms. Biggar:** Do you want me to make a motion now?

**Chair:** Actually, we have to leave the committee of the whole –

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Chair:** – and bring the Speaker back in –

**Ms. Biggar:** Okay.

**Chair:** – for you to move the motion.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, okay –

**Chair:** (Indistinct) present that motion –

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, okay, thanks –

**Chair:** to (Indistinct) that motion. We'll continue the discussion.

I have the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, do you have another question?

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

Just a follow-up again; I think, really, this sort of activity on our highways, in many ways, is just a symptom of a bigger problem, which is the lack of infrastructure planning,

that this government is doing in our province.

We have these main arteries, these highways that have residences on them, and there are no plans in place to relieve the pressure, so you've got children standing at the edge of a very busy highway with multiple lanes of traffic. When, in fact, if there were proper infrastructure put in place to allow other access to those properties, they wouldn't have to do that.

This is impeding economic development; development of properties, it's a huge issue. Again, I do thank the member for bringing this to the floor because this will allow us to have a broader discussion about our infrastructure and our highways and how passing a school bus with the red lights flashing, I believe, is a symptom of a bigger problem with our infrastructure and that shows a lack of planning. We need to really look at how we look after our roads, in particular, and our main arteries on this province so that economic development can

**Chair:** Are you speaking to the motion –

**Mr. Trivers:** – continue –

**Chair:** – member?

**Mr. Trivers:** – yes, and that safety –

**Mr. Myers:** No, motion anymore is there?

**Mr. Trivers:** – as well –

**Chair:** (Indistinct) to the bill?

**Mr. Trivers:** – and that they're as safe as possible.

Again, I do thank the member.

Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** Supports the bill.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, he supports –

**Mr. Trivers:** Support the bill.

**Mr. Myers:** There is a fair point there that has to do with the infrastructure on the

roads. We've all grown up on Prince Edward Island and got to this point.

Not even Route 2, but if you take some of the roads in my area where I grew up on the Bangor Road, you could drive you bike down it all day long, you wouldn't see a car all day in the summer. Now, I wouldn't walk on that road the cars are –

We have changed our habits a lot over the years and there's a lot more people travel a lot further distance to do the things that they do. Because of that, some of those routes, like Route 2, Route 1, that have residence access to the highways which wouldn't exist if it was built new today and it wouldn't exist in other province. There is kind of that heavy traffic and I travel in to here every day, I get on the TransCanada by the end of the 48 Road, that's a busy stretch of road. From there to the bridge is a really busy stretch of road. Kids get on the school bus all on that stretch, too. A lot has changed in how we use the infrastructure that we have.

But for me the over-arching point is that, either people don't know or are blatantly disregarding the rules and either one could result in a tragedy. Any steps at all to help keep that from happening, I think are important steps.

**Chair:** Next on my list I have the Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this bill forward. It's certainly a concern of every single member of this House, is safety on the roads and in particular, this issue of passing school buses.

I just want to pick up on something that Rustico-Emerald said about this being perhaps a system of infrastructure problems. While we all know that our roads need improvement, particularly our rural roads and we found many discussions in this House about where our limited resources should be placed.

I have to say that when it comes to ignoring red flashing lights and barriers and all the rest of it that you're faced with, that's a

driver error, that's not an infrastructure problem.

When I was involved before being elected to this House, in the plan B issue, did a lot research on road safety, an enormous amount of research on road safety and what causes accidents and what the trouble is. By far the most important feature is driver behavior, is drive error. I just wanted to say that this is not an infrastructure problem, this is driver behavior.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** I just have a couple of questions I want to ask Georgetown-St. Peters. First one is how many – and I think the minister may have alluded to this but I didn't catch it completely – how many fines have been –

**Mr. Myers:** Only one.

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** In how many years?

**Mr. Myers:** Period, I think. I don't think this part has been in that awful long; correct me if I'm wrong. It hasn't been in very long, I think there has only been one fine ever.

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** Right.

**Mr. Myers:** It's very hard to catch though, because it's such a small window. The school bus is stopped in one particular spot when it happens. It's hard for the RCMP to be there and there's no other way to charge them.

**Chair:** The Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

I note that the amendment to the bill you suggested is to double the fine. But it's not the maximum fine; it's the minimum fines –

**Mr. Myers:** Yes.

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** – that you're doubling. The maximum fine you're okay leaving as it is. I'm just wondering, in that instance, was it the minimum fine that they charged or the maximum fine?

**Mr. Myers:** I can't answer that, I'm sorry. It is a good point. Overall, there's an issue that there's only one because we hear about them all the time. You would hear as many of the ones that I hear of. There is a lot of issue with it. It's driver for sure, it's not been able to enforce them because there's not people there. I guess the fine is only deterrent to somebody who it's going to hurt financially. If you have the money to pay the fine and you don't care, it's not that big of a deal. I can't answer that question.

**Chair:** The Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair.

We're all concerned about this and the question really is: How best do we stop this potentially deadly behavior? My guess is – and I don't know – but my guess is – well let me put it this way. If I was a judge and somebody was prosecuted and shown guilty for violating this, it's not the minimum fine I'd be looking at; it would be the maximum fine.

I appreciate the public education aspect of what you're doing here. I think that's really important. Particularly for somebody like me, I came from another country where school buses – totally different rules for school – but I didn't know anything about stopping for school buses when I first came to Canada. So, the public education – we have a lot of new Islanders here from other countries.

**Mr. Myers:** That's true.

**Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker:** So I think the public education exercise of this will be the real value, so I thank you that.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

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

**Chair:** Thank you, Leader.

And a comment –

**Mr. Myers:** There is a very good point there about we really promote bringing new people into the province here and maybe if this goes to committee and that portion will come out that there is a newcomer education piece that we are currently offering and we

just expected everybody understands our rules, which is silly for us to think that.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you, Chair. My comment is directly to that point that you're making. Under our highway traffic division, we do offer education programs to new immigrants. We have printed material in different languages in regard specifically to this topic, so that is one of the parts of the education program for new drivers into the province from other countries who may not have a focus on that part.

I think when we go to committee it'd be a great way to have that discussion, to say: what is in place now, what else can we do, and involve that, take that education piece further.

Anyway, I just wanted to make the point that we do now have that education program for new immigrants and we have materials printed in different languages and we have a number of different staff at access sites that speak multi-languages to be able to communicate with different languages that our immigrants are coming into the province with.

**Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I, like many of the Members that spoke prior to myself, I'd like to thank the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for taking this bill forward. We've certainly heard time and time again when this issue arises.

I guess I would have to agree with the Leader of the Third Party as well, that this is an issue that in a lot of cases, in most cases if not all cases, comes down to the driving habits of the individual. To see a bus ahead of you with flashing lights, first the amber and then the red, and in a lot of cases the stop sign that comes out of the side, it's baffling to me that someone wouldn't know from being a driver anywhere in North

America or pretty much around the world that that's a sign that you need to stop. You need to stop because there's children boarding or exiting a bus. I think what it's going to come down to is, again, continued education and enforcement.

I agree, I think it would be a great idea to take this to committee. I guess my question would be which committee we'd be looking at to send this to, but –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) transportation and infrastructure (Indistinct)

**Leader of the Opposition:** Okay.

One of the things that I would like to suggest with that is one of the groups that I think we need to hear from directly is some of the bus drivers. Not being a bus driver myself, not knowing how the system works, but I would think that anytime an incident like this happens that there would have to be an incident report that the driver would have to fill out, turn it in to their supervisor or their dispatch, so first and foremost we could also see where the most prominent trouble areas are and communicate that with law enforcement.

Now, there was a concerted effort back – I believe it was a year ago on Highway 2 and there was a lot of discussion on this and there was some infractions that took place and there was a heavy presence of RCMP out there then, but I guess I'm wondering what else we could do in cooperation with the RCMP to ensure that they're out there.

Maybe it's a matter of having some of the unmarked cars closely following these buses on the trouble areas to reinforce the issue. This is a serious issue, but I mean, I just – you drive down a road in the city, you drive down a street through your community, you drive down Highway 2 or Highway 1, how many people are still using these up to their ear?

**Mr. MacEwen:** It's true.

**Leader of the Opposition:** How many people? I mean, you talk to the first responders that go to motor vehicle accidents, how many times are people seriously, or in some cases, fatally injured because they're still not wearing their

seatbelts? In this day and age, people should know what the rules are, so fundamentally, I think it comes down to education and enforcement.

If we all agree here today, which I think we will, of sending this to committee and looking at the matter further, I think it would be a great step and it would be a terrific step towards protecting our children here on PEI.

Again, hon. member, thank you very much for bringing this bill to the floor.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

You bring up – there's a lot of good points there, and one that popped into my head that when you were talking was that I see on a daily basis, and everybody travels a different route to work, but quite a few of us here would come quite a distance, and there seems to be a lot of impatience on the roads these days, like people who they get behind a tractor or slower vehicle and it's like the end of the world and they're taking all these crazy chances to get around them.

And when it comes to buses, and each one of you here I'm sure could confirm this in your own area, it's all a matter of what time you get out the door. For me, if I get out – the five minute's difference and there's not a bus in front of me all the way to Charlottetown; five minutes later, there's five of them. And you know what? You can't pass five buses. You're not getting around five buses in the morning. That's life.

When you get behind the one that's up on the Trans-Canada travelling my way, you're behind it right till the MacLennan Road, so from the 48 Road till the MacLennan Road it's stopping, and there are times there's hundreds of cars behind a bus, but that's life. Everybody had the choice to leave four minutes earlier –

**Mr. Myers:** – and be ahead of that bus, and I think a lot of it has to do with the impatience in society on the roads today.

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

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

I certainly appreciate the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters bringing this to the floor. I think it's – and I certainly appreciate his willingness to bring this to committee, because I think that's where it should be.

A tremendous number of issues in this, but I think if we all – and I don't think there's a member that sits in here, an MLA that sits in this Legislature that doesn't agree that the whole reason why we're talking about this is safety for our children to make sure that they don't get hurt or something worse. I think as long as that's the focus at committee, I think we'll probably come out with the best solution possible for this.

But I agree with pretty well everything that's been said around the Legislature here with this, and I think it's a perfect example of – and again, I applaud the member for agreeing that this should go to committee, because it shows how much input there is, and this is just from us as people in the Legislature, MLAs, and I'd find it very interesting to have some professionals, bus drivers –

**An Hon. Member:** Safety officials.

**Mr. Roach:** – and those, everybody that has a say in this, but certainly – and I'm just going to talk about this very briefly.

One of the biggest reasons why we have accidents, the number one single reason is driver inattention. It's not drunk drivers. It's not anything else. It's driver inattention. It could be – and I'm going to tell you just quickly some of the things I've seen, and – texting, I've seen people spill coffee and have accidents because of that. I've seen people reading the newspaper on the way to work. I've seen people eating breakfast. I have seen people shaving in their car. I've seen people putting makeup on. These are all drivers, by the way.

And certainly I agree with the fact that we live in a world where everybody's again trying to get to work, and they're trying to get the children ready to get on the bus, and then they're trying to get away themselves, and I think what happens is when they're distracted, they come behind a group of cars; if it's going slow, they don't see the lights flashing. All they look at is: Is there anybody coming the other way so I can get

out and get around this? That's the inattention.

But I think just in hearing everything that's been said around the table, and the great input that all MLAs that have spoken here about this really shows that there's terrific interest, there's good collaboration here. I think we can all work together and do what's best for our children.

So again, thank you Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this to the floor.

Thank you.

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

Like I said, I am quite interested in hearing what people would have to say and how we can best eradicate this problem, regardless of what the measure is.

**Chair:** Another question from the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Roach:** No, just a question, and I agree; I don't think it's – I really don't think for a lot of it it's fines. I think that every issue of every side of this needs to be looked at. I think there's an education piece. I think there's an awareness piece. And I think that we may perhaps have the opportunity here to be a leader, and whether it's something really harsh or whatever the case may be, I mean when the seatbelts came in, it took – how long did it take us before we could get people to start wearing seatbelts?

Unfortunately, there's still not enough wearing them. Unfortunately, it seems to take a tremendous (Indistinct) – and it's hard to figure out what's going to really work.

So again, glad to see this going to committee.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Just a couple of pieces of information I did wish to bring while we're here speaking about this in Committee of the Whole.

I think it was last year somebody had asked about second arms on the buses. I am pleased to report that the new buses that were purchased this year had that second arm on the back, and the buses that will be purchased again next year, if we pass the Capital Budget, will also have that second arm on the back, and that's noted to be a great addition to stop people from doing this.

It's a second stop arm that comes out from the back of the bus, the same as the one that comes out on the side. It's relatively inexpensive to put them on compared to the price of the bus, so it's, I think, a great investment for Island students and others that will be on the roads.

The other thing, while I'm here, PR-wise that kind of I know from my past life, and a lot of people don't think about when they're out there on the road, but it's really something that we should all be very cognizant of, not just in relation to this but any driving offences, particularly those that could bring with them an eight demerit point deduction, is that likely your insurance would not insure you after that, or it would be very expensive. So there's an extra additional expense there that, you know people look at the fine – the fine would be nothing compared to your insurance for the next few years until you got back in good standing with your demerit points, and that's something a lot of people don't know until after they make a foolish decision when they're out there driving on the roads. I just figured I would mention that now while we're here talking, and who knows if it gets picked up or not, but as all the members around are talking about that, it's something that definitely people should know.

And kids usually are kind of the least informed on that, too, and that would apply to things like dangerous driving – the summary offence – dangerous driving; impaired driving, even if you get caught with the lower provincial piece of it, that brings with it that same insurance issue, so there's all kinds of things like that that have big-time insurance implications in addition to whatever fine that you do end up getting.

Also, people should know, too, that if fines aren't paid, which is constantly an issue that I'm aware does present itself when you have a high fine, the fine often doesn't get paid, it can result in things like vehicles being impounded or licenses being suspended or different things like that. There's some other interesting pieces that you might not even necessarily kind of see or think of there, but happened through other pieces of legislation that we should all have some awareness of and be telling people about, too, when these kinds of things come up.

Thank you, Chair.

And if anybody has any questions on any of that, I'm happy to answer.

**Mr. Myers:** That's a good point, the demerit point and the insurance is a good point, and then it comes back to we've only had one conviction, and I know it.

So I'm just going to go talk about in Cardigan this summer, there was a lot of instance of cars racing through the village really fast, and it was young guys acting like young guys act. But people were – everybody was talking about it. They were upset.

Somebody along the way must have started making phone calls, or many people started making phone calls, and all of a sudden the RCMP were in, and it didn't take any time and it ended. It was a matter of a week once they landed and set up shop that it was over, and some of those people would have faced exactly that, where their insurance would be knocking on the door saying: Okay now, I see you have a speeding fine for twice the limit. What are we going to do about this? Your insurance is cancelled, or whatever might happen that goes along with that. So, it's a good point and I think that we somehow have to figure out how to get more people caught who do it. It's so complicated because it's not like sitting in Cardigan all day waiting for it to happen. It happened at a bus stop, at a specific period of time and it's like one second of the day and there may be only one in a month. But, one that happens while a child is crossing the road, obviously is one too many.

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

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

I just wanted to make a comment or a commitment, I guess. If the transportation and infrastructure committee is reviewing this, that we'd be glad to come in with my officials from highway safety to report on what we are doing, what those fines are, what the implications – I think it's a great idea to get in someone from the insurance bureau of PEI to also talk too.

**Mr. Myers:** I think it's a good opportunity because they stand the risk to be unfairly blamed for not charging people, but we all know it's happening once a month in an obscure location; you could never have enough people (Indistinct) –

**Ms. Biggar:** Same as RCMP. They often get blamed for not fining people, but sometimes it's very hard to lay that charge. As you noted with the visibility of your dash-cam, it's equally hard in some other – it would be good to have that discussion because there are a variety of factors that come into play when you're trying to lay a charge.

**Mr. Myers:** Right.

**Ms. Biggar:** Maybe your son's driving your car, but –

**Mr. Myers:** My license plate.

**Ms. Biggar:** It's your license plate, but you're not the driver so there are a number of nuances there so it would be a great discussion.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I just wanted to mention – for kids too, it's simple things that they don't even really get, again, but we see just to your point hon. member.

I know there was one parent today had to phone me. Their son had lost their license for a period of time for dangerous driving pursuant to the *Highway Traffic Act* and I think actually, as I recall, it had to do with a bus. But, he had chirped the tires, quote on quote, and the RCMP caught him and

charged him and he didn't appreciate at the time when he had put his guilty plea in and paid the fine – I think it was a \$1,200 fine – that he was going to be into like \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year in insurance and then having to be insured through the facility for a period of time afterwards.

It's a whole interesting piece here that very few know about and very few that are acting, as you say, would appreciate that. Even if you're tearing off from a stop sign or carrying on like that, that often would attract the attention of the loss of a number of demerit points and probably an insurance bill that you're going to have trouble paying for.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** I just want to give way to the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid for recognition of guests.

#### Recognition of Guests

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

I just want to bring attention to – we have some special guests in the gallery here today. We have Heather Mullen and Roisin Mullen in the gallery, and we also have Shirley Jay with us as well.

I just want to let you guys know that Roisin was a winner of a national award in the Remembrance Day poster contest for her water painting, I believe is the technical term, I'm not sure. So, congratulations to Roisin, and I see her over there talking with the Premier as well. It's not every day you get to shake hands with the Prime Minister and the Premier in the same day, too, so that's a pretty exciting day for Roisin as well.

I was talking to Shirley outside about this bill. I believe the home and school association, according to Shirley, was one of the drivers of increasing this fine or even bringing this fine into existence way back when, back in the 1990s, on this actual bill of a fine for passing school buses. It's timely that she's joining with us today, so I just wanted to say welcome and thank you for being here.

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

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

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

I waited six years now to get the member from Georgetown on the floor to ask him questions.

**Mr. Myers:** Have at her.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** No.

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

**Chair:** No, to be serious, I want to thank the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this issue to the floor and I'm glad he's agreed to take it to committee because there was a great conversation here this afternoon on this bill. This is serious because the parents put their kids on these school buses with the intent that they're going to come home safe and these kids are innocent and they deserve us to make sure that we protect that they are safe.

This is a starting point. I'm glad he's brought it on the floor, even to get the discussion started if that be it. As a first responder, I dread the early morning and mid-afternoon times when the school buses are on the road, as a first responder because it's always in the back of your head. We always have practices with school buses and accidents, and children on these school buses. There is nothing that I'd want to see in my own district, is a car pass a school bus and hit a child because it would take the heart right out of you.

I'm glad this discussion is started. I'm glad the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters got it started, and it's up to us to make sure these children are safe on these school buses after this has started.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

Thank you to the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters for bringing this

forward. I think it's wonderful that we're going to extend this and take it further to committee, but I had some questions. Maybe it's more of a committee piece for us later, because as we all know – I think we all agree here that one of these incidences is one too many.

I wanted to know if you had any background information on how often this happens, and through that reporting process that I think bus drivers have to go through if there is a car going through, do we have any baseline information? Do we know how often that happens in a month or a year?

**Mr. Myers:** I don't and that's something that we had been trying to determine. I'm sure the department –

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Oh you have it? Okay. Do you have it now?

Go ahead.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I have received that information from Graham Miner, the director of highway traffic; I think that's his title.

In 2017 thus far, there have been 12 convictions for passing through the lights of a school bus. In 2016, there were 14. So, more than we thought, I guess, and I'm sure that's only a fraction of those that would have gone through.

**Mr. Myers:** That is quite a few that are being charged, but I would suspect there's a high number of those incidences happening where there's no ability to charge because the RCMP aren't there or not enough information was to be gathered. But, it would be an important part to have to complete the discussion.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

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

Those numbers are quite a bit higher than I had expected they would be as well, those

convictions. It will be good if we can get that information maybe when it moves along to committee to get a real understanding of what the baseline information is, because if some of the solution that we're talking about is an awareness campaign then we certainly need to measure where we are today and see if that awareness campaign is working, not just on the conviction side, but also and maybe as importantly, on the near misses side. All of that data that we can collect from the drivers, I think would be very important.

Again, thank you, member, for bringing this forward. I look forward to this going to committee.

Thank you.

**Mr. Myers:** Thanks.

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

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

I want to thank the member for taking this forward as well and I think it's just really a discussion starter, whether it's increasing the fines that will solve this or whatever it might be; I think going to committee and having a further discussion is absolutely terrific.

The only thing I want to add is, as the member was saying when he's coming into town and following the school buses, five minutes makes a difference. We all need to have a little patience, but I think we should recognize, too, the work of the bus drivers. We put our children and our grandchildren –

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

**Mr. McIsaac:** – in their hands and it is a lot of pressure for them to have those kids on the bus with them, but they take that and they do an honourable job of that. They recognize as well that there is a traffic lane building up behind them and when they have the opportunity – I've seen it many days – they pull over and they let the people go by.

So, kudos to our bus drivers. It's not an easy job. There's a lot of stress on them and whatever we can do to help them out, whether it's increasing fines or whatever,

but if we're getting those kinds of numbers for convictions, word on the Island spreads that: Hey, they're really taking this serious and they're watching it. That will help them to, but again, just kudos to the bus drivers because it is not an easy job and they are taxed with a very important job: Carrying our kids and grandkids.

**Mr. Myers:** I agree 100%.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, do you have something else or do you have a question?

**Ms. Biggar:** No, I'll just pass to the next person.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, technology's great, Mr. Chair. I had another note here from Graham Miner saying that there is a written exam for newcomers and any incorrect answer on a school bus question leads to an automatic failure of that exam – so an interesting piece there, too.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah – might need that for Islanders.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

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

**Mr. Myers:** He's good too.

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you Member from Georgetown for bringing this Bill to the floor and I thank the minister for suggesting that it goes to committee.

As the Chair can contest, we had an incident where a young, foreign student that we came upon one day actually went through a bus that was stopped with the lights flashing. He didn't know what to do and he was pretty worked up and he asked for the advice of the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road and I and we told him that he should go see the police, which he did. I don't know if he ever ended up getting charged or not with it, but anyway – there is an issue there around education.

I had quite a scare myself one time with my own child with a bus, but it wasn't somebody going around him. I was actually behind the bus and my son got off the bus and he saw me, the bus takes off, he saw that I was parked there and then he starts to walk across the road to come to me and, of course, there was a potato truck coming at the same time and he noticed it at the last minute and got out of the way.

The reason I agree with it going to committee is because I think that there's a lot of different answers and I think raising the fine might be good in a sense, but at the same time, I think that's really after the fact – that's after the offence is already committed and we should maybe look with more emphasis on trying to use technology to prevent it from happening in the first place. I don't know what that would be, whether that would be more arm extensions on the bus, or longer arm extensions on the bus, or something to try to stop it from happening in the first place. The old saying is – what is the old saying?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Quote of the day.

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

**An Hon. Member:** – is worth a pound of cure.

**Mr. Myers:** That's good.

**Mr. Murphy:** So, anyway, I fully support this going to committee.

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

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

I do applaud the member for bringing this forward. I think it's an issue that has to be dealt with and it's a serious issue and I agree with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries in regards to responsibility around the bus drivers. They've got their hands full. They're trying to watch the child, they're trying to watch the children in the bus, they're trying to watch both left and right side, what's coming forward and backwards. It's a job that I definitely wouldn't want and you've got to give them full credit for it.

I support this being dealt with this, but I think there might also be other avenues that would be good to discuss – whether there are avenues that could be put in place or measures could be put in place by act of regulation in regards to driver licences for anybody convicted of this. Maybe this might be a way to open up discussion –

**Ms. Biggar:** It's there for the graduate (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** – and see what we can do in that regard also.

Thank you.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah. I do think that when this discussion moves forward, there's a good opportunity to have the larger discussion of all the different aspects of it –

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

**Mr. Myers:** – and when the report comes back to the House, it may be lengthy in some of its recommendations and then it would be up to the department to figure out what's implementable, and what they can do, and what works with their planning and stuff.

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

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

Again, I just want to go back to all of the great ideas that are coming out here in some of the comments that are made. You know, it might be a good idea for anyone who is writing their first driver examination that if they fail the bus section, or don't get the answers the correctly, that they fail the exam. It doesn't matter who you are.

**An Hon. Member:** Good point.

**Mr. Roach:** The other side of it, I guess – I think which made me want to speak to this again: when I first arrived in Prince Edward Island – I'm a returning Islander – came back in 1990 and one of the first accident scenes that I attended as a peace officer was a bus accident. It was out on the other side of Cornwall, out in New Haven and the bus was 100 yards from a stop sign. The lights were flashing and a young 13-year-old got

off the bus, walked around to the front of the bus, stepped out, and was hit by a motor vehicle. We had to wait some time – I just happened to be literally only about a quarter of a mile away when the call came in that there was an accident involving a student on a bus, so I was there in short order. We couldn't move the young student at the time because of the injuries and the fear of back injuries that could be critical. We had to keep that student there and keep that student warm until the services arrived to take her to the hospital.

So, when you're actually there – and I'm sure other members here, former police men – can attest to that, but you feel pretty helpless. You're trying to say: Why did this happen? You've got a bus, you've got flashing lights, and there's a stop sign right there. That's why I felt I had to kind of speak up and speak to this again.

I think one thing that we should all take into consideration when we're talking about: how do we kind of slow this down? Every person that's getting a new drivers licence, for the better part – for the majority, are all former students. They are all students or they currently are that go to our schools and a lot of them are on our busses. So, there's a great place to have a really good focal point to start. I just thought I'd throw that in there and I think that's the kind of thing that happens when you engage like this – where you get people coming up with different ideas.

**Ms. Biggar:** Start in the schools.

**Mr. Roach:** Start right in the schools and teach our own because they are our newest drivers – the kids that are currently in school and it's their busses and it's them that are on the bus prior to that. Anyway, those are just a few more comments and, again, I can't say enough about appreciating this and seeing that it's coming to the forefront and going to committee where we'll get all of those ideas.

**Mr. Myers:** Just to one of your points there about when you had to respond to an accident and it made me think of something too. We think that an injury is a terrible thing, so we don't want that to happen, but there are a lot of people affected when that happens. If you have a school bus full of children who bear witness to that and it's

something that could linger with them for the rest of their lives and all of the people, like the RCMP and the first responders, like the Member from Souris talked about, who have to be, then, part of something that could scar or stick with them for the rest of their lives, too. The prevention, obviously, is key to help alleviate any of those concerns that could bring long-term issues.

**Mr. Roach:** Mr. Chair?

Just to follow-up on that, the member's absolutely correct – it's all the people that respond to that. I was almost terrified to phone the parents and say: There's been an accident, your daughter's been involved – no, don't come here because they took her to Charlottetown. How do you tell that? They want to go – go straight to the hospital, the ambulance is on the way. They can't even come to the scene – they've got to go – so, the anxiety and wondering how badly the child is hurt. Those are the things that we want to prevent. Fortunately, the young girl recovered and went on to university and everything went great, but there's a lot of worry there. I'm sure that young lady had a lot of nights where she thought about getting hit.

When we think about it, you've got a 13-year-old girl, probably weighs about 85 pounds getting whacked by a car that weighs a couple thousand pounds. When you think of it in those terms, that's when the impact of what we're trying to do here really hits home.

Again, thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** Thank you, Chair.

I'd also like to applaud the hon. member for bringing this Bill forward. I don't think anyone in the House knows this, but in a previous life, I was a school bus driver.

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

**Ms. Mundy:** So, when my children were small, it is something I did on a substitute basis. I can tell you, as a former driver, and

as someone who was witness to many, many close calls, that every bus driver on Prince Edward Island would be happy to, I guess, lend their voice and to see a bill like this passed.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries mentioned how stressful the job is because you do have to have eyes in the back of your head. You're driving this bus, upwards of 72 of our most precious resource on Prince Edward Island, you're driving them to and from their schools each and every day, and every time they board the bus you're worried that they're going to make it to their destination.

I can tell you, the drivers, we would tend to gather in the afternoon before the afternoon drive, and there was always talk of near misses in the morning. It was, as you said, it would be cars that were just anxious or aggravated or road rage or in a hurry, or as the Minister of Finance said: eating their breakfasts or texting or whatever. But they just weren't paying attention.

I can remember there was one day, it was such a close call, and I couldn't even drive the next day because it just horrified me, but there was – we were stopped and there was traffic stopped both ways already, and the children were lined up and I was just opening the door to let them off and about five cars back pulled out, to pass, the line of five cars, and the school bus. I beeped the horn and I closed the door and wouldn't let the children, but if that had been 10 seconds later there would have been seven children crossing that road, and that car was passing and he was gunning it.

Anything that we can do to keep our children safe, I am definitely in favour for. I think we will have many more conversations when this goes to committee and you will hear more stories.

But anyway, thank you, hon. member for bringing this bill.

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

**Chair:** Thank you minister.

We now have the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

**Ms. Biggar:** Just some feedback on some of the discussion we had around about writing exams. If you fail that on your driver's test, you fail the exam, period.

The posters that I mentioned that we have for different languages they are French, English and Mandarin. We also take those pamphlets to the car rental agencies because that's a big factor too; with foreign visitors just coming on vacation, so we do have those pamphlets in those different languages at our car rental agencies.

I think that, again, is another extension of education that we do. I think there is going to be a lot of good discussion come out of this committee.

Thank you, again, member.

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

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

I'd like to, also, commend the member for bringing this forward and sending it to committee. I, as a former police officer, I never did attend a school bus accident, but I did attend a lot of bad accidents; industrial accidents and trucking accidents where there is loss of life, but fortunately there were no kids.

I guess, what I would like to say, bring forward, I had a friend one time that – he was taking his turn and he was passing a school bus, and he had every right to do so, he was just clearing the back end of the bus, glanced up and saw the yellow lights on, so he didn't violate anything, he couldn't cut back in so he kept on going; thought it was the safest thing to do.

After he pulled in, he said: I felt terrible because up the road it was a pick up, and all the families, the mothers and fathers were out with their little ones along the side of the road and for him to get back in he felt like he violated the situation.

I don't know how you prevent that, so, there are two things here. There is one, where you stop to let people off, but there is also a danger for cars that have the legal right to pass. I want to commend school bus drivers

because school bus drivers, everyone I've have seen, they don't let the traffic build up behind them, they usually pull off. But there is an occasion where somebody thinks it's safe to pass; feels that, okay, that's the last stop, or whatever, goes by and then all of a sudden: gosh, I'm going too fast here for the situation with all these kiddies and families lined up along the road.

I don't know if there is something that could be looked into in that regard. You know what I'm saying; I don't know if the school bus driver could have a little signal light. I know the yellow lights come on: they're about to stop, okay. But, if there is a little light on the back of it that said: I'm about to flash the yellow lights on. I don't know, I just –

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

**Mr. Dumville:** A brake light or something, or a little – like you could just tap a switch and say: I'm about to stop.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) same lights as a police car.

**Mr. Dumville:** Anyway, it'll go to committee and it's just something that the committee could think about. My friend, he felt really bad about it. He didn't feel he did anything wrong, but it was close.

**Mr. Myers:** That is another good point because I know, even myself, if you get out ahead of that bus, you're still not out of the woods because you still have to be careful because if you're ahead of the bus, all the children are standing there at their gates, so you still have to be – the same precaution has to be in place because you don't know that – if they don't see that they might run out in front of you.

I know, when my own kids were little living on a stretch of road that was fast, not posted fast speed limit, it was just fast; people drove fast there. I had some of that surveyor paint, you know the orange stuff, and I painted a line at the end of the driveway and I said: wait for the bus, but it has to be behind that line. I put it back far enough that, at least, they weren't next to the road. I

know that doesn't solve all the things that could happen along there, but it was an extra precaution on my part to make sure that their feet weren't touching the pavement or they weren't anywhere near the edge of the road.

**Chair:** Next, we have the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I, too, would like to speak to this. I want to thank the hon. member for bringing it to the floor. I, as well as the hon. Member from Summerside-St. Eleanors, used to drive a school bus as a casual driver back about –

**Ms. Mundy:** Oh, wow.

**Mr. Gallant:** – 30 years ago –

**Ms. Mundy:** Another school bus driver –

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

**Mr. Gallant:** – thank you.

There were days I got home, I went: phew, got home safe and sound. I mean, you know, as a bus driver you have some pretty precious cargo, and you have to be watching all the time.

Nowadays with so much traffic on the roads; so many distractions – yes, as minister of education mentioned, as the minister of transportation, the extra sign is a great help, but if you're distracted and you come up behind a bus, something could happen.

I support this going to committee and look forward to any future discussion on it.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Another real point of interest: we talked about statistics earlier and what statistics we have. In 1980 there were 77,500 drivers. In 2016, out of a population of – what did we

have then, 148,000? We had 108,563 active drivers licenses in the –

**Mr. Myers:** And it's noticeable.

**Ms. Biggar:** – in the province. That's not even counting the million tourists that we get here in the summertime, right? So, it is quite noticeable.

Remarkably, you know, we are having a reduction in the fatalities in the province, if you compare those same stats from injury collisions. They're all going down, even though we have more drivers, but still, it's very – like you say, it's very key with the number of drivers we now have on the road that it is certainly noticeable, all of us that travel any great distance and within the metropolitan areas, I'm going to say, of the province, it's difficult. It's amazing the number of drivers that we have on the Island roads.

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, I know when – I go back to when I was young, in my area, most houses just had a car –

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Mr. Myers:** – and maybe only a driver and both –

**Ms. Biggar:** Good point, yes.

**Mr. Myers:** – wouldn't necessarily have their licenses. Some had no cars and just relied on their neighbours whenever they had to go a distance, which most of them never had to go a distance; the odd doctor's appointment.

But now when you drive around there are cars, there are five cars in –

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**Mr. Myers:** – some yards. There are three, four, five cars in the yard. Even the difference of car ownership is probably much – it's probably closer to a one-to-one over that same period of time, which does put a lot more cars on the road, and a lot more traffic –

**Ms. Biggar:** Anyway, thank you.

**Chair:** Do you want to say anything final?

**Mr. Myers:** No, I guess if the wishes of everybody and it sounds like it is, to send this to committee, we'll yank it off the floor and do it in that motion.

Thanks, everyone.

**Chair:** Okay, thank you very much, and just in closing, I want to say it was a great discussion –

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

**Chair:** – and I guess we'll bring back – okay, so I'll have you to –

**Mr. Myers:** So I say –

**Chair:** (Indistinct)

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

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

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House having under consideration a bill to be intitled Bill No. 101, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act*, 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.

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, I move that we take this to committee. I make motion that we take this to committee.

**Speaker:** Okay, hon. minister, do we have a seconder?

**Ms. Biggar:** Seconded by the Minister of Finance.

**Speaker:** Okay.

Does everybody understand the motion?

**An Hon. Member:** yes.

**Speaker:** Are we ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**Speaker:** All in favour, signify by saying “yea”.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yea!

**Speaker:** Opposed, say “nay”.

Motion is carried, and it is unanimous.

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

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

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

Opposition would now like to call Motion 9 to the floor.

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

**Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin):** Motion No. 9.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters moves, seconded by hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the following Motion:

**WHEREAS** the federal Liberal government has announced a number of proposed changes to the Canadian tax system that are aimed at ensuring that all Canadians pay their fair share of taxes;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that Members of this Legislative Assembly stand before this House today in support of those changes.

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

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

I feel like I've been talking all afternoon, but –

**Mr. LaVie:** You have.

**Mr. Myers:** – I'll talk about this motion.

Basically, as all Canadians saw back in the summer, and I might add it was in the dead of summer, the federal government started making some moves to change the federal tax system, and what they had looked to do was change the tax system so they could

take from small business, and their stock line was that, you know, small businesses were not small businesses, a business bureau (Indistinct) they were hiding money, that they were putting it in off-shore accounts and those types of things, and I thought it was very unfair.

Why I thought it was very unfair is that I grew up in a small business family; my mom and dad both in separate ventures and my dad still runs his business today. He's been running that business for 45 years now, and I watched over the years the amount of time that he dedicated to his business, that amount of time that he would have been on the road that we would have eaten supper without him, that he was gone early in the morning and sometimes he'd be home late at night. You wouldn't see him for days.

To have him labeled by Justin Trudeau and Bill Morneau as a tax cheat certainly hurt, and I know that many people and business families and many business-owners right across Canada were hurt by those words. I don't know if it was an unfortunate choice of words, they didn't know any better, or it was just branded Liberal arrogance that has become the flavour of politics in Ottawa these days under Trudeau.

It's hard to run a business. For anybody who looks at businesspeople and talks about them as though they're making all this money or they have some rich and lavish lifestyle because they run a business certainly aren't speaking about the majority of businesses. There's probably some successful businesses that make a lot of money, but in a lot of cases businesspeople are – who are doing well on Prince Edward Island in particular – are doing well to give themselves a paycheck. So the same paycheck that we would all get on behalf of the taxpayers here in this Chamber is a paycheck that they're working 12-13 hour days to try to get for themselves, and in a lot of cases wouldn't be making the money that elected officials would be making.

I always applaud businesspeople. I know how hard it is, and I know I've heard some flippant comments over the years about, you know somebody's new truck or something that a businessperson had bought, and whether or not they had good years is quite irrelevant to me at that point.

The point for me with small businesses; they are the ones with their necks on the line, so they are the ones at every single day that go to work, that have their own personal finances, who could have a personal line of credit involved with growing their business, who may be taking money out of their own personal savings to make that happen, they're the ones that are running 100% risk when they're out there doing business. They're the people that are employing people, and when I take my father as an example, he would have employed hundreds of people over the years; hundreds of people over the years and did that as a part of his business because he obviously needed the employees, so it wasn't – but it's a two-way street.

If government looks at small business or business on Prince Edward Island as a vehicle for prosperity, then they'd be looking at business the right way. I think we need to send a message to Ottawa that we're not happy, and it was the basis of my questions in Question Period today, that I'm not happy at all with the way this transpired.

I was down at the chamber event here in Charlottetown, and I know I said the finance minister wasn't there. I didn't see him, so I didn't realize he was there. But that aside, the room was full. It was packed, and people were quite hot about the issue. They wanted to talk about it. There was a number of people that went to the mic and had their say, but they absolutely packed that room and they were passionate about it.

It was good to see them all coming together, because businesspeople don't always belong to society or a union that operates like that in the, I guess in this case to the chamber but was the one that brought them together, but they came under a unified voice to talk about their issue and their displeasure with the issue, and I thought that was good on their part, and that happened right across Canada, and as that happened across Canada, we were able to see the government starting to change their tune up until the point where – we still don't have any idea what the changes are going to be.

One of the things that really disappointed me, that really disappointed me, was when I heard that they were going to take the so-

called perks that employees have and treat them as taxable income. That's okay if you're a partner in a law firm that gets your gym membership paid. I'm okay with you taxing that perk. But when you're talking about somebody who might get 15% off a Big Mac at the end of the night, I'm not okay with that.

This government has to get their head on straight when it comes to dealing with people in Canada, and I was quite saddened at their attitude towards Canadians.

I had, like a lot of people in here, was elected during the last government in Ottawa, which was Harper government, and I heard a lot of negativity about them and the way they had treated people.

What I heard from Justin Trudeau, and I think what Canadians had heard from Justin Trudeau was he was going to be better and it was sunny ways and everything was going to be great. I'm quite disappointed to see this, this summer.

One of the other things that had come up and I was at the committee when we had a presentation on this topic. It had to do with –

**Mr. Trivers:** Crazy.

**Mr. Myers:** – spouses or children who work in a family that there's going to be new rules. That somebody is going to check up and see what sort of an active role they have in the community.

I'll go back, again, to my own family situation. Prior to my mother going into business, she raised four kids, one of which was me. I'd like to think she did a good job, but everybody has their opinion, I guess, on that.

But all those years that I talked about where my father was building his business and he would be in Grand Manan, he'd be building a fish plant over there on two different occasions. In Alberton, building a potato warehouse or – that's a long way away from Cardigan. Some of those trips don't result in a: I'm coming home at night. Those result in: I have to stay up here for the weeks while we build these buildings. That's just the way construction works.

My mom, who was home with us all the time, who fielded all of the stuff that happened in the home, who took care of everything that had to do with school, feeding, clothing; all of those things, was home for all of those years.

How can somebody in Ottawa now determine what her actual value was to the company? How do you determine? Why does a bureaucrat get to decide what the value of a spousal unit or a family unit is in a business?

Just because you're not the one carrying the broom doesn't mean you don't have an active role in the community. Just because you don't report to a job site doesn't mean you're not a part of a business.

It's extremely shortsighted. Family business is something that we should be proud of. Family business and everybody in here would know numerous family businesses. Some of you belong to family businesses. That they are an all-in and everybody kind of chips in when they have.

I remember growing up, coming to Charlottetown on Saturday mornings with my father. I remember leaning out the windows of what is now the Delta, when there were no windows in it because that was the job that he was working on at the time.

That's going back a few years. That's probably 1983. I remember sitting up near the top floor of the Delta looking out the windows on a Saturday morning because he had to go in and do work.

For me, it was a chance to get to Charlottetown because in those days, you didn't get to go to Charlottetown. Also, it was an opportunity to spend time with my father, who was building a giant hotel so he was gone all the time.

Then, over the years, though I don't have any involvement in the company, so I don't want to lead anybody astray that I'm involved in the company, but over the years at anytime I was needed, if he needed me for whatever reason, I did what I could to help and be there and be a part of whatever happened.

I guess my point is that when it comes to a family-run business it is sometimes an all-in family. It's very hard for somebody who sits in Ottawa in an office who is a bureaucrat, to go through and say: well, what you did didn't contribute to the business, and what you did didn't contribute to the business. But because you carried a broom you contributed to the business, or because you drove a truck, you contributed to the business.

Not all contributions to business are an 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. They don't all happen on an 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The member beside me here, fishes, and I'm sure he, you know, though he's the one that gets up in the morning to go out and do it and has hired help, I'm sure that he would probably tell you that his wife plays a big part in it because I know there's no way he would get fed during the day –

**Mr. LaVie:** You're right.

**Mr. Myers:** – unless she took care of him.

You can't discount the contribution to –

**Mr. LaVie:** You're right.

**Mr. Myers:** – businesses like that.

It's not fair for somebody in Ottawa, especially a politician, to brand those people as tax cheats because they're all-in. Because they take their family business serious and they're all-in? It was shameful.

Completely, non-politically, I was angry this summer over it because I felt, as a product of a business family, that those people were being treated extremely unfairly.

Maybe there is some higher level big time corporate stuff going on that needs to be addressed, but that's certainly not the message that was delivered this summer. That's certainly not the people who were attacked this summer.

The passive investment thing is another thing. To say that: I can't keep my money in my business without it being taxed?

Anyone here who has run a business knows that you don't spend all your money. You

save as much as you can. You save it, save it. Those that are saving it reinvest in their business. In my father's case; buy equipment. In a restaurant's case; it's upgrade or expand or do something new or whatever it is that they think they need to do to put money back in their business.

If they don't save that money they have to borrow it. If they have to borrow it there is a cost associated with it that drives the cost of business up, which, ultimately, drives the product cost up to the consumer. That's the reality.

To say that businesses can't keep that passive investment inside their company to save for a rainy day is what, it's a rainy day fund is what it is for businesses when you don't spend all your money. It's exactly how you would run your home if you had enough money to save it; you'd save it.

I'm not sure how many people have that kind of money. I know, but for those that do, you save and you save for those major investments. That's exactly what businesses are doing.

They're not hiding it there because they don't want to spend it. They're not hiding it there because they don't want it, they want it.

There's an issue. There's an issue on that corporate level, apparently, I'm told where there are millions and millions of money that's basically just dead money. It's sitting there in passive investment; doing nothing and it's not part of making (Indistinct) that's great.

If you're talking about the 1%, if the 1% are the problem, then by all means address the 1%. When you talk about family farms and small businesses and call them tax cheats, you're not talking about the right people.

Anybody who is in business will contribute, they contribute to – anybody who has done a payroll knows that there's employer contributions that they're paying on behalf of the employee. That costs money. They do it. I'm not even saying it's a bad thing or complaining about it. I'm just saying: they're paying their share and they're an active part of society now and they're an active part of the solution to some of the

problems Canada has around employment and poverty, and general well-being of people.

I'm going to let the member seconded it. I'm sure everybody is sick of hearing me talk from, I think, since 2:00 p.m. this afternoon

**Mr. LaVie:** No.

**Mr. Myers:** You're not, I know, I appreciate that you're not. I do appreciate that you're not.

The other thing I'm just going to touch on really quickly is the long-term trust. As everyone here knows, as a politician, your long-term trust is important. The fact that people trust you is important.

What happened in Ottawa this summer, in my own opinion from what I hear from businesspeople, broke the long-term trust of businesspeople in Canada. They no longer trust that this federal government looks out for what's best for them.

They no longer believe that this federal government is looking and saying: you're doing great for Canada. You're doing what we need for Canada. You're the champions of our economy in Canada.

Let's face it, small businesses are champions of the economy in Canada. There are way more people doing what would be termed as small business from a federal perspective in Canada than any other type of business.

Small business is a backbone of this country. Small business is the absolute backbone of Prince Edward Island. They should be applauded for what they do, and there has to be, from this Assembly, we have to protect the long-term trust with our business community.

That's why we bring this motion forward so that we can get the support that we need so Islanders know that they, at least, have our support, that the long-term trust that we want them to have in us, that we can foster, and as we move forward – we have the ability to send a message to Ottawa. We may be small. It's the Premier that says small can be mighty. Let's show our voice. Let's be mighty and let's send a message to

Ottawa from this Assembly that we're not happy with the way they treat small business and we want their attitude changed when they look at us.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise and second the motion today.

Frankly, I find it hard to believe that in this day and age any government, especially a federal government with all of its resources and its tax experts, could come up with such a poorly-prepared document. They may not realize the negative impact of these proposals on small businesses and on communities across our province and across the country. Or, do they simply not care?

The federal government did not do its homework or did not exercise due diligence. Certainly, it did not consult, at least not until there was an uproar from across the country that they had to back down and launch a consultation process. I do not believe that they anticipated the backlash from Canadian business operators. The point is they should have.

Small business is the backbone of this country and of this province. As the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters talked about, small business owners are always sacrificing, always looking ahead at how they can make their business better, how they can improve it; how they can expand; how they can hire more employees. That all gives back to the community and all gives back to the economy of this province and this country.

I want to read into the records of this House a letter that was sent to the Minister of Finance from the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, which I found on their website. It's dated October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 and it states:

We write to you today on behalf of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of

Commerce, representing 1,000 members who employ almost 20,000 Islanders, to express our concerns with the proposed changes outlined in the July 18<sup>th</sup> consultation document titled, Tax Planning Using Private Corporations.

We believe this document paints an unfair picture of business in PEI and across the country. Statements from the government suggest these changes will only affect the wealthiest Canadians. The chamber disagrees with this statement based on the overwhelming amount of feedback received from our members, as well as what we discovered through consultations with a number of tax specialists.

The implications of these proposed changes will reach well beyond closing a few tax loopholes, as it has been suggested. The consultation paper being released is not really a consultation paper. Out of the three areas under review, the government appears to have made final tax policy decisions with respect to both income splitting and converting income into capital gains. The paper was released in the middle of the summer holidays, with only 75 days to make comments. In our view, this is a very unfair way to introduce major tax policy changes to Canadian private business.

There is an anti-entrepreneurial sentiment that exists throughout the document. We know you are familiar with the work of Island Advance and its mandate to celebrate support and encourage entrepreneurship in Prince Edward Island. We are concerned that the tone and position of the consultation document conflicts with the efforts of Island Advance. The government is proposing these changes because they believe that tax planning undertaken by private companies is raising concerns about the fairness of the tax system.

Unfortunately, the government is comparing business owners and entrepreneurs, who undertake a significant amount of risk, to employees who do not have the same level of risk. Fairness does not always mean equal. Any consultation on appropriate tax policy for Canadian business needs to take this into account. The government proposals go well beyond targeting the wealthy; they also affect small business owners who clearly are part of the middle class.

One tax specialist with the chamber membership estimates that 80% to 90% of their small business clients will be impacted by these proposed changes. In a review of the tax policy with respect to Canadian private businesses, must include a review of personal tax rates and in particular, the level of tax income where the top personal marginal tax rate kicks in for an individual. Any new tax policy proposed needs to balance fairness with complexity.

The current proposals of the government are extremely complex and in many cases, will be difficult for the Canada Revenue Agency to administer. They will increase the cost of tax compliance for the Canadian business community, which is inconsistent with the government's objective of reducing red tape for businesses –

**Ms. Casey:** Call the hour.

**Ms. Compton:** – so they can focus.

**Speaker:** The hour has been called.

**The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker:** You may be seated.

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 Assistant (E. Doiron):** 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.

I will now call on the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point and the Deputy Speaker to come and Chair the Capital Estimates.

**Chair (Casey):** 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 on page 11. The Capital Expenditure Education, Early Learning and Culture has been read and we were asking questions.

Permission to bring a stranger on the floor?

Granted

Thank you. We'll just wait for him to get settled.

Hon. Members, while we're getting ready to start, I would just ask you to ensure that you direct your questions through the Chair. I'd be happy to add you to the speaking order.

Good evening, welcome. Could you please 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:** Welcome.

**Jim Miles Executive Director:** Thank you.

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

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

When we were last at this, we were talking about the Capital Budget for schools and I think we got to 2020-2021. So, in 2021-2022, there is \$7.2 million. I'm wondering what schools are allotted in that bunch?

**Mr. J. Brown:** (Indistinct) half of that.

**Chair:** Sorry. Hon. Member, would you kindly repeat your question?

**Mr. Myers:** I thought it was for the finance minister. I didn't think it was for the education minister so I spoke in a voice that he would hear.

**Mr. Roach:** I guess I can answer.

**Mr. Myers:** There's \$7.2 million in the Capital Budget five-year plan for 2021-2022 and I'm wondering what that \$7.2 million is allocated for in school constructions and renovations.

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

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, for 2021-2022, that is for West Royalty – and additional classroom space and Sherwood School replacement that will continue.

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

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

I'm confused on the Sherwood School. What I had heard was: It's going to start in the 2019-2020 budget, so two years away, but it's not going to end until 2022?

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

**Mr. Roach:** It's actually going to start with some preliminary work in 2018-2019 and it'll continue from there right through until 2021-2022.

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

**Mr. Myers:** So the Sherwood School is now a four-year project?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Roach:** I should explain that the bulk of the work is three years. The bulk of the work that's going to take place is in 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022. It'll be some preliminary work that's done in 2018-2019.

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

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

I guess where I'm confused is: three years to build this building – having actually worked in a construction company and built schools

– the three years to build this building, it's going to be some massive building, I would think, is it?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thanks, Madame Chair.

Perhaps, I can shed a little bit more light on this and the minister of transportation might even have some additional comments.

When you're doing a new school, in particular, there's a more extensive process than just the actual building. So, the first piece of it – and this work has already, in some way, begun – would be folks from TIE would arrange to have some what I'm going to call conceptual work done. In other words, they have to start to figure out: What are you going to do through the planning and implementation process to make this happen? As an example, Sherwood School sits on an existing piece of property. The question will be asked and we'll have to determine: Will the new school be able to be built on that piece of property or will we have to acquire any additional property to build the school? What will the school look like?

There will be a planning committee that will be set in place with a number of different officials, both from our department, from PSB, from TIE, and home and school, and the school – that will sit on that committee and basically they look at what they would like to see in that school envelope and then we try and figure out what we can make happen within it.

When you start to look at the different kinds of expenditures as they line up over the years, a lot of that work would likely be happening in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 and then the actual start of construction would likely be 2021-2022 –

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** – school years.

**Chair:** Oh, sorry.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry – and then the project would take some time, obviously, to complete.

You'd probably be looking at – for a school like that – it's hard to say at this point in time, depending on what it shapes up like, but you're probably looking at a couple of years to get it done and the minister of transportation might have more on that.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll just add to that, if you look at *École La-Belle-Cloche* and those kinds of projects that, you know, it is a very comprehensive planning process that has to take place. As the minister said, planning with the committee and then taking those plans forward. There's a large amount of tendering process that has to be put in place. Those are done in phases; you can't tender everything out at once. But the whole planning process when it comes to our department under that will be quite extensive, so rolling that out –

If you compare it to the other school projects that have taken place, and if we even compare it, even though this is not a new build, if you compare it to Three Oaks alone, and that's not a new building that we're putting up, but the extensive renovations project – if we did that school, for instance, for Three Oaks, it'd be \$40 million, that budget. So by doing what we're doing there is different.

But with Sherwood, you know there's a lot of planning that has to take place to make sure that it's done right and the way that it needs to be, and the whole planning process now entails a new model of classroom learning that, in consultation with the school board, you have to really plan out so that there's a whole new model of learning areas and breakout areas. It's not the traditional four walls of the former type of school that we're talking about here.

Thank you.

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

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

So my understanding then from the process as it has been explained, is there isn't actually a guarantee that Sherwood is going to get a new school, the current school could be renovated in that same period of time?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I want to make it perfectly clear: The existing Sherwood school is not able to be renovated.

**An Hon. Member:** Brand new.

**Ms. Biggar:** It will require a new structure from bottom to top.

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

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

This is exactly what happened in Souris. The school in Souris had a plan in process and they had somebody from the home and school and somebody from the community and somebody from government, and they went through this whole process and they were going to get a new school, but they didn't. They actually got a renovated, and they said it couldn't be renovated. All these things were said at the time, and at the end of the day, the \$20 million or whatever it was ended up being spent renovating the existing school.

Based on what the minister of education said in his rollout plan, I don't see any assurances that's for sure what they're going to get, because he's going to have to go under the recommendations of his committee, which hasn't actually been formed yet, so until they meet and give recommendations you won't know what they're actually planning to do.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Well, I'm just wondering, is that the case?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** As we indicated, it will be a new school. You can't compare it to the other project. It has been determined there is

a new school being constructed, and with the plans we will go forward on in consultation with the school board, with the meetings that were held last winter during the school review, that was the recommendation. That was the recommendation that was accepted. Because of the condition of Sherwood school –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – it's a 60-year-old school if I'm –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sixty-three, I think. It opened in 1956.

**Ms. Biggar:** So it is a 63-year-old structure. It is not in any way, shape, or form able to be refitted, reconstructed, redesigned, or renovated. It will be demolished and a new one constructed.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

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

Can you give me year-by-year what the plan is for the French school board in a five-year plan?

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, Madam Chair?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I might want to be clear on that. Can you specify what exactly you're asking? What plan are you asking about for the French Language School Board?

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

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you, Chair – school construction and renovation.

**Mr. J. Brown:** There's a couple of schools that we're working on, obviously, within that envelope. Is there one in particular that you're wondering about?

**Mr. Myers:** No, I want to know every year what French school would be allocated to the budget item?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sure. For 2018-2019, École La-Belle-Cloche has \$160,000 allocated to it, and for 2018-2019, École-Sur-Mer, which I should note is an addition – it's an addition to basically add high school to an existing building – and it's estimated that for 2018-2019, \$3.7 million would be allocated to that, and for 2019-2020 \$1.3 would be allocated to it.

**Mr. Myers:** That's it for five years?

**Mr. J. Brown:** That's it, yeah.

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

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

I'm wondering why it is that the French schools aren't given the same consideration to have a five-year plan in theirs as the English schools are.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not sure, Madam Chair, I understand the question.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, can you expand on your question?

**Mr. Myers:** Sure, so if you look at your Capital Budget, you have money spread over five years. I don't know what you have in 2022-2023, but in four of the years we've talked about extensive projects, but when I asked about the French schools you didn't have anything past 2019-2020, so they don't actually have a five-year cycle planned like the rest of the schools. They have a two-year plan, and the last three years –

So the French school board doesn't have any idea whether or not they're going to have any allocation to fix some of their ongoing issues past 2020.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I think there are a few things again that I just want to be a little bit clear on when we talk about this.

This budgeting process is in relation to all schools. There happens to be two school boards – the Public Schools Branch and the French Language School Board – that both fall under our department's consideration for requests that go to finance related to the Capital Budget, and finance ultimately determines what we're going to do over the five-year capital plan.

In that, we are seeing we are just finishing a just-under \$10 million school in Souris for the French Language School Board. Over the past number of years the French Language School Board has seen a tremendous amount of investment. In fact, over the past 10 years, 20% of the Capital Budget has gone to the French Language School Board for an allocation of roughly 5% of the overall students that we would have. With this allocation over the next five years, they will get roughly 10% of the Capital Budget over that planning period.

Then aside from that, because you had mentioned their ongoing concerns, as I had mentioned the last time we were speaking in response to a question from the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, we have a capital repair budget that deals with what, I'm going to call ongoing maintenance related to schools, so they would have requests in for ongoing maintenance related to that.

Now, in saying that, the French Language School Board schools are very new, relatively speaking. So we have invested a tremendous amount of money in the French Language School Board schools over the past 10-plus years, depending on what horizon you want to look at, and so they have – they're in pretty good shape relative to the PSB in terms of the infrastructure that they have.

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

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

There are a couple of things: One is, I would disagree that we have two school boards; we

have one, and we have the Public Schools Branch, which is a vastly different beast than a school board which is completely autonomous. So part of their autonomy is that they'd like to be able to have some control over their planning, which I totally appreciate their position, and in order to do that they have to know in a five-year window what they're going to get for money.

What you're telling me is that they should be happy with what they have because it's all-new and they shouldn't have any plans to expand on what they have?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. member, that's not what I said. What I said is that they have had a tremendous amount of investment in their infrastructure over the last 10 years, in particular, but going back before that; relative to the PSB, they've also had a tremendous amount of investment in their infrastructure. So what I said is, relatively speaking, their infrastructure is in a lot better shape in terms of meeting the needs of the students in their area.

When we look at it, on the time horizon that we're looking at which is five years, they're getting a high school addition to complement what they already have at *École-sur-Mer* and we're completing the *École La Belle Cloche* project in Rollo Bay, which was a project that took a few years and the total cost of which will be just under \$10 million.

I guess is bears mentioning, as well, there are six schools in the French Language School Board and there are roughly 10 times that in the Public Schools Branch, and the schools that are in the Public Schools Branch are significantly older on a per-school basis.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, I'm going to let you have one more question and then I have five other people on the list, and if they all took 20 minutes, we'd be at 9:00 p.m. I'd be happy to add you to the end of the list if you have more questions.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Myers:** Just to go back to that, and I listened to what you said, but if I was on the French Language School Board and I just listened to what you said, you as much as said they should be happy with what they have. Basically, I paraphrased what you say to say: They've had a great investment. We've built this and this is brand new, and you only have six schools and it's all relatively new infrastructure. If I was them, I would be sitting here listening; is he saying: Don't come here, you should be happy with what you have?

On the topic, and I support whole heartedly their assertion that they need to have a five-year planning window of some sort. Why won't you sit down with the school board and do – because I know they're not happy with you; I know this for a fact. They're not happy that they haven't been given consideration in each of the five years in the five-year Capital Budget so that they can't plan. Well, I know they are because I did an interview on it the other day. But, you didn't because you wouldn't come out.

**Chair:** Do you have a question, hon. member?

**Mr. Myers:** Yeah, I'm getting to it.

You wouldn't come out and do the interview, so I have all the information that you don't have because you wouldn't go out and face the fact that they're angry with you. Will you give them what they're asking for and give them at least a five-year plan so they can plan their cycles, just like the unelected, appointed school board has?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Hon. member, we have given them a five-year plan of what our intentions are in terms of capital spending.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Thanks, Chair.

I'm interested in a breakdown of the classroom technology expenditures of 2.525 million coming up next year. If you'd like to table the breakdown that would be wonderful, or publishing it online would be even better.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The way that the budget for classroom technology is set out over that five-year horizon is as follows: 2.52 in 2018-2019; 2019-2020, 2.2; 2020-2021, 2.1; 2021-2022, 2 million; and 2022-2023 is 1.6 for a total of 10.425.

Next year, there's a 1.5 million allocation that's set up as part of the plan to implement the bring your own device program, which I believe the hon. member would be familiar with, there will be a requirement, basically, to implement a firewall and a software that will allow teachers at the head of the class to be able to determine and know what all the students have – an interconnectivity with all of the devices that they would have in their classroom. There would be an investment made in that next year.

In addition to that, we will start into a refresh program for the hardware devices that we have, so Chromebooks and laptops and what do you call them? There are new versions of smart boards; anyway, I can't remember what they're called. There are currently 12,000 devices in schools that need regular replacement. There's 3,000 laptops; 1,450 desktops; and 7,550 Chromebooks. After that 1.5 is spent on the infrastructure that I just mentioned, the bulk of the balance will be devoted to refreshing the hardware as we go through.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Just to be clear, that's for 2018-2019, or are you talking about that full five-year period? What you just described there, I just missed that. Was that just 2018-2019?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** No, that's the full five-year period, hon. member.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** Thank you, Chair. Next year, what are your plans for the 2018-2019 year, specifically?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The 1.5 will be the bulk of the – the 1.5 will be the 1.5 of the 2.52 for 2018-2019 and it's to get in place that firewall and the software that's required for the teachers to enable the bring your own device program.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** I understand the bring your own device program, I believe, in terms of getting the Wi-Fi there and allowing devices to connect to it. I'm interested in this portion that allows the teacher to interact with the students, that's what it sounds like you're saying, on their own device. You're suing Chromebooks already. You're using G Suite for education and seems to me, as long as they have access to Wi-Fi and they're able to bring that up on their device, they should be able to collaborate; I'm not understanding what additional software is needed.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I would agree that you're maybe not getting the picture that I'm trying to convey.

Say the classroom looks like this, which most modern-day classrooms don't, but for argument sake, the teacher would have their kind of map of devices on their device or their platform up at the front of the classroom or in the middle, wherever the teacher is going to teach from and they would be able to click on Rustico-Emerald and look at what Rustico-Emerald is doing on Rustico-Emerald's, if it was a Chromebook or if it was their own iPad that they brought in or whatever.

You have more technological capability than I do, I would imagine. So, this is my understanding of the way this software will work, but they've been looking at it and that's what I'm told; that to make this work for teachers and not create a whole lot of extra work for teachers, teachers need to be confident that they can have the tools that they need to put bring your own device to work, which is a software that enables them be connected to each of the devices that would be in their classroom.

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

**Mr. Trivers:** That's all, Chair.

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

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

To the minister: What is put in place when major construction is going on in the schools to lessen the impact on the teachers or the students trying to learn when construction is going on?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not totally sure I follow what your question is, but –

**Mr. Fox:** You got construction going on at Three Oaks school: What is in place to ensure that that construction does not impact the learning ability of the students or impede the teachers trying to teach the course?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll take it.

Specific to the Three Oaks project, as the Member from Summerside-Wilmot asked me the other day and in response to that, I explained that in consultation with the school team. There is a school team that meets every morning with the construction manager before it starts, on a daily basis. If there is any construction going to happen in a particular area there is a plan that is put in place so that students are located in another part of the building so that it doesn't impact

on the day-to-day learning. The school team meets every morning, including the principal. They go over what work is being done that day, and if it may impact on any kind of a disruption, it has been and can be planned for a different period of time.

We have completed one new section of the school so those students are there now in that new area and it's moved off to another area, which is cordoned off. We're able to accommodate learning in every day setting right now. If there is something specific that has to take place that may impact the students there has been a plan put in place to do it on a weekend, to do it on a PD day that it's not going to impact on student learning.

It's been working very well, any plan that needs to be revised is done in consultation with the school teaching team under –

**Chair:** The –

**Ms. Biggar:** – the direction.

**Chair:** Thank you, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture had an intervention.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, so, hon. member, I guess I would add to what the minister has said by just indicating the following; each project will be different. So just depending on what you're doing.

As an example, with Sherwood, part of the piece with Sherwood is that, just because of the age of the infrastructure, the way it's set out, all that kind of stuff, the folks at TIE had engaged to, you know, look at whether or not that school envelope could be used and indicated that it's probably not a structure that we would invest any further monies into because of the age of it and the state that it's in.

In addition, you look at, with Sherwood, you would have between five – I think it's, the number is roughly 550 students that you would then have to take someplace else to go to school for probably two years. When you look at Sherwood, there is no place else. That becomes part of the consideration that you would look at in relation to that construction project. Even as it's there, you

know, you would look at Sherwood being on an envelope of property and then requiring a new project to be built on that same envelope of property, which will impact the playgrounds, which will impact sports facilities that are around; the whole deal.

Whatever the project is, folks from the school, folks from the PSB, folks from TIE, all collaborate to ensure that that's a safe learning environment for the students as the construction goes on. They do their best, as the minister had indicated, on a day-in-day-out basis to ensure that that happens in a way that makes sure that the student is safe and their learning optimized. That's the focus when those construction projects are ongoing.

Specifically, in relation to Three Oaks, we were fortunate there because the school is roughly at 75% capacity and there are, really, four wings in the schools. So, what they've done is they have moved the students around from one wing to the next into different classrooms and they'll work on one wing at a time. There are, kind of, five phases to the project. The students are never in the phase that's under construction.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** I'll just add to that.

In regards to specific – to the Three Oaks project, it's a very unique project, Madam Chair, because it's the largest – it's not just a renovation project; it's a reconstruction from the outside in with a total redesign of whole interior of the school. It is the largest most complex reconstruction of an existing teaching facility that has ever taken place in the province, which is totally different than – as the minister said: when we're talking about Sherwood, you're talking about space in the proximity to it that a new facility can be built. When it's completed then you can relocate the students and that will be what the plan is.

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

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

Keeping with Three Oaks, if I understand it right, it's new construction from the outside

wall going inward, so that's going to impact classrooms that are around that area. In the morning, if I'm following you correct, the teachers meet with the construction foreman –

**Ms. Biggar:** The principal.

**Mr. Fox:** The principal – and if they're going to do work near this classroom or whatever they move those kids out of that homeroom or wherever into another classroom, is that right?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** They know more than a day-to-day basis of where the construction is going to take place. As the minister mentioned, it's done in different wings.

One wing is now completed. The other students that were located in the next wing have been relocated.

If there is something specific, if it's jack hammering in the area and there are students close by that can hear that then those things are adapted. It's not a matter of: Okay, today we're going to do this so, you were in this classroom yesterday, but today you're going to be in that classroom. It's not that, you know, chaotic, I'll say.

There is a long-term plan. They know what they're going to do on a week-to-week basis in each wing. It's not as chaotic as I think, perhaps, you're suggesting.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Every effort, then, is made to make sure the teachers are not disrupted in their teaching and the students are not being impacted by the noise going on in the school.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** That's correct.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks, Chair.

Why do I have here, a message from today in regards to the construction going on, but even – I want to read it: Good evening, Jamie. Just thought I would send a quick recording from one of the classrooms at Three Oaks, and the recording is attached, this afternoon at 1:30-ish –

**Chair:** You're not going to play the recording?

**Mr. Fox:** No.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Fox:** This is what our kids are enduring. This is what our kids are enduring during class time with the renovations going on at the school. Thanks. If you have any questions just let me know.

This goes – flies right in the face of what the two ministers are saying about the kids and teachers are not being impacted.

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

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

I'd be happy to look into that because our department is the construction manager there and we work, as I said, everyday, with the school. If there is something specific I would appreciate more detail so that I can certainly look into that if there's a concern. We are – if the principal has a concern, and that parent has expressed it to the principal we work, as I said, everyday there is a team in that school that we work with.

Certainly, if that person also shared that concern with anyone else other than you, we would be able to follow-up on it with issue. We will follow-up if you wish to table that, I'd be happy to take that –

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct) table (Indistinct) recording.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have –

**Ms. Biggar:** I don't know recording –

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

**Ms. Biggar:** – you're talking about.

**Mr. Fox:** Let's switch gears.

I've got a thread of emails here, Chair, in regards to concerns from Kensington in regards to the town being concerned over a storage tank system around the Kensington high school.

For the last year they've been trying to get the concern of what happens if that tank breaks and contaminates the well field in Kensington.

With that, it was sent to me and I cannot understand, maybe you can explain this, why it would take over a year to deal with this concern when all they have got to do; they put protection around it so nobody would run into it, but why wouldn't somebody just think about picking it up and putting back in a concrete barrier protection tank?

They're online, you can see them. So, I can't understand why – or can you explain to me why that would take so long for somebody to make a decision to clean that up, or take care of it.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. member, I would note that – and maybe you'll take a rip by there on your way home – if you went by there today, there's a New Jersey barrier in front of the – it's a diesel tank for the buses, so that's the first point that I would make –

**Mr. Fox:** I know what it is. I've been there.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Okay, just –

**Chair:** Allow the minister to answer the question.

**Ms. Biggar:** Not everybody has.

**Mr. J. Brown:** For the benefit of everybody else and for Hansard, it's a diesel tank to fill the buses, okay. The tank has been inspected, it's in great shape. There are two

cement and steel barriers that were in front of it previously, and Jersey barriers on the outside of them. In addition to that, there's been Jersey barriers added on either side of the tank and in front of the tank where the fill portion is.

We've been – well, the Public Schools Branch has been actively engaged with the town, and I've had correspondence from Mayor Caseley. The Public Schools Branch has been dealing with them back and forth. They've been looking at a number of different sites together.

We've as recently as this morning made a proposal to them in relation to a site, and what we're contemplating is taking the tank, either that tank or possibly a new tank, and moving it to a different site with a concrete catch basin, as you've suggested, or something along those lines.

It's a matter of working with the town to figure out what site we're going to have this located at and going from there, and we've been working with them every day to resolve that issue.

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

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

This started back over a year ago when the emails started going to the minister of transportation, and then it was passed through the minister of environment. This is all back in 2016. So I can't understand what would take – why can't back in 2016 you figure up it's a concern, you're concerned about the environment? Pick the tank up, same as the fire department in Borden, and put it inside a catch basin or a containment thing.

Why is stuff like this taking so long, over a year and a half? Why can't somebody make the decision to do it?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I guess the first thing that I would say, hon. member, is that as I mentioned the other night when we were talking about this, there

are a lot of competing interests for our dollars in this department, for our capital dollars in particular. We have been working on this over that period of time. When I say we, it's the Public Schools Branch, but they originally had put New Jersey barriers outside the tank as I had mentioned already. There is not an issue with the tank where it is right now. It's inspected; it's ready to go, it's insured the whole deal. That said, we have been working with the town to deal with this in a way that will hopefully make them happy and will work for us as well. It's my understanding that that's fairly near to a resolution that will be satisfactory to everybody, and hopefully when we're all done, you'll be happy and you'll be in here congratulating us.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Thanks Chair.

Concrete, on average, costs one dollar a pound. It basically doesn't matter what the description of the concrete thing is. It's basically one dollar a pound, okay.

**Leader of the Opposition:** (Indistinct).

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah. So what you spend in Jersey turnpikes, the barriers to go around it, you could have put into a catch basin or that containment area. I understand you totally what you're saying about budget procedures. Well, there's things that happen all the time with this government, with special warrants being signed and things being taken care of. It's the same thing with this; it's the same thing with the roof. In times of certain, almost emergency situations, to prevent something from happening or further damage, we spend the money.

Can you explain why that that same type of – is not considered above and beyond the Capital Budget?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I mean, hon. member, there are a number of things that – we could be here all night talking about this tank if you want to, but the reality is this: Jersey barriers are something that we would deal with on a day-in, day-out basis through the Public

Schools Branch or TIE. We put them there as an interim measure to satisfy the town that, you know, look, despite the fact that we think that the tank is safe, we recognize that you take an issue with that and we're willing to work with you, so we had some Jersey barriers placed around the tank.

As you said, the expense is not egregious to do that. In fact, I don't know the answer to this, but there are likely Jersey barriers around that would have been used for that and will be used for a different purpose when they leave there. Once a location is determined that's satisfactory to the town and still works for the Public Schools Branch to get their buses to and from, we will move it there.

As I indicated, the plan is to put a concrete catch basin underneath it, and whether it's that tank or a new tank, to put the tank in that concrete catch basin.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

I think it was back in October, I know that, that's what I suggested back then, and it amazes me that it takes so long for that kind of stuff to get going, but anyway.

A question Chair, for the – I want to talk about school bus replacement for a second. You've got \$2,050,000 slated for school bus replacement. How many buses is that?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** That would be 20 a year, hon. member.

**Mr. Fox:** 20 a year?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah.

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

**Mr. Fox:** So – (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** I should say roughly, but that's the rough budget for 20 buses (Indistinct).

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah, so the prices I got back, Chair, were roughly about \$75,000 US per bus, and it's my understanding –

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) buying them from you.

**Mr. Fox:** Maybe you should. My question is – I asked this last Capital Budget and the answer never came back, and I'm asking for it again: Can you provide me with a list of all buses in PEI and what the occupancy rate is on them buses per day, per route?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I can't commit to that. I don't know whether such a thing exists, but I'll take it under advisement and see what I can get.

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Fox:** I can submit a written question and do it that way.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Don't do that.

**Mr. Fox:** My question is, and it goes back to what I've said before, I know the cost – I know that the occupancy rate is nowhere even near in some buses in the 50% range, or even 30 to 40%.

My question is: Why are we not considering minibuses or T-Tech buses, which have an occupancy rate of 20 people? They're two-thirds the money, which I was told one day in the House that a full bus, there's not much difference in the price between a full bus and a mini T-Tech bus, but apparently there is.

So I'm wondering: Why are we not looking at going with smaller buses on routes that are not at full occupancy or rate compared to other routes?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you for this question, hon. member.

Based on the comments, again I'd make the comment that maybe you have information we don't, but aside from that, I would note that when we purchase these buses we do it through a regional tendering process, so we feel that we get the best price that's out there. In fact, there are only a certain number of manufacturers of school buses –

**Mr. Fox:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and they usually would all respond to the tender, and the price is usually within maybe a couple thousand dollars, and roughly speaking you're looking at \$100,000 per bus.

So we'll start from there. The full-size buses, like the big ones that you would see kind of most days around here, are built for a capacity of 70 passengers. There's a 59-passenger model of a similar bus that's made as well, and so the 70-passenger bus costs \$100,800 in this year's tender; the 59-passenger bus is \$100,700, so we save \$100 to go down 21 passengers. The 46 passenger bus is \$96,900, so you save \$3,000 – a little more than \$3,000. The fuel mileage between the two is basically identical. They're the same chassis, just a shorter bus. So, the way the busses are used and allocated from one to the next, there wouldn't be a big advantage, cost-wise or otherwise, in having a number of small busses around that we would have in the inventory.

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

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

We're talking about 20-passenger mini-busses – I'm not talking about 50 and 60 and 70 passengers – I know about them. I'm talking about 20-passenger mini busses – are used in New Brunswick, they're used in Nova Scotia; they're used in other provinces. Why are we not looking at them here, because they are a lot cheaper?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Hon. member, I'll be honest in saying I don't know whether we have

looked at them in particular through the tendering process. I would be very surprised, to put it to you this way, if we have a great demand for busses that small. I don't, frankly, know the answer to that question, but I will take it under advisement and see if I can find out for you.

Again, we're talking a 70-passenger bus to a 46-passenger bus and the cost between them being negligible. The busses come with all that safety hardware that we talked about here earlier today, being the fold-out arm on the front and the fold-out arm on the back –

**Mr. Roach:** That's a good statement.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and they're built for standards for our children that are going to school, as opposed to other busses that are more than likely built for adults. So, there are a lot of things to consider when you're looking at them.

Again, as I indicated, I'm not personally aware of the busses you're referring to in New Brunswick.

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

**Mr. Fox:** Final question. The question I asked a minute ago, I'd like to have a report back from your department listing all busses across the province, what their occupancy rate is, and what their route is.

**Mr. Myers:** Anything else?

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

**Mr. Fox:** No, that's it.

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

You would be happy to know, I don't actually have any questions about busses. I think they've all been asked.

Just an opening statement: I did go to Sherwood school back in the day and I still remember when Sherwood school was pretty much at capacity or over capacity and, actually, we had mobiles and what we had – two remote, small buildings out front that each had I think roughly three classrooms in

them. The kids used to refer to them as the chicken coops.

**Chair:** Do you have a question, hon. Member?

**Leader of the Opposition:** I do, Chair.

That's out where the playground area is now out front. But, I'd like to go across the bridge over to Stratford and ask a few questions with regards to Stratford and the two schools that we have and the severe problem we have with over-capacity.

Chair, I wonder if I could get a break-down of the financial commitment and if it's for one year or spread over several years for the renovations and additions that are planned for both, potentially, Glen Stewart and Stratford Elementary?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sure and thank you for the question, hon. Member and thank you, Madame Chair.

In relation to this classroom space, hon. Member, we have been very aggressive in moving forward to address the capacity issue in the Stratford schools. We have actually gone out already to have TIE look at what's there right now in an effort to determine what we can do to add on to it to ensure that the capacity issue is addressed as soon as humanly possible.

As you would be aware and as I think you've indicated in the House here already in this sitting, it is literally at capacity issue right now on a day-in-day-out basis. TIE has gone through; they've looked at possibilities in relation to both Glen Stewart and Stratford. They have indicated that the most appropriate way to proceed will be to add 14 classrooms to Stratford and we'll pull a grade's-worth of students from Glen Stewart and over to Stratford.

The combination of what we're left with at that point in time will leave seven, what I'm going to call, free classrooms to grow into and they should all be ready for the 2019-2020 school year. In fact, before I left here this morning, I had signed off on letters to go out to members of the planning

committee for that project. As I indicated, we're moving very quickly on that. We would expect that the architectural tendering process would commence within a couple weeks on that. Planning committee, just as of today, has been put in place and we would really hope, come this spring, that there'd be shovels in the ground to address the issues over there.

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

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

Are there any monies being allocated towards fixing some of the serious issues that we have in Glen Stewart itself? I'll just give you some examples.

The minister of TIE talked earlier about a classroom and a space having four walls. In Glen Stewart, in many cases, that would be a luxury to actually have four walls. We have a resource room that's in the hallway, just above the library in the mezzanine level that is basically is encompassed by one cinderblock wall behind it and two wooden bookshelves coming out and a shower curtain that goes across to act as the door. That's an actual resource room, so to have four walls and a door would be a luxury.

We have classrooms in Glen Stewart – and you went to Glen Stewart, so you're well aware of this – we have classrooms in Glen Stewart that have been repurposed from open space; i.e. we have classrooms that actually have stairs that went somewhere at one time and now we have plywood walls up to add a temporary wall.

Glen Stewart, when it was first constructed, for example, the washroom facilities, they were designed to accommodate a certain amount of students. We had an addition put on Glen Stewart, which I believe contains six mobile classrooms, but they're set up in such a way that they're actually integrated, with a roof and a hallway that they feel like they're part of the school. But, if you talk to the teachers; if you talk to the administrators; if you talk to the parents that their children go to Glen Stewart; the hallways, the storage for, especially in the winter time – the storage for their kitbags, their boots, their coats – it's almost impassible through the hallways because everything is come in so tight, right? At

lunchtime and recess time, the washroom facilities in most cases don't suit the needs anymore because there's many, many more kids than were originally planned for in that school.

So, I guess I'm wondering: Is there any plans to address some of those serious issues at Glen Stewart?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** So I guess the first thing I'd indicate – and thank you, Madame Chair – the first thing I'd indicate, hon. Member, is that the enrollment at Glen Stewart, as of the time I last checked, was 624 students and after the addition to Stratford is completed, it's anticipated that it will be down to 474 students.

As you can appreciate, that's a pretty significant drop in the utilization rate of that infrastructure, so I would suggest to you that that would alleviate some of the pressure that we would be dealing with. But, in terms of specific Capital dollars to be invested in Glen Stewart beyond the asset that's there right now, there's nothing contemplated in this five-year cycle.

I should mention beyond that: when I say those are the kinds of issues – you'd indicated that you'd gone to Sherwood. I'm not going to ask you whether that was in 1956 or 1996, but you get the picture that that school was built in 1956 with infrastructure requirements at that point in time.

We have a lot of schools in our system, particularly during the Alex Campbell era, and haven't really been renovated since. We're talking 1970s and we're 2017 today. There are a lot of schools that we have that have those kinds of issues as well.

I'm not trying to minimize them, but that's the issue that we all have to address when we look at capital budgeting. We are being very aggressive with our Capital Budget planning here. This is a \$60 million construction plan for this time horizon. It's one of the largest investments ever in our teaching and learning environments. We're doing our best to ensure that the resources

that we have and those that we need meet the needs of the students that we have.

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

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

I appreciate what the minister is saying and the enrollment of Glen Stewart and what it's going to look like after the 14 classrooms are added to Stratford elementary. But I believe if you looked back and just saw some of the presentations that were made last winter again, the recent numbers that the mayor of Stratford has presented to the Public Schools Branch, the numbers that your department are projecting are far below what the town is projecting. I think the town has a much better finger on the pulse of how fast our community is growing. They're doing that from historical. They're doing that from the building permits. They're doing that from the new subdivisions and development that's going to happen in our town. The numbers you're saying, I understand what you're quoting, but the numbers I feel, minister, that you're being given are not accurate.

Could you tell me what the total dollar allocation is for the addition onto Stratford elementary?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Before I do that I'll address your comments, I guess. Between the numbers that we would have and the numbers, and I have spoken, I should say, with Mayor Dunphy and Councillor Cooper on this issue. Frankly, whether their numbers are a better projection or the numbers that we have, which I should say were numbers that were done by the PSB through the Baragar system and then were confirmed by another independent contractor.

Whether one or the other is correct, and the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters went through the construction timeline for Sherwood school and you're looking at – to do a new build for a school, and I'm not sure if that's what you're suggesting here or if that's what you're thinking – well, I can put it to you this way: the mayor indicated that

he wasn't sure if that was the answer or what that answer might look like for Stratford when we spoke. It wouldn't address the issue in a timely enough way.

What we're doing addresses the issue that we're faced with right now. Is that the solution for the long-term for Stratford? Frankly, at this point in time it's hard for us to say, but it's in a fairly large way irrelevant because what we're doing here makes maximum use of the infrastructure that's there. We'll end up with two schools that, you know, basically with what we have here, you couldn't, or probably wouldn't, add anything further to them as an elementary school. They're kind of at the upper end of what you would want to see in terms of size at an elementary school. Particularly, Stratford will be after the addition.

We'll add that capacity on and then going beyond that in future budgeting cycles, we'll have to look at the needs of Stratford as Stratford evolves going into the future.

But I will say this: I mean, you know, this is an issue that, on a medium to a long-term horizon, you struggle with in some way because, you look around right now there are huge developments that are planned and through some stage of approval in East Royalty in West Royalty, you start looking at expanding communities and trying to figure out where people are going to live, literally. I would argue it's tough to plan more than five years ahead, but say it's five years or beyond, it is tough to get accurate numbers.

I think, both the town of Stratford would acknowledge that and I would acknowledge that from the department's perspective. It's not us that looks at the numbers, it's the PSB. I think we have a good sense that right now, the town of Stratford is growing. They have a very immediate need and we are doing our utmost to address that need as soon as we possibly can.

We feel that that's the best result for Stratford right now. We'll work with them and we'll look at what needs to be done in the medium-to-longer term.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Chair –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Just before we leave that, Madam Chair, actually you had asked me the overall cost of the project –

**Leader of the Opposition:** Yeah, that's what I was going –

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry.

I believe now, the total of the Stratford addition is roughly \$6.2 million.

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

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

I think the minister said there a short while ago that they were already going out to the architectural stage; starting to look at some of that planning so that you could get the shovels in the ground in the spring to be ready for the 2018 – I think you said: 2019-2020 school year. Is that correct?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. member, I had indicated that we, just today, I had signed off on the letters to the planning committee. I suspect within a couple or few weeks we'll be into the tendering phase for the architectural work, and the hope is, that yes, we would have shovels into the ground next summer.

Just before I leave that – the big thing with a lot of this work and – I'm going to go back and I'm going to link up Borden-Kinkora's comments here earlier tonight with the discussion that I had had with Morell-Mermaid the other night.

Most of the capital work that would be done in relation to schools where there is work being done on existing schools, we try to get it done during the summertime, because we don't want to be interfering with the education of those students that are going to that school. To the extent that we can, it's done during the summertime. It's very important that we get cracking on this as soon as we possibly can, which we're doing, to get to work for next spring.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Chair.

With what the minister had said previously with regards to they're going to try to get the shovels in the ground next spring, next summer to get this work done. They'll be going to the design and the architectural stage here soon; sooner than later.

I just wanted to – and I have talked about this in the House before, but I wanted to bring to the minister's attention that the current Stratford Elementary School has a major design flaw at the entrance of the building.

As a member of the Citizens on Patrol and if you had asked the RCMP they'd explain it to you, too. When the entrance of the school was designed there's an architectural, I guess it's aluminum brackets that go up the windows, but if you're a young person and you look at it you'd say: hey, that's a ladder that takes me to the roof.

We're constantly going to the schools on the weekend and finding kids up on the roof. Like I said, I've brought it up here before in the Legislative Assembly and we have brought it forward to the Public Schools Branch, as well, to see if that can be addressed. To me, it is a major safety issue.

We were talking about buses here earlier in the day and talking about cars passing buses, well, if you have got a young person accessing the roof of the school and falling off onto an asphalt parking lot, well, we're going to have a fairly serious issue there. I would have to say a fairly major lawsuit on our hands, too. If you could bring that back, first and foremost, to see if that could be corrected, but also to ensure any further development doesn't have a feature such as that.

**Chair:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition, or the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, do you have a response to that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sure, I'll take it back.

I note, too, that the principals of those schools or the vice-principals will be on the

construction planning committee. I should mention that. You might be interested in that, hon. member.

Where there are two schools involved, typically, I'd indicated previously the – what I'm going to call the construction or the membership of the planning committees – where the two schools are involved we'd have the parent group, or someone from the home and school from both schools, and the principal or vice-principals from both schools that would be on that committee.

Once they get going, they work with the architect to determine what is going to work or what's not going to work within that space.

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

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Chair.

Chair, I wonder if the minister or it might be the minister of transportation, I'm not sure who could answer this question the best, but let's say for example if a new school was being built or there was a new – well, let's go back to Sherwood. Let's say Sherwood school was being built and it was having to be built up where the bowling greens are behind the Cody Banks Arena, and essentially you're going to have to put a new road, possibly in off Pine Drive, to access that or come in off Maple and do a 90-degree turn to get up to it.

Would a cost for a new road or a new access be included in the overall construction cost for that school?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sure, I'll take a stab at it.

It would really depend, hon. member, on what you're talking about. Like, if it's something that –

**Mr. LaVie:** How about a new road?

**Mr. J. Brown:** – effectively is in the existing envelope, like in other words if it's (Indistinct) you used the example of Sherwood, specifically. As you would know, pretty well the whole area is paved around the school until you get back down to the

extreme – I guess it'd be eastern or north-eastern part of the property there where it's grass.

Whether or not you would need to put any kind of a new roadway in, I really couldn't say. It would depend on what the new building would look like and where it'd be situated, but that might not always be the case depending on if you decided to change the access to Stratford as an example and go around from the backside, that might be a different story, so who knows? It depends on the project.

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

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

The reason I raise that, and again I have raised it in the House before, I think in Stratford we have a very serious issue with access to the two schools, and we have over 1,000 young people attending those schools during the school year on any given day.

Essentially, there's one access off Glen Stewart Drive into those two schools, and I would ask if there's any other school on PEI that, basically, is at a dead end, because that's what we're looking at here.

The previous minister of transportation, Rob Vessey, I had him over to Stratford one time and we looked at the issue and he was, quite simply, he was taken aback when he realized the situation that we had, because if there was ever a very serious issue, God-forbid a shooter or something like that that took place there, the first responders only have one way to get into those schools, and if it was planned out well enough by the people that were doing this horrible act, they could easily block that one entrance.

But in Stratford around our schools, we have an opportunity that's looking at us right in the face that could solve that problem not only for safety and for first responders access, but actually for traffic flow, because we do have a lot of issues on the Stratford Road where Glen Stewart comes in and out on any given morning, and particularly in the mornings when the rush hour traffic is trying to get into Charlottetown.

MacKinnon Drive comes in off the Kinlock Road behind Sobeys, and it could be connected quite easily to the Glen Stewart Drive, and I think it would alleviate a lot of the problems right now with traffic flow in the town and around our schools, but most importantly it would make it much safer in the event that anything ever did happen, and it could be a fire; it could be anything.

So I guess I would ask that that be taken into consideration as well.

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

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

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

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

Certainly, our department has had numerous discussions with the town of Stratford in particular to that area, and it's something that we look at and have looked at, and where would the traffic flow go through if you were to make that open. You also have to take into account does it go through a residential area? Are you rerouting a high number of traffic in through a residential area?

So there's a number of things that you take into account, but we are very familiar and have had some discussions, certainly being aware of that, so it's not something that we haven't heard or haven't been looking at.

**Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thanks Madam Chair.

I just note, and this is not within the purview of my department, but as you would know hon. member, that's actually private land that that follows through onto, so it wouldn't be for us to say or not to say that that road could be extended in any event.

Now that said, as the minister had indicated, there has been discussions with the town, and I'm not sure to what extent with Thane MacKinnon, but you know.

There's an overall – I should mention too, depending on what you look at, you kind of have to look at overall how the students are managed in that area, and so if there is future expansion as an example in Stratford, you need to look at whether that's appropriate in that same area or not. There's a lot of considerations that really go into those different possibilities.

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

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

The minister is right, it is private land. But the owner of that land (Indistinct) essentially a developer has on more than one occasion given verbal permission for those two roads to be connected, and there wouldn't be a cost for that land, and it's eventual. It's going to happen, so I just don't understand why it wouldn't be looked at, especially in this day and age where we have to ensure that the safety of our children is number one. It's paramount.

I just can't understand why this government won't look at moving forward on this project. I mean, it's there. It's looking us right in the face, and it answers so many issues around our schools, with traffic flow, with safety.

**Chair:** Do you have a question? Is there a question?

**Leader of the Opposition:** I guess I'm just asking why the government won't move forward on this.

**Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

As I indicated, hon. member, we have what I would call a very aggressive \$60 million capital plan for our education system, \$60 million worth of construction that we feel we are making tremendously effective use of. There would be probably that much again that we could spend on very viable

projects that we could look to do in that same five years.

The reality is we have to look at all these things in the context of each other and make some tough decisions, and so right now we're doing what we've indicated we plan to do in Stratford, and we'll continue to look at what we can do to build upon that as we move forward, and I think as I say part of that will be – and it will really be the Public Schools Branch that's going to have to look at a lot of that stuff. We'll work with them through our process that's outlined in the *Education Act* to determine what works best for Stratford's needs to build upon the resources that we have there should we need to as we go forward.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Chair.

I mean, that's –

**Chair:** Thank you –

**Leader of the Opposition:** – pretty much it for me right now –

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Leader of the Opposition:** – but just so that the minister knows that this isn't going to go away. I'm going to –

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Leader of the Opposition:** – continue to ask for it and ask for it until it's –

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Leader of the Opposition:** – (Indistinct)

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

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

I have questions in a number of areas. We'll go back to the buses just for a minute, minister, if we can.

I see that we're spending almost exactly twice as much as we did last year and that's the same for the next few years.

Are we just buying more buses than we used to?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry, Madam Chair, thank you. Thanks for the question, hon. member.

You may recall, and I can't remember the year, if I had a second, I could probably find it, there was a period of time where we started to very aggressively replace the school buses that we had. Basically, because it was –

**Ms. Biggar:** 2007.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – determined that the buses that we had weren't in great condition.

We're now at a spot where the buses that we have are in pretty good shape and we're into a more regular cycle of replacement of those buses. We're looking at replacing a pretty standard number over the next five years to maintain that shape.

We have found that that does a few things. One is the older buses generally, at a given point in time, they're not as efficient as the new buses in the first place and sometimes you run into more breakdowns and that kind of thing. On a dollar-for-dollar basis when you capitalize them over their useful lifespan we figure that it's really an optimal situation if you're regularly replacing a fairly standard number of buses.

That being said, we'll continue to look at that on a go-forward basis. If it's found that the buses that we have next year are in really great shape, it might be that you would do a little bit less. Or if, there's more then we'd have to look at more.

I do note, too, that I think it's 11 years – we can only keep the buses for a certain period of time, I think it's 11 years.

Given the number that we had purchased over the years, on the backend of that, you will have a legislated requirement that requires you to do those purchases.

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

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

A couple of things you've mentioned there, minister, in your answer I want to pick up on.

One of them is the lifetime cost of the buses. Now, we know that the electrification of all transportation fleets is starting to ramp up.

Last year, I asked this question about the lifetime, not just the capital cost to purchase the bus upfront, but the operating cost over the lifetime of the bus. As you say, about 10 or 11 years is what you get out. The reason why we were having to replace so many was they were just rusting out. Basically, that was what the problem was.

There are a couple of questions: There are buses available with acrylic rather than steel or metal frames, not frames, I'm sorry, bodies. So that's one question: Have you looked at that?

The second question, the bigger question is, we just heard the other day that one of the big, I think, it's Tesco is going to replace with – over the next little while their entire truck fleet with electric trucks, so it's coming.

I'm wondering whether there is any work being done on the relative cost of electric buses over their lifespan rather than the regular ones that we're buying now?

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

**An Hon. Member:** Solar bus.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, thank you for that, hon. member and thank you, Madam Chair.

We have done some work on this, hon. member. There are electric buses that are produced. I can't remember whether it's blue – my recollection is it might be by Blue Bird. There are essentially three companies that produce the buses that we buy. They may all have an electric version.

What I can tell you, by memory, is this: the electric buses are roughly, actually, they're a little bit more than three times as expensive as the normal bus. There are a bunch of issues and I'll try and address them all if you'd be patient with me for a sec.

When you take the capital cost of that bus and take it out over its, basically what I'm going to call 'payback period' it would take

you 42 years to effectively pay for the electric bus. When I say that it costs you roughly 5,000, well, an average of a little over \$5,000 a year to run a diesel bus, the electric buses actually chew up about \$3,500 a year worth of electricity. They don't have a great range. They can only go, right now, the buses that exist, can only go about 70 kilometres on a charge.

The first question you get into is – and that's the information that we have, hon. member.

The first question that you would get into would be: How and where do you charge them? You can appreciate where I'm going with that. If you have the bus driver that's taking it home at night, is the bus driver charging it at their house? Is that even possible? I think the answer is yes, but there's an infrastructure cost to set that up.

If it's at the depot, by the time you do the run and go back to the depot, literally, does that work within the charge.

I think if we thought that the cost was feasible we'd look at that probably more seriously, but that's a serious question, kind of, in our mind.

Ultimately, the electric buses that are available right now are constructed the same way as our traditional diesel buses are. Frankly, you're paying three times the cost for a bus that's going to last the same period of time.

It's just not, in most ways, a feasible way to do this right now. There are, I think in New Brunswick, I can't recall exactly where, so I shouldn't say for sure, there is another province, I think, that has purchased a couple to see how they'd work and that's generally, those have been the issues that we have found out about so far.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Minister, I really appreciate your detailed answer on that. Thank you so much.

I would definitely contend some of the figures that you've been told. The trucks that we're talking about that Tesla are making have a 700 kilometre range. I'm quite sure that the newer buses, and it's like all

technologies, you know, when solar first came in, it cost the earth and it was useless. Now, it's competitive with fossil fuels and it works beautifully.

We're at the point where electrification of the fleet is a distinct possibility. I wouldn't base your future plans, and I have to say, I accept the issue of the infrastructure required to charge these buses. But it strikes me that in the very near future we'll be able to, the buses will be such that they'll be able to do two runs a day on a single charge and that will probably be overcome. I think we can't stop thinking about this, just because we may not be there, yet.

Also, the last point you made about that we're buying, essentially, buses that will last no longer, there are plastic, not plastic, acrylic –

**Mr. Roach:** Fiberglass.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – composite – thank you –

**Mr. Roach:** Fiberglass.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – whatever. It doesn't rust. Those bodies are available. I'd appreciate if we don't just put this to one side –

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – and keep thinking about it.

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance has an intervention on this question. Then, I'll go to you hon. education minister.

**Mr. Roach:** And I think that's, if I recall, that's a conversation we had last year –

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

**Mr. Roach:** – and I do agree that I think going down the road, I think that's the direction that we're going.

But just to follow-up on what the minister over here said, the difficulty we have is, although we have a fiberglass body, which works great, it still sits on the same old steel frame and that same old steel frame only has a life expectancy of 13 years. I think that's

another hurdle that we have get over. I agree with you –

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

**Mr. Roach:** – I think eventually.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Roach:** They don't have them, yet.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'll just add, if I said anything to make anybody believe that we don't continually look at that, my apologies, that's not the case.

I think I indicated this, every year we participate in a tendering process for a large quantity of these buses with some of the other provinces. What we do would be, every year we would look at a feasible allocation for us based on certain prices. We'd look at that – I'm going to commit here that we look at it every year, but I can say generally, and I know I've had a conversation with Chris DesRoche, who does the financial work for my department and who works on this, and he's quite interested in it for sure.

As soon as it becomes feasible, I think it's something that we would look at. Frankly, there's not much reason not to. Right now, it's just the cost of it is so prohibitive and there are so many issues that I think we'd have to overcome, and to be frank again, there is no Tesla bus available right now. I wish there was, but there's not.

Again, we'll look at that. I have seen the same thing you had seen. I think, right now, that model is actually not slated for production, but they're thinking if it is to be produced, the earliest they might have it would be 1920, kind of thing, so –

**Mr. Roach:** 2020.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah, the year 2019, or 2020. Sorry.

Anyway, it's off a little ways, but you know I think it's a great idea. It's likely the way of

the future and it's something that we'll keep our eye on, for sure.

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

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

I'd like to go back to the first paragraph in the equipment purchase here and the classroom technology. Rustico-Emerald already asked a few questions about this earlier. The \$10.4 million over the next five years; I just wanted to clarify that part of that is replacing the existing devices – laptops, that sort of thing. Is part of that also purchasing new laptops and things to expand the number that we have in schools? I may have missed that. You may have answered that already.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I don't know if I answered that in any kind of direct way. I think all I said was, essentially, this is the number that we have and this is the amount that's going to be allocated towards it.

The frank answer to that is: Until we actively have the bring your own device program up and running in the schools, we're not going to really know what our requirements will be. I had indicated previously, right now we have 3,000 laptops, 1,450 desktops, 7,550 Chromebooks. There was a report done by IBM in relation to that hardware infrastructure that we have. Part of the recommendation was that we start to replace these things.

There's kind of set life spans for them and we found that, often times, the lifespan wouldn't necessarily be what the set life span is. Like the school busses, we will purchase them a certain number per year kind of thing. We're finding that does sometimes result in some that are still in half-decent shape that kind of go back in to the pool that are still quite useable. Basically, we'll keep an eye on that. We don't really know exactly where that's going to land us. We don't really know how many will not work at any given point in time. It's kind of a tough question to answers in some ways, but it's something that we'll be constantly be keeping an eye on.

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

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

The reason I bring this up, Minister, is that – I love my gadgets and my life would be very difficult if we didn't have our phones and our laptops, but there's an increasingly a large body of evidence suggesting that there are significant negative effects, particularly for young people with the amount of screen time that they're having now.

I'm just interested if government is concerned at all. There was a time when we thought smoking was great and doctors would promote certain brands of cigarettes and we thought saturated fats were the worst thing in the world, and now the evidence suggests that sugar, actually, may be the biggest problem in terms of cardiovascular problems. Our understanding of what's good and what's not good changes dramatically.

Again, while I understand the value and the relevance of how it's a necessity of having a certain amount of technology in the classrooms. Is there any sense that there's also: we need to watch this, because there are other jurisdictions, Finland for example, that just do not use them at all in the first few grades at school?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madame Chair.

I'm not going to say, hon. member, that we've made a study of the health impacts of, say, Chromebooks on students in the classroom at this point in time and what the ideal kind of allocation of that time would be. Frankly, I don't think it's an issue that's facing our children right now, and when I say that, what I'm saying is: Roughly, I think there would be about 40% of the Chromebooks that you would need to cover off – I'm not even sure if that's correct. There are 20,000 students roughly and there's 7,550 Chromebooks.

There's a third of the Chromebooks that you would need to service the whole student body on Prince Edward Island. So at best, you'd be spending a third of your time on a

Chromebook, which I can say, fairly safely, that that's not happening right now.

But, you're right, that would be one of a number of concerns that you would have if you're implementing that kind of technology in the classroom for constant use. The other obvious, huge one is when you have that kind of a device with the power that they have – when I say that, I mean, we're all connected to the Internet, if we look around here on any given night, there might be a number of members that could be doing research on whatever I'm talking about or whatever's going on.

We just saw that there with the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora. It creates a whole new kind of issue for the classroom teacher to deal with and so, as another example, that is something that we'll have to be very careful to monitor as bring your own device rolls out. All those kinds of things, we will have to continue to look at.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Just a comment on that. If you look at the amount we're spending on classroom technology this year as opposed to last year – it's 25 times the amount. It's not just a small increase, it's an enormous increase. If that's an indication that we're going to be relying more and more on students and giving them screen time, I think that's something we need to not just assume it's a good thing. The studies are showing that, basically, the more screen time you have, the more anxiety, the more stresses children experience. It's not quite as simple as that, but, essentially, that's what the studies are starting to show. So, that's the point I was trying to make.

I'm going to move on – my last series of questions.

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

**Chair:** Hon. Members, I'm having a hard time hearing the questions.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Me too.

**Chair:** You're welcome to take your conversations outside of the room.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** They're good questions too.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Yeah, they are.

**Chair:** No. You're questions are –

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I just, very quickly, on the Capital improvements for culture – two questions on that. Will the new culture strategy, is that going to be entirely funded through the operational Budget?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry. I missed the first part of that question.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Will the new cultural strategy that was announced just a couple of days ago, is that going to be entirely funded through the operational Budget?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I would say that at this point in time it's contemplated that – maybe I should put it a different way. The answer to that is not totally clear at this point in time because we're still working on the details of a lot of the projects that would require any kind of Capital spending, but I would say, yes, it's fair to say that it's contemplated that the bulk of the spending will be from the operational Budget and there would likely be a number of partnerships that we would enter into with other organizations, whether they be private developers or NGOs or groups like the PEI Crafts Council that we would be looking at partnering on infrastructure with.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister.

Clearly and over the next few years, there's no large capital spending in this part of the Budget, so it's either not worked out, or it will be entirely in operational.

The last question is, and I think I know the answer to this, but there's still presumably

no plan for a provincial museum – we've got \$150,000 in the Budget here.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** No. There's no current plan for a physical structure for a provincial museum and I should not that there is planned spending in that – in terms of culture on Prince Edward Island, I'll give you a few examples and just depending on how you look at it, but at Orwell Corner, we're doing some, what I would call, fairly significant updating to the properties out there – is one prime example. I just – not knowing exactly what you're referring to, I do want to indicate that there's not no spending in those areas, in fact, it's increased significantly over what it has been in past years.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I will clarify then, it was for a new central – well, not necessarily central, but for a new provincial museum – a brand new build.

**Leader of the Opposition:** In Stratford.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Possibly. Maybe in District 17, I don't know.

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

**Chair:** Was that a question hon. Member?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Well, he just wanted a clarification as to what I was asking, so I was asking about a new provincial museum.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** I think I asked that. There's nothing in our five-year budgeting allocation for a new provincial museum to be constructed any place.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Madame Chair.

It's certainly been a good night of questioning. I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

First of all, I want to thank you very much for the job you're doing. You're doing a great job and I know you have a lot on your plate with the department.

My first question is: How many schools do we have in the province all together?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madame Chair.

I believe the number's 62.

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you, Minister. You have meetings in a good collaboration with the French Language School Board and the English school branch?

**Chair:** The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture. Even though you're sitting next to each other, you still have to come through the chair, and share your conversation with the whole House.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've had one face-to-face meeting with the group to date. I've had a number of email correspondences with Emile Gallant, who is the chair of the commission.

Yeah, I hope to have a great collaborative relationship with them working forward. We do have a number of issues that we will be addressing over the foreseeable timeframe.

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much, minister.

Is it correct to state just for the purpose of this House, these two bodies come to your department with, let's say, a wish list, or a

list of what schools they would like to have as a priority?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, hon. member.

The budgeting process, so everybody's aware, and this is something that everybody should be aware of –

**Chair:** Hon. members, I'm having a hard time hearing the answer. I don't mind you taking your conversations outside.

Thank you.

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) all the work we did last year.

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's actually; the budgeting process is actually set out in the *Education Act*. The process really is for the PSB and the French Language School Board to determine what their priorities are and to submit them to us. We look at those priorities and then we make a submission to the ministry of finance and ultimately the capital budgeting process, on a larger scale, occurs out of that.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Gallant:** Further questions, please.

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

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

As I had indicated to you, I appreciate what you do and I know – there's two schools that came well over budget last year, that was not anticipated, so that would reflect into what we can do in the next fiscal, is that correct?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you hon. member.

In a way, yes, and in a way, no; the two are not directly connected. In a certain way, what we do is what we look at, kind of, what the needs are and what the dollars are that we have in any given time period. We go forward from there.

As an example, in the French Language School Board, we're in the existing year, and the upcoming year completing École-La-Belle-Cloche in Rollo Bay, which was a \$10 million investment. Then, we'll be starting to work on École-sur-Mer and the high school project that will be taking place there, which is a \$5 million investment that'll take place over the ensuing couple of years.

That's essentially the way it works, is that they would set forth their priorities and we look at what dollars we have to allocate towards priorities. We do our best to try and make those dollars go to the most effective use for all Prince Edward Island students at any given point in time. It's not necessarily based on who got what the year before or 10 years before or whatever the case might be, it's who needs what going forward.

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

**Mr. Gallant:** Thank you very much again, hon. member, minister.

One further question, there's approximately \$2.5 million for renovations in this budget for all the schools. I go – I have a school in my district, Evangeline, it's 55 years old. It has a few roof issues.

The reason why I bring this up is, it was brought up yesterday on another school, and I have heard since, there's another one. Is there a reason why we can't go in and fix these flat roofs? Does it have to be all fixed? Can you go in and fix a couple of spots?

Just a question that was asked to me yesterday.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sure.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you, hon. member.

I'll just clarify. It's actually \$2 million that we are investing in capital repairs in all of our schools across Prince Edward Island over the next five years.

The way that process works is each of the French Language School Board and the Public Schools Branch prioritize their capital requests, which would include things like roofs and, I had indicated, boilers, windows, that kind of thing.

We would look at them, then, in the context of each other and confirm what we can or we can't do in any given year.

I can say that, you know, we have received a prioritized list from the French Language School Board. The roof that you had indicated is not, kind of, in their immediate top few. We would be happy to work with them to look at that if that's in their top few priorities.

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

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

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

I'm going to go back to a conversation that was had much earlier in the evening, and it had to do with bring your own device to school.

I'm just going for clarification from the minister on the student component. The student brings, say, their phone to work, or to school, and they want to connect to the Wi-Fi: What would that process look like?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you hon. member for the question.

To be honest, that may be a question that's better put to the Minister of Finance through his capacity with ITSS. I don't know the answer to that.

There is specific software contemplated to

allow that to happen. I can't speak to the software. I don't have the capability to do that. If you have specific questions, I can either put you in touch directly with the person that can, hopefully, answer them, or see if I can get answers and bring them back here.

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

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

I guess where the question kind of stems from is that this has been promised for five years and the execution hasn't happened.

My understanding was it was trialed at a school, and it couldn't handle the capacity and they took the network down or something. That's what I had been told; that one of the schools had it on a trial basis. Understandably, I guess, if it's a high school with 800 students in it all connecting at once it might take quite a hit.

They do, do it at UPEI. I have been over there and connected to the guest one and it's no problem; it stays connected as you cross campus, so they must have some sort of a string of connected Wi-Fis or something. I don't know what they would have to do it.

I would like to know, specifically, two things, if you could provide it for us, is: a list of schools that will have the ability to bring your own device, and a timeline of each. If you have eight schools that you're going to bring online what are the timelines for each one of them.

The second one would be: the procedure that a student would have if they brought a device to school. The minute they walk through the door and try to connect what happens and what will they have to do to make that happen.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Maybe, hon. member, what I can do right now and I'll say this and then you can if, depending on how you want me to proceed from there, we can see what we can figure out. As I indicated, I don't know what the

technical ability to connect will be once that software is in place.

The process from here – so the first thing we have to do is approve this Capital Budget before we can complete the process to enable bring your own device. What we have done, to date, and this will actually be complete when École-La-Belle-Cloche is completed: Wi-Fi will be installed in all schools.

The Wi-Fi network that is installed in all schools is not sufficient to enable everybody in those schools, for the most part anyway, to have and use their own devices reliably. You had mentioned a pilot that was done, I think it was at Colonel Gray, if memory serves correctly, where they did have an initial kind of ramp-up period.

They did have some issues in terms of overloading of the system. Then, even after they got going, it wasn't working great, I think, just with the number of users on it. They did not and do not have that firewall and software that the teachers want to be able to put this effectively into the classrooms so that they can manage it. That's one of the things that, through that pilot, we came to learn pretty quickly.

Again, you have some technical expertise in this area, so you might even know more about it than I do at this point in time.

But my understanding is there's a firewall that would need to be developed to enable all these devices to work in connection with the software that the teachers would have, and that would have to be set up, and to that the software would be added to enable the teachers to effectively monitor and correspond with the devices that their students would have.

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

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

The monitoring part is that – I guess maybe I'm missing something here, like when you bring your own device to school, is it for personal use or is it for – so the expectation is that if they bring the device to school that their schoolwork is going to be appearing on it? Is that what I'm –

**An Hon. Member:** If they want to.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not a classroom teacher. I don't know what the classroom teachers would want to do on the devices, but yes, this is the point of what I'm saying. Classroom teachers do not want somebody showing up with a device that they are going to use to message their friend sitting next to them or whatever, right? They don't want them looking at Facebook or whatever while they're there in the classroom. That would just be an additional issue in the classroom that they would have to deal with every day. They want the ability to control what's on that device at any given point in time. So that's the purpose of the firewall in the software that goes along with it.

The answer to your question about the use of it is: yes, they'd be there for schoolwork. No, they would not be there for personal stuff unless there was some kind of time set aside for that, and the software would be there to monitor that.

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

**Mr. Myers:** My understanding of the device is that students are looking to bring they already have with them and they're the phone.

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Mr. Myers:** So all they want to do – their ability to communicate with each other and stuff they have naturally with the phone. The lion's share of students wouldn't have data on their phone because it's expensive and you're looking at a \$100 a month plan to have a phone with data on it, give or take maybe, you know, (Indistinct) hundred. For most students it'd be 100, the amount they'd probably go through.

The whole bring your own device thing to them is that when I get there, I'll be able to connect my phone to the Wi-Fi just like they can if they're at McDonald's or Tim Hortons or downtown Charlottetown or

pretty near any public place you go to now provides that.

Peakes Tee in St. Teresa's has it. My phone connects to it automatically now when I go in, as do my kids' when they walk in because they have gotten the password years ago and every time we walk in their phones just connect to the Peakes Tee Wi-Fi, as well as when we go through the Tim Hortons drive-through their phones connect.

All they're really – it's like in a moment of excitement, and anybody who has children who don't have data on their phone know it's like: Oh, we found one, don't move dad!

**Mr. Myers:** That's basically what –

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

**Mr. Myers:** It's true, though, right? It is. It's like: Don't go for a second!

So what they're looking for, from what I understand from talking to students, they're looking for the ability to have connectivity with their phone to the Internet and that's the only device they are actually going to have. Is that going to be a reality for them to connect, like, their cell phone to the Wi-Fi network?

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I guess we're kind of talking apples and oranges here. There'd be no, from what I know, there would be no specific (Indistinct) – it's not for like your sons to fool around on the Internet while they're in school. So if that's what you're wondering, that's not the purpose of this. It might be used for that at lunchtime, although we all know what the firewall does around here if you're looking to fool around on the Internet.

I'm not going to say absolutely there will be a policy that kids aren't allowed to use their cell phones on the systems that would be there, but that's not what the investment is for. It's not what the kids want. It's what the teachers want to see in their classroom.

**An Hon. Member:** That's a good question.

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

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

So you want my son to take his computer to school so your teachers can use it to teach him? If that's the way the teachers want to teach, why don't you provide the devices and then this isn't an issue?

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

**Mr. Myers:** No, but you don't have enough of them.

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. Myers:** Montague doesn't. I don't know, I can't speak for other schools. Maybe other schools do.

See, my understanding – Doug Currie, any conversation I ever had with him, and correct me if I'm wrong, the member from Rustico here, like my interpretation was it was going to be take your own device to school and connect your – that was always the discussion we had. That's what we had been asking for. I wasn't asking for another teacher's aide.

I was actually asking for – the great thing about the Internet is that everyone uses it for their own purpose. How many times a day would you jump on the Internet to Google something that you need for that exact moment? Well, everyone does that; that's how pretty near everybody's life is now. I'm fortunate. I know absolutely everything that Google knows – if I know how to ask the question.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Well, effectively; that's effectively the truth, right?

**Mr. R. Brown:** Homer Simpson (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** I could know every –

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Arguably I know everything.

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

**Mr. Myers:** Only because Google does, though, but –

**Mr. Roach:** Homer Simpson knows the same thing.

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

**Chair:** Hon. Member, do you have a question?

**Mr. Myers:** I do, I do.

**Mr. Myers:** That's the reality of the situation is everybody who is in school today grew up with Google. They've been told: I don't know, Google it; by their parents probably countless times, or by their friends or by – so it's not a matter of fooling around. It's a matter of – that for lots of people that's like a lifeline.

**Mr. Trivers:** It's an essential service.

**Mr. Myers:** It's a – yeah.

**Mr. R. Brown:** So is bradtrivers.com.

**Mr. Myers:** Internet is. I don't know what the question is. I'm trying to – so this is the first I heard of this. I actually thought it was bring your own device to school and connect for your use. I didn't ever in my mind view it as having Internet being a bad thing or that a student who had Internet was going to do something sinister or look at something they shouldn't.

I know I never looked at the world like that. I always look at it like the Internet's a positive thing. Yeah, there's bad stuff on the Internet, too, but you know what happens what students get home. They have Internet. So they already have the ability to do whatever they want that's there that's bad already. I view it as a really positive thing to have the Internet open for use, and I'm just wondering what has changed since the conversations that we had with capital budget with Doug Currie and now – because I was always under the impression from him that this was going to be – you could connect your device to the Internet.

**Chair:** Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, can you clarify?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thanks, Madam Chair.

I think I kind of understand what you're on to there; and I'll say anecdotally, I had friends that used to, as an insult, call me Mr. Google back in the day, too. So, you have to be a little bit careful of what you're prepared to acknowledge in here.

What I would say –

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** We got two Homer Simpsons.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Two more minutes, everybody. Hold it together.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** What I would say is this: I think we're more on the same page now than when we started out, but the issue is and this is – you know, Madam Chair is sitting up there maybe wishing that she had something that she could use to see what we're all up to here and control us all if we were getting out of line.

**Chair:** Oh, I have eyes in the back of my head.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah.

**Chair:** I can tell.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Again, I'm not a classroom teacher but classroom teachers do not want technology to rule their life. They want technology to add value to what they have right now.

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** So to your point, if you give a child a research project and they can Google the anatomy of a frog, as an example, that would be what I'd call a productive use of the technology. You may not need every child in the class to have their own device there to do that. Some kids like to use their own device rather than say a Chromebook or whatever, and that's what's contemplated.

But the teacher needs – so the issue now is that the teacher doesn't have the knowledge as to what those kids are looking at or doing with their devices. So if they're supposed to be doing one thing and they're off on Facebook or whatever and that's pulling away from the productive time in the classroom, the teacher wants to know what they're up to and have the ability, basically, to boot them off of their system and say: No. At least that's my understanding of what this software would do. Get on task or you're not going to have your device.

So that's, as best I understand it – I can't speak for what Mr. Currie said or didn't say over the course of time.

I'll be honest, too, in saying, hon. member, as far as this software goes and the firewall, that's a fairly new, like, after the pilot go so far along they realized that they would need this. So, here we are investing in it.

**Ms. Biggar:** Carry the section.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Call the hour.

**Mr. Gallant:** Call the hour.

**Chair:** The hour has been called, everyone.

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

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

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

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

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 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.

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

The Legislature adjourned until Friday,  
November 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.