

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to be the first to welcome Eddie Lund back –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: – a lot of people wondering you where you were. Of course, to welcome everyone else who joins us in the gallery today and those watching from home.

We have a great delegation here who support the work of hospice on Prince Edward Island and congratulate them on that and welcome them here.

Some folks who are here from the big west; Henry and Deloris Gallant, Daniel Savoie, welcome. And Leonard Toole is here. Welcome, sir. I see Larry Jones here. It's great to be here on a beautiful day, and a Wednesday when we know we've got a weekend to enjoy and see the spring continue to unfold in this province.

As we look around the House, we see many of our colleagues and others throughout the province are marking International Day of Pink, which was started by two high schools in Nova Scotia to raise awareness and celebrate diversity and to work together to stop homophobia, transphobia, trans-misogyny and all forms of bullying. I'm pleased to see that being marked here in the House, today. And, of course, to share in the message that by working together, we can all make headway and ensure that we reduce the incidence of bullying, and that we do what we can to assist and to help to support burdens.

Yesterday, I was pleased to take part, and along with many others, in a joint policy and planning forum. The fifth to be organized together by the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, by the federal government and by the province presented

by colleagues from a number of departments, a very important agenda there on healing together and response to and acting together following the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I'd add, that today and tomorrow, I'll take part in a wake and funeral for two great Islanders; John Macneill and Harold Lee, both of whom lived to be a good age, raised great families and contributed a lot to their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery today and everybody watching up in District 19, Borden-Kinkora. I hope everybody enjoys a good Easter weekend this weekend with their families and possibly get a chance to go out and do your yard work, which I plan to be doing.

Along with the Premier, I'd like to say that we all take – I think we all need to take a role and stand against bullying, not only here in this province, but across the worldwide stage. We can be leaders in that and I think that it's something that has gone on too long for too many years and we need to put a stop to it.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise to welcome all our guests in the gallery. I had the opportunity on Saturday – and I want to acknowledge the award that Patricia Callaghan received from Stratford, actually, in winning the Steven McQuaid Volunteer for 2017 from the PEI Home and School Federation, a very committed parent

who is doing great things in the schools in the Stratford area.

I want to give a big shout-out – I swung by my parents' house this morning and both my parents, mom and dad, are on day six, moving onto day seven, with that nasty flu. They're watching today and I hope them a speedy recovery to get back before the Easter bunny arrives on Sunday.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Leonard Toole, a constituent of mine to the gallery. Leonard has been around since my early days out at Brookvale and kept things running out there and kept the lift turning. I'd like to welcome him here to the gallery today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's wonderful to stand again, two weeks in a row, to have constituents down from the great west, from District 27. I'd like to acknowledge Henry 'Hank' Gallant and his wife Doloris who – Henry, I'll be speaking about a little bit later about a very adventurous past that he's had.

I'd also like to welcome to the public gallery Daniel Savoie, and Daniel also has a lot of experience and some adventures in the past. He was a member of the air force, and he was also director of nursing at the University of New Brunswick.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to wish everyone in the public gallery and those at home, especially those in District 27, Tignish-Palmer Road, a very happy Easter, and may they also take time to reflect and

acknowledge the true meaning of this celebration.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome those to the gallery, especially some of the people here from Hospice PEI, as well as Dr. Lecours and our provincial palliative care unit and some of the staff, and I'll be recognizing them a little later on.

I also want to acknowledge the people back in O'Leary-Inverness that may be watching on Internet or on t.v., especially one watcher: Allan McBain. Allan is the Hockeyville O'Leary ice maker, and he's going to be retiring after 35 years of making ice in the community of O'Leary and has had the opportunity to make ice for Eric Lindros and the Philadelphia Flyers when they came here, as well as the Ottawa Senators who are going up against the Boston Bruins. They might be a little slower with not having Allan making ice – as well as the Florida Panthers.

There'll be a celebration for Allan tomorrow at the rink in O'Leary at, I think, 4:30 p.m. 6:00 p.m., something along that line, at the rink in O'Leary, so welcome Allan.

Thanks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery today and everybody watching at home in Kensington-Malpeque.

I just wanted to take this time to remind my constituents – and I guess all Islanders – that this Saturday, April 15th, we're having our third annual Easter breakfast. We usually have about 300 breakfast serves that day. All donations this year will be going to the

breakfast program, so hopefully it's a nice day and we have a big crowd.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to rise and welcome all the folks in the public gallery, especially our neighbours from up in Tignish, Henry and Doloris, and I think there's going to be some words spoken about them later on.

Also, while I'm on my feet, I'd also like to say hello to all the good people in Alberton-Roseville that are at home watching. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate a constituent of mine, Janet Charchuk, who brought home the gold medal for snowshoeing in Austria. She represented Prince Edward Island well, and we're very proud of her in West Prince, as I know all Islanders are. So, I'd like to extend sincere congratulations to Janet on that great win.

I'd also like to wish all the folks across the province a very happy Easter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to rise today and greet everybody who's watching from District 18, Rustico-Emerald, and, of course, everybody here in the gallery today. It's good to see you. John Morris, good to see you here as well, and I know that you're one of the kingpins of live video, and so we've been taking some tips from your feeds with our live video from the official opposition.

I'm also remembering John E. Macneill, who passed away recently. His visitation is today. The Macneill Homestead is up in Cavendish, and it is (Indistinct) reportedly the birthplace of Anne of Green Gables; that's where Lucy Maud Montgomery

actually wrote, penned the story at the kitchen table there, and so I'm thinking of him and his family today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I'd just like to send a special shout out to all the children and staff at Glen Stewart School. I took some time this morning and actually went over and met with the principal of Glen Stewart, Charlotte Bryand, and she gave me a very in-depth tour of the facility.

I have to admit, it's been a couple of years since I've been in the school because my son has progressed past elementary a number of years ago. It was very heartwarming to see all the wonderful work that's being done inside the school with the resources that they have to work with. I just want to reassure the students and the staff at that school that I will be doing all that I can to ensure that the infrastructure that was announced by the board members that we get is happening in Stratford.

I'd also like to recognize many of the individuals that are in the gallery here today representing hospice and palliative care. In particular, one of my constituents, Ellen Davies who is just up here behind us and one of my childhood friends from Pine Drive in Sherwood: Dr. Janet Baker. It's wonderful to see you here.

Thank you very much.

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

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

Certainly it is a pleasure to rise and welcome all to the public gallery today. It's great to see such a large turnout today from those from hospice and palliative care. It's great to have you in Dr. Lecoors, and I see Carolyn Villard over on the far side. It's great work

that you folks do. Ellen Davies – and I was able to be part of Dancing With the Stars there a number of years ago. So, continue on with the great work you do.

An Hon. Member: Toes are still sore?

Mr. Mitchell: My toes are doing very well.

An Hon. Member: No. Her toes.

Ms. Casey: It's the lady's toes.

Mr. Mitchell: That's right.

It's great to have Eddie Lund back in the room as well. I'd like to make another mention – yes, this is Easter weekend and I know we all realize how important, that is an event this weekend, but there's another event that will occur this weekend, too.

I'd like to remind all Islanders that this weekend will be the opening day of our angling season on Prince Edward Island. I urge everyone to get out and get their licence, maybe this afternoon and all members of the floor, if they have an opportunity to get out, there may be some other long tales from the member of Souris Elmira if he gets out this weekend as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: He took the bait.

Mr. LaVie: I welcome everyone back today for another House sitting, especially those in the gallery. Also to the people that are watching from home from District 1.

There's a group of girls from right across Prince Edward Island from the provincial ringette and they're gone to Montreal as we speak. I wish them luck – all of the players right from across PEI – I wish them luck in Montreal. I know every player plays to win. But most of all, I hope these players – these girls make great friendships and have long-time memories coming from the trip to Montreal.

Speaking of ringette, Souris took over the ringette in the provincials. The Souris Senators won the Island championship in the provincials. They were coached by Tony MacDonald, manager Darlene MacNeill-Veld and coach Trent MacPhee. Not only did they win gold, but the silver team was the Souris Cyclones. That's really good to have them under 14 girls playing in the championship both teams from Souris. Not only that, it gets better.

The under 12 ringette Souris Steelers won a provincial championship and they are coached by Craig Veld, Jolyne Sharkey, and Steven Dingwell. Not only that, the team that won silver was also from Souris – it was the Souris Slamm. So you had four teams in the provincial championship and the four of them from Souris. Great representation. It's great to see ringette back on PEI and these girls had a lot of fun and there was a lot of happy faces here in Souris over the last provincial championships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome all the hospice and palliative care individuals here today. We recognize the importance that you play in our society. Dr. Baker, former doctor of mine and I've gotten to know her husband in my travels – pretty fine gentleman, too. Eddie Lund, Leonard Toole – great to have you here. Larry Jones and his daughter Ellen at the back there. I just wanted to take a moment to wish everyone a great Easter and a safe holiday because there's lots of people on the road travelling this weekend. So, be safe and enjoy.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Philip Brown

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

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Philip Brown. Charlottetown Philip Brown, I should say –

Some Hon. Members: Hear! Hear!

Mr. J. Brown: – before we get too carried away – who is a resident of Charlottetown-Brighton and has given considerable voice to having Charlottetown recognized by the Federal Government as the Birthplace of Confederation.

Mr. Brown has been the principal mover of this campaign for several years and has never wavered in his dedication to seeing Charlottetown proclaimed as the Birthplace of Canada.

In fact, I can remember when he first raised this issue at an Annual General Meeting for the Charlottetown Federal Liberal Association. He has met with several government and community representatives on the provincial and federal level to push this very important issue.

He was a great resource for me in preparing and moving the motion recently adopted unanimously by this Legislature.

Here we are at Canada's 150th celebration and the importance and timing of this declaration could not be more paramount. This has been the motivation to keep pushing it into the hands of those that can make this happen. This would not have risen to the federal level, as it has of late, without the tireless efforts of Philip. Our community is lucky to have champions like Philip Brown.

Please join me in extending gratitude and appreciation for the work he has been undertaking to have Charlottetown named as the Birthplace of Confederation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hank Gallant's Courier de Bois

Mr. Perry: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise and share the story of a remarkable man, Mr. Henry 'Hank' Gallant.

Hank was born in Nail Pond in the Tignish area in 1942, with his roots deeply seeded in the Acadian community. It was this Acadian heritage that led him to his idea to walk across Canada in tribute to the Courier de Bois, or Runners of the Woods.

This term is associated with those who are part of the fur trade and played an important role in the exploration of Canada under the French regime. These Acadian explorers covered long distances on foot, in snow, rain and the summer heat. It was this type of endurance and dedication that inspired Hank to do exactly the same thing.

In 1967, as a centennial project, Hank set out from Victoria, British Columbia, and he walked over nine months until he reached the Confederation Building in St. John's Newfoundland. This was a total of 5,226 miles.

Hank Gallant was the first Canadian to walk across Canada from coast to coast. During his walk he carried the Canadian Arms proudly to the world Expo 67 in Montreal. You can read all about his full adventure in his book titled *The Walk – 10 Million Steps Across Canada*.

In 1969, Hank also did a walk across 12 countries in Europe, and is presently working on his second book in which he will share this experience.

Since then, Hank has married his wife, Deloris, raised six children and now have eight grandchildren. He is a well respected singer, songwriter and author.

In 2015, he recorded an album called *Swamp Music*.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to acknowledge the contribution of Henry 'Hank' Gallant, who went to great lengths to honour the pioneers and their contributions to the history of Canada.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Sew Blessed Quilters

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise today and recognize a new business in my area, Sew Blessed Quilters. Owner and operator, Faith LeClair, opened the business after her old workplace, Bargain Fabric Outlet, closed after eight years in business.

Faith knew it felt right to open her own business, and that she did in her very own home. As Faith said: We all knew it was coming, we expected to have probably another year, but things didn't work out that way.

The store offers fabrics, supplies and sewing services and classes that are filled now with a growing wait list.

It is nice to see a small business thriving in rural PEI, a business that puts money back into the community and creates jobs.

Sewing is something not everyone can do, anymore, said Faith and it's getting harder and harder to find someone with that skill that is required. That is why Faith has been offering classes three times a week. She says, the demand has been high within all of her classes, and they are all full.

Faith enjoys showing others the talent and takes pride in seeing their finished products. I know Faith will continue to thrive with her new business and all the local support that she receives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

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

Mill River deal and Rodd's loans

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the minister of economic development: Can you confirm that your government threatened to call all of Rodd's loans if they didn't sign off on the sweetheart Mill River deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Rodd property at Mill River, if that is what you're talking about, is a very strategic establishment in the western part of Prince Edward Island. The hon. member just spoke about rural development.

We've been dealing with this issue for the past little while, and we see some bright lights for the Mill River property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's quite a runaround I was just given for a very direct question.

Question, again to the minister of economic development: Did your government threaten to call Rodd's loans if they didn't sign off on the sweetheart deal so you could make it happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I had no knowledge of anybody talking to Rodd's in that manner on any issue that was relevant on calling in any loans.

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 funny. Some of your own hon. members are talking about it and every lawyer in Charlottetown is talking about it, but you're pretending like it didn't happen.

Come clean right here with the House today. Tell Islanders: Why were you so desperate to push through the Mill River deal that you threatened to call the loans on the Rodd company?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's been no secret that this government has been aggressively seeking buyers for all of our golf courses as we feel that it's the best interest to move those golf courses to the private sector.

We had a real opportunity here with a local individual that wanted to invest millions of dollars into a property that, somehow we didn't see that it had a very bright future in the hands of governments and the private owners and we're continuing to pursue other interests in other golf courses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is three questions then.

We all know that it happened. Everybody knows that it has happened. At every water cooler, at every law office they're talking about it. How do you think I found out about it? Do you think I just made this up? Like, yeah, right. Come on.

Question again: Will you come clean with Islanders?

Come clean with Islanders and tell Islanders, once and for all: Did you threaten Rodd's in order to get them to sign the agreement to sell the property by threatening to call their loans?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trivers: Simple question.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, you know this agreement is going to save this property. It's going to save jobs. It's going to save economic spin-off. It's going to grow rural PEI. We're going to continue to work with this company to see the advancement of this property.

It's a signature property in the western part of rural PEI that creates upwards of over \$1.7 million in wages. We had 16,000 golf rounds played last year. We had over 5,000 campsites sold, or 2,500 campsites sold and 5,000 room nights.

It is a strategic property in western PEI, in rural PEI, and we want to keep it that way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, to the minister of economic development on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Who else did you offer this property to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, I think this government, the past two years, and the previous government, were advertising freely and frequently on the golf courses of Prince Edward Island –

Mr. Trivers: It was more than just a golf course.

Mr. MacDonald: – and there was an RFP done –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) golf course (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) four years ago (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – and so we opened it up to an RFP. We were honoured to see Mr. McDougall want to come back to his roots and make a huge investment in that property.

But more importantly, this government on the opposition side, continually divide rural PEI and urban PEI. Here is a situation where we have rural PEI, the government's investing in and they're still condemning it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Everybody is condemning this sweetheart deal.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal out for tender

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This sweetheart deal was sole-sourced behind closed doors.

To the minister of economic development on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did this property fail to go out for tender?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the property did go out to RFP –

Mr. Trivers: No, it didn't.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that the property went out to RFP.

This property, along with government entities in this whole package were losing somewhere of about \$850,000 in taxpayers' money a year –

An Hon. Member: You still are.

Mr. MacDonald: What we're trying to do is alleviate that pressure from the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island by putting this deal

together. This deal is a good deal for West Prince and PEI.

To have someone like Mr. McDougall step up to the plate and invest his time and effort at his age with his family into that community. If you –

Mr. Myers: I notice you –

Mr. MacDonald: – look at the spin-offs –

Mr. Myers: – didn't say money.

Mr. MacDonald: – in Bloomfield –

Mr. Myers: He's not investing his money.

Mr. MacDonald: – what we've done as far as – if you look at the Kentucky Fried Chicken or the Grecos or the hockey tournaments –

Mr. Myers: This isn't about Kentucky fried chicken (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Or if we just talked about Hockeyville,

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. Currie: He's got you on the ropes now.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister's right. It did go for RFP in 2011 for the golf course alone. Seven years later, six years later was the last time that RFP went out.

Lots of Island business people would have taken a free golf course from this government.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did you fail to publicly advertise this property?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. J. Brown: Don't say that.

Mr. Trivers: Fog bank.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate, but as I said before, that these properties have been on the market. We've tried several things. We were condemned all the time for not being able to sell them. We didn't have the right people trying to sell them.

Ms. Compton: You didn't sell (Indistinct) give it away.

Mr. MacDonald: We had all kinds of issues with this, and Mr. McDougall steps up to the plate –

Mr. Myers: You didn't sell it.

Mr. MacDonald: We rejuvenated property that was going to need \$6.6 million in capital expenditures alone.

Mr. Myers: Sounds like you bought it.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) 12 years.

Mr. MacDonald: Over the past – next 12 years.

Government can't continue to spend taxpayers' money in this regard, Mr. Speaker. We need new investments. We've turned it over to the private sector, and we're going to see that property prosper. We're going to see the economic spinoffs, and we're going to see employment in West Prince.

An Hon. Member: Responsible government.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal and IRAC

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, parcels are required to be advertised to Islanders for three months prior to selling off-Island.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did this deal fail to go to IRAC?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Mr. Trivers: Follow the rules.

Mr. Myers: Nobody up west wants (Indistinct)

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an establishment that has been around for a number of years, and I'm sure everyone in this House at some point in time took their children there.

We, as a government responsible to rural development in PEI, didn't want to see this property go away. We didn't have too many options when this deal was done.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: We either had to make – build up this property to allow it to continue, to allow the investment in West Prince.

There's 200 rooms past Summerside. We could have built a wall and said we're not doing anything with Mill River and shut it down. That would have left 110 units –

Mr. Myers: There's (Indistinct) hotel there.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I can tell you, the slowest growth region on Prince Edward Island last year was West Prince. If we shut Mill River down –

Mr. Myers: Ten years later.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: – that would be almost immediate –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Liberal lawyer and Mill River deal

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It never went to IRAC for an off-Island purchase, and it was one of the first decisions taken by Cabinet this year.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Which particular Charlottetown Liberal lawyer represented government in this deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Mr. LaVie: Call the house doctor now.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I'm not 100% sure which firm, because I think there may be more than one, but I can bring that back to the House.

Mr. LaVie: She's sinking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: What'd I tell you? He'll tell you. Tell them (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, Billy Dow was the legal point man for this government.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: How is it after egaming that your government allowed Billy Dow to wear two hats on both sides of another deal?

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: I believe, Mr. Speaker, we discussed in the House yesterday about legal professionals and how we do it through procurement, and who specializes in certain areas of law.

If that's what we've chose to do that in law, I think we've come out with a really good deal, and it's unfortunate that the –

Mr. Myers: The lawyers who specialize in backroom deals.

Mr. MacDonald: The opposition continues to talk about doom and gloom and we continue to grow the economy at a rate better than the national average. We're doing a phenomenal job –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: You're sinking.

Mr. MacDonald: We're leading Atlantic Canada and we're leading most parts of the country, and the last meeting I was at of internal trade, the hon. minister Bain said to me, he says: I don't know what you guys are doing down there, but geez, whatever you're doing keep it up. You're successful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) work for an Islander.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal and Budget book

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to leave that response alone.

Billy Dow represented government in the sale and also represented government in the Rodd loan thread.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why are the costs of this sweetheart deal not in your Budget book?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll have an opportunity to discuss that, and you'll have an opportunity to even ask more questions on that through Budget Estimates, because it actually is partially in our Budget book through IPEI and the Department of Tourism, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Consultation with Aboriginals

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the government is guaranteeing losses, but they are not reflected in the Budget.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did you fail to consult the Aboriginal peoples of PEI on this deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Look –

Mr. Myers: You need a constitutional expert over there. Anybody know one?

Mr. MacDonald: We value our relationship with the Mi'kmaq in advancing socio-economical procedures with them. We've been working very closely with them.

We were advised that we were duty to consult. That's exactly what we've done. We've done it a number of times, and we'll continue down that road, and we continue to value our relationship with the Mi'kmaq people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Value of Mill River property

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, duty to consult is a must; before, not after.

To the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism on his sweetheart Mill River deal: Why did you decide to sell a 90-room full service resort with an 18-hole championship golf course, indoor pool, 90-foot waterslide, whirlpool, sauna, squash courts, tennis courts, restaurant and lounge, 72-site campground, and fun park, and all the land for \$500,000 when your own assessment for the property was worth between \$8-9 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me take you back to 2013, when we did an independent study. And it wasn't government that did it – it was a third party; it was a consultant that'd done it – and the capital improvements and the advancements of that property at that time in 2013, the investment that was required was \$43 million to keep it where it should be.

If you look at the deal that we've made, you look at \$850,000 in losses a year, you look at where the capital expenditure was going to have to be placed in that establishment the golf course, it's over \$6.6 million in 12 years in capital expenditures alone to the campground and to the golf course.

That's not counting the Rodd property, itself.

So, it's pretty easy math to figure it out over a number of years (Indistinct) taxpayers off the hook.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mill River and impact of marketplace

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: When you put together the Mill River sweetheart deal, did this tired Liberal government do any analysis of how pouring millions of dollars into Mill River would impact the marketplace?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Every time you see a Mill River ad somewhere in this country or around the world, it's going to enhance the product of Prince Edward Island.

By closing that property, we would have done detriment to the industry, especially the industry of rural PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: And Charlottetown lawyers. Well, you ruined the Charlottetown lawyer market.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) winners.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Consultations with TIAPEI

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm hearing that, in fact, you didn't do any analysis to see how it would impact the market place.

This sweetheart deal has created an uneven playing field by heavily subsidizing one business to the tune of millions of dollars for the next 12 years.

Question for the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: Did you consult with TIAPEI about the possible impacts of heavily subsidizing the one private tourism

operation with millions of dollars in public money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government's making investments in the tourism industry all the time. We have a list of grants, and we'll be going over those in Estimates, and they're in every riding and every one of our districts in both sides of this House.

It's a very important industry to us – 6.5% of our GDP, it's \$435 million in revenue.

We continue to progress the tourism on Prince Edward Island, and we will continue to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Privately-owned tourism businesses and subsidization

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, in fact, there are over 150 businesses in the Cavendish Resort municipality alone in my district, so I will ask you this question, Minister of Economic Development and Tourism: How many other privately-owned tourism businesses are you subsidizing with millions of dollars in public money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to invest in tourism, whether it's Cavendish, Georgetown, or wherever. The economic development in rural PEI has always been an issue with the opposition. Here when we go and do something good, we get blamed for doing too much. It's a

very strategic property in West Prince and we want to keep that strategic property alive.

There's room for tourists. We had 1.5 million visitors here last year. Cavendish wasn't hurting, Georgetown wasn't hurting. West Prince had the lowest numbers of anywhere on Prince Edward Island, even with the ferries closing in the east. They still had the lower numbers.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Subsidizing losses at private business

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're listening to the public. We're listening to our constituents. When the public outcry over your sweetheart deal began, the new owner said that Mill River would rival the Cavendish Resort Municipality.

Minister: Can you explain how spending millions in public money to subsidize 12 years of losses at a private business will duplicate what has taken over half a century to build?

Mr. Myers: Good question. That's a good question.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There have been investments in the Cavendish area over a number of years and, actually, on the other hat I wear, we're looking at investments in rural broadband. There's always investment in other areas of the province. You know it's funny because in my other hat, which was immigration, we had seven or eight new entities buy properties in Cavendish. There are always investments in those areas and we'll continue to make investments in those areas.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Following the comments that I referenced earlier, both the Cavendish Resort Municipality and the Tourism Cavendish Beach Inc. they cried foul – rightly so. Calling the comments 'patently absurd' and the whole caper a 'sweetheart deal'.

Question to the tourism minister: Do those comments reflect your tired Liberal government's position on this sweetheart deal?

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure how tired we are. We're gearing up for likely one of the biggest tourism seasons that we're ever going to have.

I give kudos to all the industry from one end of the Island to the other and we try to treat them as fairly as possible. When you look at what we've done in the past two years in the department of tourism, we're leading visitations right across the country. We have a great presence, we have an international presence, we're working on our global markets and we're going to continue to because it's an important industry for PEI and there's not a business on PEI that is not affected by the tourism industry.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny that the minister mentioned high speed internet because when this tired Liberal government started feeling heat over its failed sweetheart high-speed Internet deal, this minister suddenly started singing the praises of not interfering in the marketplace.

Mr. Myers: That's true.

Mr. Trivers: Question to the tourism minister: Why are you doing the exact opposite when it comes to this latest sweetheart deal from your tired Liberal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: That's a great question. They can't help themselves. They're Liberals. They like to meddle.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The economy of Prince Edward Island is the best it's been in a number of years. We've got close to \$400 million investment; 60% of that investment is in rural PEI.

We're working with – we've seen what we've done with SRDC and CADC. There are no boundaries in economic development in Prince Edward Island. We're small enough right now that we have to work with everybody and that's exactly what this government is doing. We're aggressive in our economic development platform. We're doing as much as we can possibly do and the results are fact, not opinion.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If this tired Liberal government were serious about growth, instead of sweetheart deals, then you'd really tackle the high speed internet issue.

Question to the tourism minister: If you had millions of tax dollars burning a hole in your pocket, wouldn't addressing high-speed Internet access have more direct benefit for the entire tourism industry?

An Hon. Member: There you go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question (Indistinct)

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think he must have missed – he couldn't have heard me when I said we're working with a community in his riding on rural

broadband and internet services. We're working with all the ISPs –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Hon. member (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: We're working with all ISPs and I've stated before in this House that some of the ISP came back to us and said – told the government to stay out of it.

Well, you know what? I'm a responsible minister for the taxpayers of PEI. We want the best service possible in internet solutions. Every province in Canada is dealing with this, but PEI is going to be a leader in it because by the end of next year, we're going to be at 99% at 5 megabytes per second or better.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Fracking omitted from water act

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

The draft water act that is currently being reviewed in public consultations does not deal with the issue of hydraulic fracturing or fracking. This issue was raised by many Islanders during previous consultations and we have a motion before the floor from the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald calling for a ban of fracking.

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Why was fracking omitted from the new water act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good question.

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

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

Truly it is a pleasure to rise and talk about the process of the water act, which we are now in our second area of public consultations all across PEI. Certainly, I am well aware as minister of the conversations that have been at those meetings and several of the members that sit on the floor of the

legislature have been at those meetings to hear them as well.

The issue of hydraulic fracturing on Prince Edward Island has been brought forward in the initial rounds of the consultations and again, there's discussion on the second round and I've indicated to those people that discussions will continue as we work on regulations, even after the draft act becomes passed on the floor of the Legislature. Those details of that can be worked on through regulation – and I'm committed to do that with the great folks across Prince Edward Island to take their concerns and work with them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Public consultations on water act

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks so much, Mr. Speaker.

Several groups involved in water issues on the Island are wondering why the final consultation process for the new water act is so short – it's barely a month – when the minister had previously recognized the need to, in your words, get this right.

A question to the minister: Why is this final round of consultations so much shorter than the previous one?

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

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

This process that we've developed of public consultation on the water act, and how all Islanders are concerned about protection of the quality and quantity of our water, our most precious natural resource for not only our generation, but generations to follow. All indicators have been that this process has been phenomenal.

We've taken almost 20 months to do the first part. It's been well informed to me that the draft act that has presented has brought much of the view of Islanders have brought forward and they're very pleased the way it

looks in that draft act. We certainly do have a lot of work once we get that – as we move out on the rest of the consultations and I look forward to those.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

In the past, the minister certainly has been accommodating and he has slowed down the engagement process for which many of the people who made presentations and submissions were grateful and acknowledged that. But the groups involved in water say that they need more time to analyze this 38 page act, minister. Not something you can analyze quickly or easily. And developing good policy, as you've said, does indeed take time and it should not be rushed.

Will the minister commit to extending this final public engagement period for the water act?

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

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

The consultations thus far have been extensive. I have indicated to everybody that those details of those specific things will be dealt with in regulation. We have up to 18 months now to work on that. It certainly hasn't been a rushed process.

If the hon. member would like to attend one of the meetings, he would hear from the people that are at the mic that they are very happy with what they see in the draft act and we'll continue that process as very collaborative and consulting with Islanders and it's been fully reflective so far and it will continue. There is no rush, hon. member. We are doing it in its justified time and working towards the end of the process.

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

Electronic supervision of offenders

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. In February of 2016, a one-year project began with your department to test electronic supervision of offenders.

Premier: Is your department considering making this program a permanent method of correctional service that can be used to create accountability of offenders?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question.

We are, indeed. The department and government are considering the permanent option of the tool of electronic monitoring based on a review of the electronic supervision pilot project and recommendations will be put forward for our next steps. That would be expected to take place by summertime and in that process there will feedback from justice partners as well as departmental personnel and my understanding is that the view of that pilot project today has been very positive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These ankle bracelets allow more offenders to be supervised in the community, which would appear to be a more cost-effective solution for some inmates. Does the Premier have any data regarding the cost savings to the taxpayers if this program is implemented on a permanent basis?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That will be one of the questions that will be taken into consideration as we review the pilot project. It is, indeed, the case that there are savings related to the technology itself or

to the electronic bracelets, and that does reduce demand on custody facilities.

Over time, we also have to take a look at what is involved in community-based supervision and support programs to reintegrate offenders. But, the objective and beyond the actual dollars becomes an assessment of the improved outcomes for offenders and for the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Does the Premier see electronic monitoring helping offenders integrate into the community?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

In principle, the gradual and supervised return of offenders to the community has been shown to be more effective for the offenders, and for their families, and safer for the community and the public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Midwifery services

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Minister, everyone in the House is aware that I tabled a petition in the fall sitting of the Legislature to regulate and fund midwifery services on Prince Edward Island.

How close are we to having midwifery services here on the Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point has been a very passionate advocate for midwifery services here in Prince Edward Island and in that vein and because of her advocacy, we have entered into consultations with a number of organizations, small healthcare professions and the midwifery association is one of them. Those consultations, hopefully, will lead to a new registered healthcare professions act. That would be something that we're looking at.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister: Will you explain what the registered health professions act is, how midwifery fits in the act and when can we see it coming to the floor of the Legislature?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The healthcare professions act is, the registered healthcare professions act, is an act that's going to help regulate a number of smaller professions that deliver healthcare services in Prince Edward Island. Groups that don't have a large enough association to regulate themselves, and the midwife association could be a group that would be affiliated with that and we are going through the legislative process on that and we hope to be tabling that legislation here in the Legislature this spring sitting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Support of new registered health professions act

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Born Cooperative, an advocacy group for midwives on Prince Edward Island, has

launched an online petition asking all MLAs to support the new registered health professions act. Minister, I will be supporting the registered health professions act. Will you?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, as Minister of Health and Wellness in the Province of Prince Edward Island, I think it's important that we make sure that the delivery of many healthcare services by our healthcare professions are done in an effective, safe and responsible manner and this registered healthcare professions act will allow for that to happen here, and should the midwife association be one of the organizations that wants to apply to that act –

Mr. LaVie: Answer the question.

Mr. Henderson: – we will definitely be supporting that here as minister, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) giving you the runaround.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Legal costs for Cornwall bypass

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

Question to the minister of transportation: Minister, how much has your department spent to date on legal costs for the Cornwall bypass project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Trans Canada Highway extension is an extensive project that is going to generate

millions of dollars into the GDP for Prince Edward Island; \$42.9 million. It's going to create 502 person years of employment, and it's going to bring tax revenues of \$8.3 million into this province.

That's not the only project we're investing in. We have four tenders out for every –

Mr. LaVie: Answer the question.

Ms. Biggar: – part of this Island, which is \$24 million. We are injecting water and wastewater projects across 29 communities, which will be over \$60 million and we are contributing to the economy to making jobs for people across PEI.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister, unfortunately, did not answer my question until the very end when she said she's investing – infusing lots of millions of dollars into the economy, and I would have to say that's by paying millions of dollars to lawyers. Once you start using lawyers to force expropriation, the bills pile up quickly.

Question to the minister: How much does your department expect to pay in legal costs for arbitration following your attempts to expropriate land?

Mr. Trivers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we initially decided to go forward with this project, we looked at our policies around the expropriation. We took one to Executive Council, which was approved, and we have followed that process to a T. We own, already, 25% of the property on that particular Trans Canada Highway

extension. There are 24 others to be acquired –

Mr. Trivers: How much did you pay (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – 50% of those have either been acquired or are under negotiation and we will continue to work with all property owners.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's no secret to anyone here in this House that the *Expropriation Act* here on Prince Edward Island is the most outdated *Expropriation Act* of any in all of Canada.

Again, question to the minister of transportation: Will the legal work being handled be done by government lawyers or outside counsel?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we enter into negotiations with property owners there is a process, again, that's put in place. There is an option to use an independent appraiser. We continue to work on that on different projects in acquiring and negotiations. Things are still under negotiation with a number of properties, so when we're all done we'll be able to have a fuller idea of what those particular negotiations will entail.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: The question (Indistinct) government (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Resources for community organizations

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

The province's mental health strategy talks a lot about the need for more resources for community organizations and private-sector partners.

Question to the minister of health: Minister, do you still endorse that sentiment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we, in the Department of Health and Wellness and through Health PEI work extensively with many different organizations that help deliver mental healthcare services in this province, including the Canadian Mental Health Association. We have also created a number of different supports for people suffering from mental health and we'll continue to work with those organizations in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Community mental health supports

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

The Hughes-Jones Centre is a non-profit that provides horse therapy services to a number of vulnerable groups and individuals.

Again, question to the minister of health: Do you agree that groups like these add value to our community mental health supports?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Trivers: Easy question.

Mr. Aylward: Yes or no.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we always work with different organizations dealing with various situations that help individuals and organizations across Prince Edward Island.

I'm not as familiar with that particular organization and what it actually does, but I know we do work with various organizations and they provide great valued service in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Displacing Hughes-Jones Centre

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

I would urge this minister of health to get caught up with his responsibilities and to know what services are available out there and what resources are available, whether they fall directly under his department or if they compliment services that may be provided by his department.

Horse therapy is a widely recognized practice that benefits many groups like; at-risk youth; people suffering from PTSD; people with disabilities, and those with social anxieties.

Question to the minister of health: How will destroying a horse farm that provides preventative mental health services make more community resources available?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very well aware of the work that has been happening at the Hughes-Jones Centre over the years.

With this particular property, as well as several other properties, we have initially offered to relocate that particular property. We have entered into a lease so that that property owner can stay there until May of 2018.

We have also entered into leases with other property owners so that they have time to relocate. We are not starting that project immediately. It will be started this fall so there will be lots of time for people to

relocate and I will continue to work with the other property owners to negotiate those sales.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would go back to my last question, again, because I was hoping to get an answer from the health minister, but he probably wouldn't be forthcoming, so I'm move on.

The Hughes-Jones Centre doesn't get government funding for their services, and they aren't looking for any.

Question to the minister of health: Why would your tired Liberal government displace and destroy a viable working partner in the community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) to work.

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, again, as I noted, with this particular property, we entered into discussions with them at their request last fall. We continue those discussions. We went externally with appraisals for those properties. We have worked with them to ensure that they have adequate time. We offered to relocate that property to other property to offer to work together.

We are glad that they have entered into a lease so that they have time to relocate and to transition their property to another location. We will continue to work with them in that regard.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

Groups like the Hughes-Jones Centre actually save government money in the long

run by providing much needed community mental health supports.

I'm going to go directly to the transportation minister because unfortunately the health minister doesn't seem to be able to answer the question, so we'll go directly to the transportation minister who wants to try to answer everything.

Minister of transportation: Why does your tired Liberal government put a higher value on asphalt than supporting vulnerable young Islanders?

Mr. Trivers: Very nice (Indistinct) question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: It's the Island cultural fund (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) cousin.

Ms. Biggar: The investments we're making through infrastructure across this Island goes back into the pockets of Islanders because they are employed in the projects that we are doing right across this Island –

Leader of the Opposition: So that's more important than children.

Ms. Biggar: – in every community across PEI. We continue to work with organizations, as well, that provide supports to families.

Through the investments that my department is making in Islanders, in projects, in communities, it will engage more Islanders through the workforce, in turn adding to the income of those families –

Mr. Myers: One family anyway –

Ms. Biggar: – and we will continue to invest –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) –

Ms. Biggar: – in projects that are needed –

Mr. Myers: – the Premier’s family.

Ms. Biggar: – across the Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, your final question.

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

It simply comes down to priorities.

Again, question to the transportation minister: Wouldn’t the money you’ll spend on lawyers expropriating the Hughes-Jones Centre be better invested into frontlines community mental health supports like the one you’re destroying?

Leader of the Opposition: That’s right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear. We have worked hand in hand with this particular business to offer to relocate, offered different pieces of land as part of our negotiations. We have entered into a deal in terms of a lease to the present property and if people decide they do not want to take particular offers that is their prerogative. We have worked in good faith with all of the property owners. We will continue to work with all the property owners.

We, again, will work with that property owner if they so wish to choose to work with us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Justice Supports for Children

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, to better support children and families who are experiencing the difficulty of separation or divorce, government is implementing a

Parenting Coordination Program and creating a children’s lawyer position.

Proposed legislative changes to the *Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act*, the *Family Law Act*, and the *Judicature Act* will empower this work.

First, the new Parenting Coordination Program will assist high-conflict parents to implement a parenting plan that is child-focused. A parenting coordinator can assist when parents do not agree on a parenting agreement. If the parents frequently go to court over a parenting agreement, a parenting coordinator will work with both parents to fine tune the agreement and resolve disputes outside the court. This could include; parent education; mediation, or arbitration.

Resolving issues outside the court is certainly easier on the family as a whole. This alternative dispute resolution process is intended to support a healthy co-parenting relationship that is in the child’s best interests.

Second, government has created a children’s lawyer position. The children’s lawyer will work directly with children who require the services of a lawyer to protect their interests. The children’s lawyer will be able to provide legal services to the child.

The children’s lawyer will be empowered to gather information on the child’s case from agencies like schools and police. They will work with parents and caregivers to come up with child-focused solutions. They will be able to participate in alternative dispute resolutions such as mediation to help parents reach solutions outside of the court system. If necessary, they will be able to make submissions to the court on behalf of the child.

Later this session, we will introduce amendments to the *Maintenance Enforcement Act* to better assist single-parent families who use this program.

These legislative changes will protect children when the adults in their lives are in conflict and give children in high-risk family situations a stronger voice. By protecting our most vulnerable citizens, and our most vulnerable populations, especially children,

present and future generations of Islanders will be better able to thrive in our communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Responding to the Premier's statement will be the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think the welfare of our children is on the upmost of everybody's priorities. I think this government has failed to listen to what Islanders actually have been saying over the last many years –

Mr. LaVie: They don't listen.

Leader of the Opposition: Islanders want a child advocate. Repeatedly, we're hearing that. This Premier fails to recognize that across the Island. This is just another case of it.

I think that we also have to look at, and this government has failed to do it –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: – the amount of outstanding child maintenance money and funds that are outstanding to parents that need it, or single parents that need it.

Again, he's failing to deal with it. He's failing to show leadership where it needs to be – and that is: put a child advocate in place in the province of Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: It's all about the child. It's all about the children.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

As the Premier said, government has a responsibility to protect the most susceptible groups in our society and children, of

course, are uniquely vulnerable and they need to be advocated for in a number of areas – not just in the area of legal concerns, but in child welfare and youth justice, children's mental health and a number of other issues.

Every other province in Canada has a child advocate who advocates over these broad range of youth concerns. The mandate for some of those positions is different, but each of them has a thing in common – it's that they are independent arms-length from government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

And unless Prince Edward Island adopts this model, we will continuously be behind the other provinces and we will not be advocating in the most appropriate or effective way for children in this province.

There are two things that I think fall short in this announcement: One is the scope of the supports – legal supports, yes, but as we know, there are many other things in which we need to advocate for children. And the second thing is this lack of independence from government.

While the official opposition and myself have spoken at length and reputedly and I believe that we reflect the will of Islanders for the need for a child advocate here on Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The only people who don't get this are the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Tone-deaf government; tone-deaf.

An Hon. Member: Tired.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: You were born on third and thought you hit a triple. You were born on third and think you hit a triple yet today.

Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr. Myers: Lots of people here hit a triple, you didn't. You were born on third.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

National Advance Care Planning Day

Mr. Henderson: This Sunday, April 16th, is National Advance Care Planning Day, a day of awareness and action for all Canadians. Many people think that advance care planning discussions are about death and dying. In fact, it's about how well you want to live.

Advance care planning is about sharing your values and wishes with your family and health professionals now, not later – because you never know when you may face an unexpected event or illness and lose the ability to speak for yourself.

Conversations about living well and dying well can be challenging, which is why Hospice PEI and Health PEI have come together to develop a free online workbook. This new tool can help individuals to think about the important people in their life and suggests ways to start and what can be a difficult conversation.

I encourage all Islanders to take the first steps in advanced care planning. Having a plan will reduce your family's stress and anxiety, improve your satisfaction with your care, and improve your quality of life and quality of death.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Hospice PEI for their work on this initiative and all of our health care professionals who work diligently for the betterment of Islanders – including our palliative care staff, physicians, nurses, home care supporters, paramedics, and other patient navigators, councilors and many others.

Joining us in the gallery today we have: Members of the Hospice PEI Board of Directors, Linda Callard and Lorna Jenkins; Ellen Davies Ward, Executive Assistant of Hospice PEI; and Laurie Ann McCardle, Interim Executive Director of Hospice PEI.

As well as some of our staff from our provincial palliative care centre: we have

Dr. Janet Baker, palliative care physician; Sharon Ruckley, palliative care nurse; Blanche Ward, project manager for the provincial drug pilot program and social worker at the Provincial Palliative Care Centre, as well as Dr. Mireille Lecours, our Provincial Palliative Care Medical Consultant.

Thank you all for the very hard work that you do each and every day in making the lives of Islanders much better and happier.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I just want to simply echo all of the statements that the hon. minister has just made with regards to this very important topic. Advance care plan is not something that, obviously, many people want to think about or look at. What you're essentially doing is looking towards the end of your journey, and most individuals do not want to do that.

I know, within my own family, my parents have taken the lead on this because they know that eventually they will need a plan in place. To the extent where, back a number of years ago, my father actually took me down to his lawyer and we wrote out the power of attorney. We thought that that was taken care of.

Last year my mother, actually, has some dementia – she fell and broke her hip. She's now at Beach Grove Home, which I've spoken many times about in this Legislative Assembly – of the great work that they do out there, the fantastic staff, the facility overall.

It was an eye opening experience for our family because we thought that the power of attorney – because we had done it with the lawyer, everything was done, signed, sealed and delivered – until I started having to look after some of the financial aspects for my parents and then working with Service Canada and with the provincial government,

I quickly discovered that, just because you have it there, it's not actually enacted. So, we had to go through a long and arduous process to get that done.

That's just a very, very small part of the advance care plan. I do remember, shortly after being elected as a member of this Legislative Assembly, I had the pleasure of meeting with Marilyn Lowther, who is very involved in this, and she certainly opened my eyes to what a full advance care plan means. Since then, I have spoken to many people about moving forward and getting this in place.

So again, just echoing the minister's statement: I think it's coming upon us all to talk about this within our family unit. I also applaud the wonderful people that are here in the gallery and the work that you do every day for all Islanders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Life is unpredictable and none of us knows our future – it's not clear, it's not assured and we don't know what lies ahead. Just last week, I had a close friend in his twenties who ended up intubated in ICU. So, absolutely, we're talking about the end of life, but that doesn't always come in a predicted, natural way. It can happen at any time.

That's one of the reasons why it's really important that we deal with these issues – that we face them. Advance care planning – it's a multi-step process. You first have to sort of reflect on your own values and your beliefs, you have to speak to people and communicate that, choose somebody who will speak on your behalf – and then make sure that that's recorded somewhere so that there is no ambiguity and you know what your choices are if you happen to end up in that awful situation.

Like fire insurance and automobile collision insurance, we hope we never have to use it.

But equally, it's very important that it's there.

I also want to acknowledge the fantastic work that people in hospice and palliative care do on this province. It's the most admirable work.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Day of Pink

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today April 12th, marks the International Day of Pink, a day where communities across the country, and across the world, celebrate diversity and raise awareness to stop homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of bullying.

I'm pleased today to see many of my colleagues on both sides of the House have joined me in wearing pink and taking a stand against bullying. The International Day of the Pink is a time when we can all make a commitment to be open-minded, to accepting the differences among us, and to be united in treating each other with respect.

The Day of Pink is a time to promote acceptance and respect. Our community is filled with people who seem different from what we may consider the mainstream. People may stand out because of their genders, disabilities, sexuality, faith, age, occupation, or financial status.

When we learn to accept differences without judgment, to accommodate people's varying needs, and to recognize the equal humanity even of those we don't understand – only then will bullying and isolation cease.

We all have a role at home, at school, in our workplace, and here in the Legislature. I've witnessed a number of meetings across the Island throughout this year. We hear it about incidents at the rink. We hear about incidences of things happening at school. And here, in the Legislature, we can set the tone for what the rest of Islanders do.

We've experienced it here. We may not agree with each other, but when we turn those words and make them into personal comments about each other, that is bullying, and we can set that tone and make sure that – even though we may disagree in our debates – that we are respectful, and I wear this pink so that I – and I'm glad to see everyone has – so that we can make progress as we move forward on equality and acceptance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Responding to the minister's statement will be the – okay, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for this statement on this International Day of Pink. I applaud and appreciate the work that the minister, and this government, is doing.

I know there's a lot of work done in schools, and I think that's important. The schoolchildren do a lot of projects to do a lot of work. Actually, I think we have a schoolchild here with us today; Oliver is here with us today in the media gallery, and I know he'll experience this going through his school age, too.

My own children come home, and they talk about it. It's open, it's not a problem, and they try to push that around the school, the non-bullying nature. I know in my coaching, you try to set an example that way so these children are growing up the right way.

And you do see it. It's working. The kids don't have bias when they come in. They don't see any difference, so I applaud the government.

There's still a lot of work to be done, that's for sure. I mean, we still need to – wearing pink and doing these things one day is one thing, but we need to put the effort in all year round.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister and the hon. member for their comments on this incredibly important issue.

Speaking up for yourself can sometimes be hard, and particularly when there are still powerful prejudices in parts of our society for people who are gay or bisexual or transgendered or – and for them, that makes it particularly hard to stand up and feel accepted and proud of who they are.

I have to say, in the last couple of weeks I know I have spoken to two families whose teenage children have developed fairly severe mental health issues, I think, in what may be entirely – it's certainly in large part – because of anxiety surrounding their sexuality and not being able to talk openly and comfortably about that.

It's an appropriate time for me to remind the House that on April 15th, the Matthew Murphy Memorial Fishermans Breakfast is happening in Bonshaw, and for those who are not aware of the story, Matthew was a student at Bluefield High School, and in 2014 he took his own life. His brother, Devon, says he suffered from awful bullying at his school, and on the 15th in the morning there will be a breakfast, the annual breakfast, and the money raised from that goes to a scholarship for somebody who has a particular fondness for the trades. Matthew loved welding, and the scholarship is for that.

As people have said here, this has to be something more than a symbolism. We have to intervene, and we have to make sure that we stop this, because it is, in some cases, a matter of life and death.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of this House, I beg leave to table a book entitled *Advanced Planning Care Workbook: Prince Edward Island Edition*, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and the Status of Women.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the 2017 Information for women and men in an abusive relationship, and this is a guide that was prepared by the Interministerial Women's Secretariat in partnership with Justice Options for Women and PEI Family Violence Prevention Services, and I also have included 2017 Family Violence Resource Guide. I've shared with everyone in the Legislature, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Family and Human Services, that the said document now be received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act*, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: *An Act to Amend the Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act*, Bill No. 62, read a first time.

Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Premier, could you give us a brief explanation of this bill?

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Amendments to the *Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act* will empower the court to appoint a parenting coordinator to assist high-conflict separated or divorced parents to implement their parenting plan and resolve conflict in a child-focused manner.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Family Law Act*, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Family and Human Services, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: *An Act to Amend the Family Law Act*, Bill No. 63, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, a brief explanation, please, of this bill?

Speaker: Mr. Speaker, amendments to the *Family Law Act* will allow for family law arbitration on Prince Edward Island. This alternative dispute resolution process assists separated and divorced Islanders to resolve their family law issues outside of the adversarial court system.

Speaker: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Good job.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Judicature 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 and Clerk of Committees: *An Act to Amend the Judicature Act*, Bill No. 65, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, a brief explanation of Bill No. 65?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, amendments to the *Judicature Act* will provide the legislative authority for the children's lawyer to represent and protect the needs and interests of Island children in custody and access cases.

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Speaker: Thank you.

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

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

I'd like to indulge just for a second. I'd like to actually recognize somebody in the gallery if you wouldn't mind.

We have young Oliver here with us today, who is the son of Kerry and Teresa who's in the gallery, and I think it's appropriate to say hello to young Oliver.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 1st order of the day be now called.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Carried.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

to take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point to come and Chair the Committee of the Whole House.

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 22. The section is Policy and Agriculture Resources Division Management. The section has been read and we were at the question stage.

Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor.

Mr. Trivers: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

Mary Kinsman Director: Mary Kinsman, Director of Finance, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Chair: Welcome, Mary.

As a reminder, we are on the bottom of page 22.

I have a question from the Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks, Chair.

Since we're in policy and agriculture resources division, I'm curious on, last year in the budgets, I had asked questions on the land bank that was supposed to be established and set-up.

What is the status on the land bank? I'm hearing from young farmers that there is no land to buy and government hasn't done anything on it.

Mr. McIsaac: That's unfortunate because we did set up a land finance –

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Mr. McIsaac: – a land finance program several years ago. It was the new farmers, we would finance up to 150 acres with very

little equity level on it. They could borrow up to between 95% and 100% on that.

For existing farmers who wanted transition. I'll give you an example of a couple of brothers who wanted to transition their dad out. Really, the only avenue they had was in the land. We were willing to buy that land back and buy it and lease it back to the young fellows so they could have a few dollars so that would allow dad to transfer out. Or if they wanted to pick up a (Indistinct)

That program is already in place and it's called (Indistinct) financing instead of land bank per se.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, so –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks.

I'll take that back to them.

I had a question for you: How do you come up with the fair market value in regards to per acre? If you're making that deal with the landowner, how do you come up with that?

Mr. McIsaac: We look at comparable acres in the area. That has been moving in the last few years that's for sure. Especially since land is getting tighter, that's for sure. We have had some new people come in from off-shore, the Amish community from Ontario, they bought up some land. We've had other farmers just within the last year come in and take over different farms, different dairy farms, for example.

To some degree that tests the price of land. We have also had potato land moved and other land moved. We have seen the price of land go, but still it is nowhere at the level of, say, the area the Amish came from, which was around between 20,000 and 25,000 an acre.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah.

Mr. McIsaac: Down here it's running between 2,500 and 3,000 in our area. There are times where it has changed hands for four or five. We will, I think, see that price creep up as things do tighten up. We only have so many acres here and we're doing the

best we can to make sure that it stays in the hands of our farmers.

Leader of the Opposition: Is there a general policy within your department or within government on how it evaluates and comes up with an appraisal on land, or is every department different?

Mr. McIsaac: Is every department different?

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah. I'll tell you what I'm hearing. I'm hearing the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, they have a completely different formula when they put on the land that they want to buy, but the department of agriculture has another formula.

I'm wondering why that would be. Can you –

Mr. McIsaac: Basically, what we do in our department, we follow the marketplace.

Leader of the Opposition: You follow the marketplace?

Mr. McIsaac: If I'm buying land – buying your property per se, I would likely have someone check, see what the neighbours have been paying for the land, what it's worth, that sort of thing. Because it might be different in your area than it would be say, down east, or whatever it might be. It does vary from area to area. We look at other land in the local area to find out what the value is.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Do you think, minister, that there should a – what do you call it – the exact same policy across government when government is dealing with land? If you're paying fair market value, would it not be fair for all other departments to be using fair market value?

Mr. McIsaac: I'm not going to speak for what the other departments do. I know what we do in ours is look at the local, the neighbouring land to see what the price is, being exchanged for the same purpose; that being agricultural.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Chair: Before you go on, hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy has an intervention to your question.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to clarify the process that we use internally; we do have some certified appraisers, but in a lot of our transactions that we've been going through recently and, in particular, the landowner that we spoke about today in our Legislature, there was an independent external appraisal; had nothing to do with our department for the price of the property that was offered.

We do use our own certified appraisers inside our department when we are looking to purchase land, but the landowners have the option to request an outside independent appraisal.

Leader of the Opposition: I'd just like to –

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, come through the Chair –

Leader of the Opposition: Chair –

Chair: – not talking back and forth. Come through the Chair.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair, I'm fully aware of the appraisals that were done on that piece of property, fully aware.

I have question for you minister: Do we have a policy? Are we looking at a policy going forward in regards to crop rotation and climate change?

Mr. McIsaac: We have a policy in place with regards to crop rotation.

I should clarify, too, for you, as well. The land program I'm speaking of, the purchasing land is not actually with agriculture. It's with lending PEI.

Leader of the Opposition: With lending PEI, okay.

Mr. McIsaac: They work with ourselves, work with the federation, the other (Indistinct) farm organizations, to come up with an idea – what could we do for our young farmers, for transition farmers, because we used to have the old LDC program. That was done away with, because back then in the LDC you could buy a farm but if you would buy the machinery, the land, the cows, the quota, the pigs, whatever it might be, it was an ongoing farm operation, we would buy it, lease it back to the new owner, and he or she would carry on with it.

They did away with that program. It wasn't working that well at the time. When we entered back into the land financing deal, it was done through finance with all the partners looking at it, and it's dealing only with the purchase of land.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Minister, so going back to my crop rotation question: Do you think if we're looking at a policy on crop rotation, are we looking at what we're seeing in climate change or weather patterns changing, or should we be looking at a policy that takes that into consideration? Or is the department already doing it?

Mr. McIsaac: We are already doing a lot of work on that. Our stewardship program, they map the Island, one third of it, every year. So over a three-year period, the whole Island is looked at with regards to topsoil loss or whatever that may be.

If you care, I'd take you to – next time we come to the standing committee, we could take you in and show you the maps on a three-year basis, pictorial, of how it has changed over the years, and talk to you about some of the stewardship programs we're doing to improve the situation and cut down on the loss of topsoil. I think we had 162 programs within the last year in that stewardship program with grass waterways, berms, many things like that, working with the land to stop the runoff and things like that so, yeah.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: What I'm hearing from some farmers is that the

amount of rain we're getting or climate change or torrential downpours, the actual culverts that are available now are not large enough, they believe, to handle the water flow that's actually happening. So I'd like to see, I guess, a comment, that you take that into consideration, and I'm glad to hear you are doing that.

I'm interested in how many – going back to that land finance program, how many people have actually taken part in that in, say, the last couple of years?

Mr. McIsaac: You know what? To tell you the honest truth, I'm disappointed in the number. I can't give you that right now but it's not as big as we would have expected, but we did put the program in place. It has been used. I don't have the exact numbers on it, but I hope it's something that would pick up.

We wanted to look again and review it as to, with regards to what review the interest that we charge on it, the equity piece that was offered, the number of acres that were allowed in it. It needs to be looked at on a regular basis, but we were kind of disappointed in the amount –

Leader of the Opposition: Chair –

Mr. McIsaac: – of people that have took up on it.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Can you provide me that information on that program? Can you forward it to me?

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: On what's available on it?

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking at the grants, and I'm on page – it says page 101, but it's several

pages in. I'm looking at the professional services grants. Anyhow, I'm looking at the 4-H program grant, which is really good to see, the support going to the 4-H programs. I'm a big fan of 4-H. I'm a former 4-H-er.

I was wondering, given the focus on the Public Trust Program, and Food Security & Food Education Programs, which of course are to support commodity and industry organizations with organizing public learning experiences to enhance the public's trust, as well as provide support for community-based partnerships to provide learning experiences that increase knowledge about safe and nutritious food. It seems to me that 4-H would be pretty much the perfect fit for those programs.

I was wondering if you've been having conversations with 4-H and the role that they can play in the Public Trust Program and Food Security & Food Education Programs; because I think you'd have a huge leg up, because with 4-H, almost all the supports are already in place to do exactly what those programs want to do.

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah. The 4-H program, the grants for that is in the next section.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, that's (Indistinct).

Mr. McIsaac: Oh, you're skipping ahead.

Mr. Trivers: Oh –

Chair: Oh, no we're not.

Mr. Trivers: – oh, sorry, yeah.

This is the policy and agriculture resources section, is it not?

Mr. McIsaac: This is policy and agriculture resources, but the grants for the 4-H come under policy planning and –

Chair: Great, if you could hold your question for that section –

Mr. McIsaac: But on the point –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – you know, it's a good point with regards to the 4-H. It's an excellent

organization. We do work with them in many, many ways.

We work with the schools as well. For example, we had them down at the – it used to be the, is it – down at the rink, the rink down here in the arena a couple of weeks ago there.

Chair: Trade centre.

Mr. McIsaac: Trade centre, yeah, and we set up 13 stations talking about – and kids came from, I forget how many schools, but right across the Island basically.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, my son was there.

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, well there you go; and they had different stations where they'd go, talk about blueberries, talk about goats, talk about dairy, and they had sample animals there and everything that they could actually touch. It was great.

Mr. Trivers: So my question is: Are you actively engaging them in the Public Trust Program and the Food Security & Food Education Programs? Because, I feel 4-H is really set up to deliver on the mandate of those programs right now –

Mr. McIsaac: I agree with you fully.

Mr. Trivers: – and you could probably hit the ground running with the 4-H-ers.

Mr. McIsaac: And like I said yesterday, public trust is something that's coming into play in pretty near every program, every aspect of our department. In the Growing Forward 2 program as well, public trust is one of the new items that will be covered and we will be expanding that, and I'm sure even more so with the 4-H and the Women's Institute, all those groups that work in rural PEI.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I guess the answer is yes, you are engaging with 4-H to help out with those programs as much as possible (Indistinct) –

Mr. McIsaac: We will be engaging even more once we sign the new (Indistinct) policy framework as well. So the funding will be there for (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: That's it for this section.

Chair: Great, thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I think some of the questions I may be asking were partly asked by Rustico-Emerald yesterday, but my questions are to do with public trust in food. I know there's two separate programs here. There's the Public Trust Program, and there's also the Farm & Food Care Canada, totaling almost 130,000.

My first question is – and I think Rustico did ask this yesterday, but I apologize for repeating it if I am – are these programs doing essentially the same work?

Mr. McIsaac: It's all to do with, basically, the same thing, yes. The Farm & Food Care Canada program is brand new, just getting off – out of the blocks you might say, and it was signed onto in our last federal-provincial-territorial meetings that we just had last year in 2016. Agreed to the program after a country-wide discussion on the whole topic, because of the need that all our commodities have to take part in with regards to showing our consumers exactly the quality of the food we have, where the food comes from.

So we build that public trust between the producer and the consumer, and they know exactly where they come from; because I'll say the consumer is becoming much more aware and much more caring as to what product they buy and they want to know basically where it comes from.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can you tell us, minister, if the amounts that we're dedicating to each of these programs, have we signed up for a multi-year commitment to that?

That's 100,000 for Public Trust Program and 27,500 (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: FFC, sorry.

Mr. McIsaac: They're both new programs, the Public Trust is 100,000.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: FFCC is 27,500.

Mr. McIsaac: Yes, it's 27,500, yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So are we just in for one year and then we'll see how it goes, or are we –

Mr. McIsaac: It's a multi-year program, okay? We're signing in for – they're just getting going, so we're going to be monitoring them and seeing how they go, but we expect them to go forward – a lot more than that. Because when we signed the new Growing Forward program, or as it's called right now the next policy framework, there are dollars in that that will match, on a 60-40 basis, specifically for public trust.

Public trust was not in the old Growing Forward programs, but it's become such an important issue right now that the federal government working with the provinces have decided: Let's fund that area as well. There's money in it for climate change, too. Those are two of the new areas. So public trust is front and foremost with the new programs. That's a five-year deal going forward from there.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

So five-year deal, you're saying?

Mr. McIsaac: The next policy framework is, and we'll be following that through.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair, just so I'm clear. Are we committed to five years of this level of funding?

Mr. McIsaac: The program we –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: For both of these organizations?

Mr. McIsaac: – signed yesterday with Food Care Canada, actually they are rolling that out on a 25-year program. That's how long-

term they're looking with regards to that program dealing with public trust. This is not something that's going to be just this year or just NPF, Next Policy Framework. It's going to be forever, basically they say because the minds of consumers have shifted to where they are, like I said; very much more aware and we'll be expecting to know much more about the food that they consume.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I couldn't agree with you more, minister that the minds of the public have shifted. They want to know where their food comes from. Who is growing their food, and public trust, I believe – I mean, the reason I trust the food I eat is because I buy it in the farmers market on Saturday morning, and I know each and every single one of the farmers who's given – who's selling me their food. There is trust in the deepest sense. There is a relationship there between myself and the farmers, who are growing the food that I buy.

I don't think you can ever purchase through a public relations program the same level of trust that you can get through that.

I'm asking you: If you would ever consider abandoning, what will amount to over five years, 600,000 of taxpayers' dollars on Prince Edward Island and use it for some sort of local program to foster that – or to introduce Islanders to their farmers.

However, I have no idea what that might look like, but I'm thinking that that might be a way better way of spending this money.

Mr. McIsaac: We do those programs already. Like, I mentioned to the Member from Rustico-Emerald, the classes that came into the trade centre the other day. We have agriculture in the classroom, where myself and some other people, some other farmers, went out into the grade 3 classrooms.

There was a book that was published specifically for agriculture in the classroom of a young lady, who is doing her home – has a homework assignment on where her food comes from. The story is, the mother takes the child and says: Come with me. Put

your homework aside and come with me. She took her daughter to the farmers market and talked to Ted, I think, or whoever it was. And he opened the backdoors of the farmers market and showed her in the fields where the food was growing. They passed a dairy farm on the way; a beef farm on the way, and the mother explained it all to her. By the time she got home she realized she had her homework finished.

That's the way we're introducing – through the 4-H programs; through the Women's Institute; through all those organizations like Agricultural in the Classroom or whatever. We have to build that connection.

Also, in the different commodities, it's not just we, ourselves, in the different commodities; be it dairy; be it beef; be it hogs, whatever, they have put in place, now, a code of practice that lays out exactly, not just for PEI, but right across the country. How do we raise our animals that's acceptable? It's a code of a practice that has been accepted for each of the different commodities.

There are barn inspections that go on in the dairy industry to make sure that, for example, the milk is up to Class I. It's sampled every time it goes into the truck before it gets to the processing part of ADL. It's tested to see if there are any antibiotics or anything like that in it. If there is it's turned aside. There are so many things that are happening right now to make sure that our products are up to par, but we still have to continue to build that trust with our consumers.

If you lose that, you lose everything.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'd just like, for the record, that I really feel that in these programs where you have the industry and commodities accessing these funds that the money is being spent to overcome a public perception, correct or otherwise that there are problems with the way that we grow our food in commercial agriculture these days. The province would be far better to spend the 130,000 per annum on creating local programs here and encouraging Islanders to buy food, which is grown by local farmers.

Mr. McIsaac: We do that too. We do that with our Future Farmer Program. We do that with many projects. We help young people get into the farms so that they can the little basket programs.

The Member from Rustico-Emerald was talking about the other day and we support that through the farmers market.

We have to remember though, that our province does not just produce food for our province.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I get that.

Mr. McIsaac: You know, 25% of the dairy products we produce here goes off-Island. The vast majority of our potatoes go off-Island. Our beef, a lot of it – we're trying to consume as much as possible of our own local food, but we cannot exist as an agriculture industry and drive the economy of this province if we only produce for the 150,000 people we have here.

Our farmers expect to export and we have supply management quantities that we ship across the country. We have other products that we ship internationally. We do a great job of it, but we have in the back of minds and at the top of our minds that we have to keep the consumer in front and foremost. That's why we all agreed to the codes of practice, and we are building on and growing the whole idea behind public trust.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

Just when the hour was called yesterday, I was asking the minister a few questions around, in particular, the support for the Atlantic beef plant. We were just getting ready to have a short discussion around animal transportation subsidy.

I know there's –

Chair: Carry on.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks, Chair.

I know that the minister's department is actively working with the Atlantic beef plant to try to get more animals to come in from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, instead of just bypassing the bridge and going directly, mostly to Quebec, because, I think that there has been, sort of, an unfair subsidy there in previous years with regards to the transportation subsidy per animal going to Quebec from this region.

I'm just wondering: Is there anything in particular that you're doing to negotiate inter-provincially to get us on a more level playing field?

Mr. McIsaac: I think (Indistinct) a little bit different than what it actually is. What happens is, most of them – if you want to take your beef and ship it to the plant here, you receive seven cents a pound less for your meat than if you shipped it to Ontario. But if you ship to Ontario they charge you seven cents shrink.

What we're doing is offsetting that. The price per pound here and the price per pound in Ontario is differential because of that shrink weight. Our farmers here would love to say: Let's lower that seven cents because they want the Ontario price. The thing about it is our plant right now is becoming much more efficient –

Mr. Aylward: Right.

Mr. McIsaac: We are starting to make some money there. Actually, just at the beef producers meeting the other night, they brought this up with the manager. He said: If things keep continuing the way they're going, we can drop that seven cent down to five. He made a commitment that they will work on that.

Eventually, if we get enough animals going through the plant, and we didn't have to take animals in from Quebec – that is costly, to take them in, but the efficiency of the plant is based on the (Indistinct) put up at the plant.

Mr. Aylward: Right.

Mr. McIsaac: If we don't have enough animals the efficiency drops off. If we can get – that's why we're looking at Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to bring as many

animals through our plant because it is the Atlantic plant then that drives up the efficiency.

If we could source all our animals here, that seven cents right now could be dropped, I'm pretty sure. The way Russ was talking that he's made that commitment. When we start making money at the plant then we will drop that price, or drop that reduction. The farmers are quite excited about that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

I wonder if the minister has any intel with regards to long-term forecasting of when we could expect the plant to be breaking even or being profitable for that matter.

Mr. McIsaac: Oh, I'd love it to be now, but it all depends really on the number of animals –

Mr. Aylward: Volume.

Mr. McIsaac: – volume going through that plant. If we keep the price up to the farmers, that's encouraging them to produce more, so it's a catch-22 sort of thing. We have to keep the money up, the price up to the farmers so they can produce the animals. They can produce the animals, put them there and not ship them off-shore, it'll be sooner that we start making the money.

The plant is really working a lot more efficiently. The deal they have with Sobeys right now has been a bonus. The product coming out of the plant is superb.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Out of my own curiosity, I guess, more than anything, everybody just assumes that the animals that are rendered at the plant would be raised for nothing but meat. Is it true that there are milking animals after they reach the age that they're no longer producing the volume of milk, that they're also being taken up to the Atlantic beef plant?

Mr. McIsaac: Oh, yeah. We run a lot of culled dairy cattle when they're finished their term of dairying. There is still a considerable amount of meat on them. A lot of that becomes – goes through the plant. That helps the efficiency of the plant, as well. We are looking at taking more of those animals in from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well.

On the Island, we finish most of the beef. A lot of – there is some in the other provinces, but the cow-calf farms are bigger there, but when they get to the 700 lb. weight or whatever, we take them over here. We finish them here. They could be backgrounded and then finished here.

We are trying to get as many dairy cattle from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well as our own, to keep as many of them here as well, run them through the plant. That's certainly helping the efficiency, as well.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much, Chair.

We've been subsidizing the plant since it began, however many years ago that was, essentially, and we had originally – our neighboring provinces were helping to subsidize it as well. I guess I'm wondering: Is there push back from the smaller plants? I'm thinking Steerman's or MacPhee's and the other smaller operations on PEI that they not receiving subsidies?

Mr. McIsaac: They actually end up buying meat from Atlantic Beef Products – Atlantic provinces plant as well, because they may not sell the entire animal, per se, they may have a larger request for steaks vs. loins or whatever – ribs or whatever it might be, they can source that through the Atlantic provinces plant. There a good working relationship there, as well. It's improved from where it was, for sure. Steerman's – I mean, they raise a lot of animals. They ship some to the plant as well, they get some killed at Shaw's and they cut them up themselves, they don't actually butcher any there on the farm. But, it's a relationship that's working a lot better than it was and I think it works out better for everyone.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

I heard you mention the Atlantic beef plant. Do the other provinces contribute to the beef plant?

Mr. McIsaac: Not, right at the moment. They did a few years back. Just shortly after we came in, there was a request made to the other provinces and the federal government. At that time, I think it might have been 2007 or 2008 – somewhere around that, Nova Scotia put in two million, New Brunswick put in two million, we put in two million, and the feds – through ACOA, I think it was, put in six million, but we haven't had any dollars since that time.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Minister: Why is that?

Mr. McIsaac: Why is that?

Mr. LaVie: Yeah. Go ahead and have a drink.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Another one.

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, another one. I actually could use another one. What was I going to say now? You threw me off.

Why are they not putting that in?

Mr. LaVie: Yeah. Why? What happened?

Mr. McIsaac: I think that was the final commitment they made for the plant. Again I say, they weren't finishing the beef and most of the calves were sold at the Truro sale. They'd come over here – our guys would go over and buy them, finish them here, and put them through the plant. So, they didn't really see it. Perhaps that's (Indistinct) of a benefit, not looking at the big picture, maybe, as much as we would hope they would have. I think they do value it, but times are tight in the other provinces, as well, and they haven't come up with any

more dollars for us. But, we are now looking and encouraging them to send more animals through here which, indirectly, helps our plant for sure.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Are there any talks of getting them back on board financially? Or that's off the table completely?

Mr. McIsaac: No, no. That topic comes up from time to time.

Mr. LaVie: Oh, yeah.

Mr. McIsaac: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: It does.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Chair, just a statement.

I want to thank the minister for the quick response on your question yesterday.

Mr. McIsaac: We aim to please.

Mr. LaVie: That was much appreciated and I see John Jamieson's name on the bottom, so – I think John's a little nervous of me so that's why he (Indistinct) so quickly.

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah. I told you we'd get it. He was monitoring the program, he (Indistinct). We do have a copy of that that I will table. So, officially put it on the record that I did bring that back.

Mr. LaVie: Thanks for the quick response.

Mr. McIsaac: Great.

Chair: Total Policy and Agriculture Resources Division Management: 2,044,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Policy, Planning and FPT Relations

“Appropriations provided for the planning, development, and implementation of departmental and Federal/Provincial/Territorial policies and initiatives.” Administration: 29,200. Equipment: 2,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 6,800. Professional Services: 2,500. Salaries: 449,400. Travel and Training: 31,200. Grants: 422,700.

Total, Policy, Planning and FPT Relations: 943,800.

Shall the section carry?

Question from the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair. Again, minister, why the 55,000 drop in wages? Salaries?

Mr. McIsaac: We had – it was the result of a short-term vacancy and also due to a retirement during the year.

Mr. LaVie: One retiring?

Mr. McIsaac: One retiring, yes.

Chair: Hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, do you have another question?

Mr. LaVie: None of this section. The last sections we talked – is there anybody going to be fired this year?

Mr. McIsaac: I hope not, no. We had some retirements and we had some restructuring so that's what's throwing off the – some of those positions with regards – it affects the salaries and it affects the professional services there as well.

Mr. LaVie: But you're not going to fire anybody. You're not going to be like the minister of finance and fire anybody.

Mr. McIsaac: We have, I think, one of the greatest departments and the best staff in government –

Mr. LaVie: Oh, you do?

Mr. McIsaac: – so why would we let anyone go? We're doing great.

Mr. LaVie: Okay, just making sure that we're not firing anybody in agriculture.

Thank you.

Chair: Total Policy Planning and FPT Relations: 943,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Sustainable Agriculture

“Appropriations provided to assist the farm community with programs and services which provide sustainable agricultural practices.” Administration: 15,900. Equipment: 4,700. Materials, Supplies and Services: 29,600. Professional Services: 88,200. Salaries: 937,700. Travel and Training: 22,000. Grants: 2,183,000.

Total Sustainable Agriculture: 3,281,100.

Shall it carry?

We have a question from the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Minister, I've been doing some quick figuring here, over the last couple of days, and a drop of 620,700 in sustainable agriculture industry. A total budget surplus of 601,000. I can't believe that this finance minister is trying to balance the books on the back of these farmers.

Mr. McIsaac: And he's not.

Mr. LaVie: He's not?

Mr. McIsaac: No.

Mr. LaVie: So where's that?

Mr. Roach: Slow down your figuring.

Ms. Biggar: Count your fingers again.

Mr. Roach: Take four days.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: What section are you in?

Mr. LaVie: Sustainable Agriculture. But I was just doing the figures over the last couple of pages here and I see a drop of 620,700.

Mr. McIsaac: It's just down 55,900 in that section. Because of the changes from one department to the other and the restructuring, it could be down in one area, up in another area that offsets that.

Mr. LaVie: Well grants are down 225,000 in that section.

Mr. McIsaac: Grants are down 125,000. Yes.

Mr. LaVie: 225,000.

Mr. McIsaac: 225,000?

Mr. LaVie: The section before that we were down 55,000 in wages. The section before that, we're down 101,000 drop in wages. The section before that we're down 38,000 in wages.

Mr. McIsaac: Well, in the grants in this section that we're dealing with right now, that's down 125,000, it has to do with the fact that – it's from the Growing Forward 2 program. That five year running record that I talked about yesterday where the first year was not that great of an uptake; second, third, and fourth years are a high uptake in the program from the fifth year – the last year of the program – it's the dollars that are left. It's not an even amount on grants every year. If you had gone back two years, you would have seen a really big spike in that grant section. This year, it's down to 125,000.

Every one of the dollars that was in their agreement on Growing Forward 2, between the feds and our own province, will all be used. But it shows differently from one year to the next.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Pretty well every section we're reading here, it's a drop, it's a drop, it's a drop. I think the finance minister has balanced his books on the back of the farmers. It's a drop, drop, drop – even into the future when we turn the page; drop, drop, drop.

Mr. McIsaac: I will tell you, though, that agriculture and fisheries – and the finance minister will tell you that himself – the year that we just had has certainly helped with, of course, the lobster price and the potato price.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, I agree with you.

Mr. McIsaac: Ag and fish has really helped contribute to the economy of the province and to the bottom line of the finance minister's wallet.

Mr. Aylward: And, of course, because of the weather you guys provided. I mean, we couldn't have –

Chair: Souris, are you –

Mr. McIsaac: That's environment, not in ag and fish.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, for now.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct) taking the credit (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you. The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you. Actually, my questions were answered.

Chair: Thank you. The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I hope I didn't miss this, but – the National Farmers Union – as you know, minister, you were at their AGM this year as well –

Mr. McIsaac: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: One of the concerns they have is non-resident ownership of farmland and the ability for people who live somewhere other than PEI to buy up farmland on Prince Edward Island and be absentee landowners, whether they rent the land or they let it go foul. I mean, that's hard to say. But I was wondering if you've allocated any funds in these areas, whether that'd be sustainable agriculture or policy planning and FPT relations or elsewhere in the budget to deal with this issue, either to examine it and come up with a solution or figure out a way that we can have sustainable farmland

and it doesn't essentially get bought up by non-residents and then potentially go foul or end up in a situation where we have absentee landlords.

Mr. McIsaac: Well, the transfer plan does not come through my department. It comes through Communities, Land and Environment.

But when the purchase of land like that goes, it has to clear through IRAC, then it has to come to the CCOP, the priorities committee, and then it has to go to Cabinet, so there are three checks along the way before that happens

But there are strict regulations in place, specifically, especially with nonresident landowners, and we watch that extremely carefully like I explained to the National Farmers Union when I was there.

Everyone has a concern about that, but there's also rumors get going that land changes hands from one nonresident to another nonresident, and it made the news there at one point, and it actually never even happened. It was a terrible story to get out, but anyway. We watch that very carefully.

I will note, too, it's interesting when we had the Carver report done – and maybe it's something we'll have to look at, too – in speaking with Mr. Carver, he had mentioned the fact that one recommendation he didn't make in that report was that maybe non-farmers on the Island perhaps didn't need to own more than 200 acres, and he didn't make the recommendation but he put it out there are perhaps a discussion point, and maybe sometime we will revisit that ourselves.

So, if I'm a non-farmer, why should I get to own 1,000 acres, or my corporation get to own 3,000 acres if I'm not actually a farmer?

That may be something we look at down the road, but as far as the transfers go, we watch them very carefully – they're checked at IRAC, they're checked at policy committee, and they're checked at Cabinet before they're officially approved.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair. I was wondering – and I know you’ve talked a little bit about the ALUS program already, and you have 728,000 allocated to ALUS in the current budget.

One of the concerns, of course, that I’ve heard, and I’m sure you have as well, is we need to increase the amount that government’s willing to pay to take land out of agriculture use to put back, and I think you might have commented on this earlier today, but do you feel that you need to budget more money and increase the price that you’re willing to pay farmers to use their land for alternative purposes?

Mr. McIsaac: Are you suggesting a price?

Mr. Trivers: I’m not suggesting a price. I’m wondering if that’s something you’re examining, looking at.

Mr. McIsaac: Are you hearing that – well, I’m just questioning – are you hearing that the price is not enough?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, this is something that I hear, for example, at the draft water act consultations. This was a topic that’s brought up.

Of course, they’re looking at that from the perspective of water and saying: You know, we would like to see more environmentally-sensitive land taken out of farm use, but farmers aren’t willing to give up that land because the price being paid for ALUS isn’t enough.

I just wanted to see if you’d heard that and what your perspective is on that and do we have enough money.

Mr. McIsaac: I actually haven’t heard that. Maybe once or twice, it’s brought up, but not – I mean, I’ve gone to a lot of the meetings, and that’s not one of the issues that’s brought up. But I can tell you, we do pay for buffer-zone tree planting. We pay 185 per hectare per year for that, and a hectare is 2.2 acres, so sensitive land for retirement expanded to the buffer zone, that’s 185 as is non-regulated grass headlands. High-slope land is 150 per hectare per year. Land under soil conservation structures is 250 we pay per

hectare per year, and maintaining livestock fencing adjacent to watercourse and wetlands we pay at 30 cents a metre.

They are fairly good compensations, and I honestly haven’t been flooded with a request to raise that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, is that information you just read off available online?

Mr. McIsaac: I believe it’s online, yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, okay.

Thank you.

Mr. McIsaac: Okay.

Chair: You’re good? Thank you.

Total Sustainable Agriculture: 3,281,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Agriculture Industry Development

“Appropriations provided to assist agriculture industry development for producers and agri-processors to meet market and production opportunities.”
Administration: 15,400; Equipment: 5,100. Materials, Supplies and Services: 26,400. Professional Services: 3,100. Salaries: 711,500. Travel and Training: 22,600. Grants: 2,056,800.

Total Agriculture Industry Development: 2,840,900.

Total Policy and Agriculture Resources: 9,110,200.

We have a question from the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, salaries are up a little over 100,000. What is that for?

Mr. McIsaac: Salaries are up 30,100 (Indistinct) 30,100 for next year.

Mr. MacKay: What's that? Say that again.

Mr. McIsaac: They're up 30,100 for next year from 681 to 711 –

Mr. MacKay: Right, and –

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

And also, the grants – why are the grants down?

Mr. McIsaac: Same thing. Growing Forward 2, we're in our fifth year. Same thing that the Member from Souris-Elmira has been asking me all along, and it is the 50 or so, we expected that, so it balances out over the five-year terminal.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you. The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

My first question is: Is this the section – I won't say a section, I just wanted to ask – I think it falls underneath here –

Can you just dispel any rumors that may be out there about whether or not the beef used in Burger Love is 100% Island beef?

Mr. McIsaac: It is 100% Island beef.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I was wondering if you've considered made-in-PEI labeling for agricultural products in stores, like a standard label that producers can put on their products.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Can't hear you.

Mr. Trivers: I know I mentioned the other day how I walked into a large store, and it's really not clear which product is from the Island and which isn't, and the beef that was there – there was no beef in the whole store that was from PEI –

Ms. Biggar: No, (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: But I think it would just make it a lot easier for – what was that, minister?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: You're not helping.

Mr. Aylward: Just ignore it.

Mr. Trivers: I think it would make it a lot easier for consumers to be able to buy local if there was a distinct way. You know, like the Dairy Farmers of Canada, for example, have that distinct logo where you know when you buy that ADL product or – of course, we know ADL is 100% PEI – but I think that would just be very useful to consumers and wanted to know if you had considered that.

Mr. McIsaac: Anyway, first I want to say is I wish I knew where this store was. I'm disappointed there's no Island beef in it –

Ms. Biggar: Tell us where it is.

Mr. McIsaac: But they may have a reason for that, but I'd like to put them in touch with Atlantic products beef to have a little chat about that –

An Hon. Member: They probably just sold out.

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, that could be one (Indistinct) sold out.

An Hon. Member: The best goes first.

Chair: Thank you. The hon. Leader of the Opposition –

Mr. Trivers: Chair, I have more questions.

Chair: – just has an intervention to your previous question, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: On what the hon. member is suggesting, a while back I

suggested that we look at – your department, maybe – look at that square bar code thing there –

An Hon. Member: QR code.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, the QR code, is it?

That could be on every product that's coming out of this province pointing back to PEI, so when they scan with their phone it points to PEI. That's something the department should look at, and the whole province – the government should look at.

Mr. McIsaac: Well, the codes, in practice, they can go to the extent that they trace back to the animal – or from the plant – from the store to the plant to the animal to the farmer.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, but I'm not saying to do that, like right for the public, right? They see that package of beef, and they see that QU code and they take a picture of it and it tells that this came from PEI, where PEI is and everything about PEI.

Mr. McIsaac: They're doing that on the lobsters too, in some cases. Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, I heard they were stamping lobsters.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I was looking at the grants and I noticed that you had a small amount: 475 to oversee a demonstration beehive at the Legacy Gardens at the Farm Centre, for example. This is an issue that's been brought up to me by several of my constituents; is that the importance of bees, of course, and pollination and making sure that our agricultural crops actually mature because they need – and I was wondering if you have allocated any money in this budget to support bee production as well as, perhaps, to study the impact of pesticides and herbicides on bees. We've heard about neonicotinoids and how they might impact them.

I'm not sure if this is the proper section for that, but –

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, it is.

We do it under the – we have money for the Queen Bee Replacement Program and it's under the Growing Forward Livestock Program, such as that.

Mr. Trivers: How much money do you have allocated to that?

Mr. McIsaac: I'll have to bring that back.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: That money that you have allocated there, is it allocated to support bees on PEI or to do studies about neonicotinoids or what is that money allocated for?

Mr. McIsaac: I don't there's studying, per se. The neonicotinoids, that's done by PMRA, out of Ottawa, Health Canada. They look at all of those. Actually, there was a study on the amount of (Indistinct) right now that the closing of that was, I think, the end of March for submissions and it's one of the neonicotinoids. They will be coming back with a decision on that this year to see if there actually is harm being done by that.

But, they check all of those sprays before they're approved and there's some follow-up now dealing with, actually, the neonicotinoids.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Are you concerned with the bee population on Prince Edward Island? Are you concerned – this is a two-part question – are you concerned with neonicotinoids and the impacts they might be having on our bee population here?

Mr. McIsaac: Well, I'm always concerned about the bee population because that's our pollination. They do the pollinating for us. We actually had to bring bees in last year, the last couple of years, I believe. Again, we want to make sure we bring in clean bees and there's always concern about that, but we check them at different intervals. They actually came out of Ontario. They went in to Nova Scotia. We used (Indistinct) because they are a little bit ahead of our

climate, and then they came into PEI, so they were checked before they left Ontario, after they left Nova Scotia and when they got here as well.

We're also concerned about the pollination, that's for sure, and we are following a study that's being done by PMRA on the (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking at the grants again and in particular, I'm just looking at the Growing Forward Organic Industry Development Program, and I noticed that last year there were 48,200 of eight projects in increasing market competitiveness.

Mr. McIsaac: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: I was wondering if you could comment on what those projects are and how did they work to increase market competitiveness?

Mr. McIsaac: I can tell you the objectives of them are to accelerate the adoption of certified organic production and processing technology, to encourage strategic growth and market development, and to implement comprehensive weed and pest management practices. That's what, basically, those programs are for. There were eight approved last year for 48,200.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: There are other grants there –

Mr. McIsaac: They're for the –

Mr. Trivers: – which are mostly self-explanatory.

Mr. McIsaac: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: With specialized equipment, I guess you could comment on, but strategic initiatives, in particular, isn't all that descriptive. I'm just curious what those three projects would (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: It had to do do with – some of them were with weeding. That was the specialized equipment. Pest management practices, market development – all of those projects had to fit into that. That's basically what they cover.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: How would one apply for funding from this program if you had a project you wanted to put forward?

Mr. McIsaac: You would come forward to the department and we'll put you in touch with the manager in that area and fully evaluate your program and if you're approved, you are granted money to do the project.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thanks, Chair.

Again, back to the grants; I know, minister, you said, in particular, the numbers were decreasing due to the fact of we're in our fifth year of Growing Forward program. But, if I look at your handout on page 204 where we look at the budget estimate for 2016-2017 was 400,000, but right now you're forecasting to be at 622,000, so 222,000 over your estimate.

I'm just wondering why we're forecasting to be so much more over our budget estimate?

Mr. McIsaac: We had a big uptake in the fourth year and that's where we spent that. That's what I was talking about, the unevenness of it.

Mr. Aylward: Yes.

Mr. McIsaac: There was a big draw on it in year four, so we spent more than we had budgeted for. But, then it affects things in year five – in the fifth year.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Then coming into the fifth year, we're not going to see that demand again impacting and growing it?

Mr. McIsaac: No, 331,000 is what it's going to be and that will finish the program in that area.

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Mr. McIsaac: But if we leave until the fifth year, there may not be projects that people want to do and we may not spend the money. The money is there on a 60/40 basis and it's tough to say we wouldn't spend the money, but there was a big uptake that year –

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Mr. McIsaac: – and we did the projects.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Total Policy and Agriculture Resources: 9,110,200.

Shall it carry? Carried.

We are now at the top of page 24.

Marine Fisheries, Agrifood, Seafood and Regulatory Services

Agrifood and Seafood Services

“Appropriations provided for the effective delivery of information, and product and market development programs for both the agriculture and fisheries industries.”
Administration: 9,100. Equipment: 4,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 40,700. Professional Services: 9,400. Salaries: 448,300. Travel and Training: 43,300. Grants: 1,817,800.

Total Agrifood and Seafood Services: 2,372,800.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I understand that there is an initiative termed ‘lobsterlicious’ that is coming forward this year and –

Mr. McIsaac: It's not our program.

Mr. Trivers: It's not your program?

Mr. McIsaac: No. That's through the fishermen's association and with tourism, and it was put out for a program that actually ended up being secured by the town of Souris, but it's not in our department and it's through tourism and the fishermen's association.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Maybe you could just give a brief overview of what programs you do support in the market development. I mean I would assume that that sort of lobsterlicious program would be one of the key ones, but maybe you have other equivalents.

Mr. McIsaac: Oh yeah, we have (Indistinct) – where are they all listed here.

Mary Kinsman Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Couple a million dollars there, so there's got to be something.

Mr. McIsaac: We have the Best of Sea program. We had 15 projects that were funded in 2016-2017. They were included – a local fibre production and malting barley, two tulip marketing ones, a juice press and it may not sound like fisheries, but it's fisheries and agrifoods is what it is, a mixture here, here okay?

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. McIsaac: Those are some of the programs that we funded through there.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Once again, I just wanted to clarify, that if someone did have an agrifood project that they wanted to apply for funding for, you just simply contact your department and work with your staff to –

Mr. McIsaac: That's exactly right.

Mr. Trivers: – develop the project and apply?

Mr. McIsaac: Yeah, and if it fits, we'll fund it if the dollars are there, yeah.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you just said something a second ago that jogged my memory on something. Can you tell me what the status is of waste treatment going into – from the Atlantic beef into waste treatment, which I know is owned, my understanding, by Island Waste Watch?

My understanding that there's restraints on the system, that it actually needs upgrades or more volume capacity to handle actually to the great level that Atlantic beef is at, and it's not being dealt with or is it being dealt with?

Mr. McIsaac: Well, I was asked that question basically by Rustico-Emerald the other day. There's possibly, hopefully something coming forward within the next few weeks. It's a federal announcement that I am not privy to – I don't know the details on. We hear that there will be something coming, but until it's announced we do not have it. But we're – let's say we're cautiously optimistic and excited.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, so what I've heard –

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I have heard there is funding coming, possibly from the federal government, but there also is a need for provincial funding to help this.

Mr. McIsaac: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Can we ensure that the province gets involved in this?

Mr. McIsaac: We have set aside 300,000 for that should the program (Indistinct) –

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Mr. McIsaac: – move forward.

An Hon. Member: Good stuff.

Chair: Thank you.

Total Agrifood and Seafood Services: 2,372,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services

“Appropriations provided for the enforcement of legislation and the operation of services associated with fish inspection, animal health and welfare, and plant health. This section also provides provincial advocacy on behalf of the PEI fishing industry.” Administration: 23,700. Equipment: 4,100. Materials, Supplies and Services: 294,300. Professional Services: 17,400. Salaries: 1,096,500. Travel and Training: 153,300. Grants: 498,300.

Total Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services: 2,087,600.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

So I'm looking at the grants here, and it's hard to reference the exact page, well, it's page 1 of 3, it's the Marine Fisheries, Agrifood, Seafood & Regulatory Services page, Note #52, and it's “Consultant Services pertinent to Marine Fisheries.” So there was media training provided –

Mr. McIsaac: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: – and I was just wondering, who would receive media training?

Mr. McIsaac: It's actually industry. We organized that for industry. People from the aquaculture alliance, PEI fisheries associations, PEI seafood processors association, federation of agriculture, horticulture association, PEI finfish growers – You know what? I find this as really interesting and important, and when I talk to groups I tell that we need people from within the industry to stand up and speak for them. How do you approach the media? How do you tell your story? Because we have a great story to tell in agriculture and fisheries, and it's not always, perhaps, the best person to be the minister who speaks on their behalf. I certainly do that, but when

you have a farmer or a fisherman stepping forward, telling their story, that adds so much more to it. I encourage people to do that.

I'll give you an example. Almost a month ago now, we had a session by the watershed group out in Vernon River, where three farmers who had been working through the ALUS program were recognized for the work they did on their land with regards to watching the shorelines, things like that. They were recognized by the watershed group for the great work they were doing.

They gave them a plaque and they asked them: Would you mind if we gave the media your names so they could come and get your story? And at first they were saying: I don't really know if I want to do that. But they did in the end, and actually it was published in *The Guardian* there a week and a half or ten days ago, and it was absolutely awesome and a lot of good stuff comes out of it. We offered training for that, for industry people themselves, and I think it's worth every cent of it.

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Aylward: That was the best trainer you could come up with.

Chair: Total Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services: 2,087,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Marine Fisheries, Agrifood, Seafood and Regulatory Services: 4,460,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

We're now at the top of page 25.

Mr. McIsaac: I have that information on the bees. It's already come back here, so I'll table that as well.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Do you have a question?

Mr. McIsaac: No. (Indistinct) Sorry.

Chair: No, that's good.

The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, do you have a question on the budget section?

Mr. Currie: Yeah, I'm just going to talk about some stuff. Is that all right?

Chair: Yeah, sure.

Mr. Currie: I just wanted – minister, last weekend I got a briefing from your department a while back on the buy fresh local initiative from your department. I want to compliment you and your staff for their leadership. There was a significant investment in that initiative which will be a pilot.

I know last weekend I was at the Home and School Federation AGM and they've been significant champions of, sort of something I guess bigger than what we talked about, but what we announced in that investment is certainly a very positive step.

So maybe just give a little feedback on that initiative for a few minutes, just to sort of some clarity, because I think it is an initiative that I think has significant potential. I know that the MLA who's in the chair has certainly been a real champion of the program and the initiative and there was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm at the Home and School, and one of the resolutions was to continue to build on this initiative.

Can you make a few comments on that, just your thoughts?

Mr. McIsaac: Sure.

It has to deal with the local food and getting it into – and the Leader of the Third Party has talked about it as well, as well the hon. member here from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, and we're building towards a local food act, which has tax implications for the farmers that when they put food forward that we can use, and possibly using our school system.

Interesting, since you made the presentation at the school, I've had a request from one of the principals that one of the pilot (Indistinct) schools (Indistinct) her school.

Mr. Currie: Yeah.

Mr. McIsaac: So I think it is building strong. It's great that we talk about local food. I think it's great that we get the word out to our youngest people at the school level, like where the food comes from, because that's one of the big pieces of it, too, is the educational piece.

Mr. Currie: Yeah.

Mr. McIsaac: Your food doesn't come from Sobeys and Superstore or Walmart or whatever, it actually originates at the farm gate.

Mr. Currie: Yeah.

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

Mr. Currie: Yeah. I remember, minister, and a credit to you, I remember – I guess it was back in our first mandate, I think – you raised this discussion about the importance of educating our youth on where food comes from. I'm very, very pleased that we're one government department that will be working closely with you with the Public Schools Branch.

We have been in conversation with the Public Schools Branch. They've already made it clear to Chartwells, which is a major purchaser of food services, and they know that there will be three schools recognized, that we'll be focusing our investments in buy fresh and local, so I want to commend you. You started this conversation a number of years back; and another compliment to the Chair for her commitment and dedication to this, because we are going in the right direction on this file.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McIsaac: And I'm pleased, too. The minister of health is involved in this as well, the health department, as well as the Minister of Finance and his department, so it's a team effort to make sure this project runs and a lot of excitement (Indistinct)

Mr. Currie: Yeah, well thank you.

Chair: Hon. members, we're at the top of page 25.

Aquaculture and P.E.I. Analytical Laboratories

Aquaculture

“Appropriations provided to manage and support the sustainable development of both the aquaculture industry and the estuarial shellfish fisheries.” Administration: 15,600. Equipment: 11,300. Materials, Supplies and Services: 56,800. Professional Services: 13,100. Salaries: 645,700. Travel and Training: 65,700. Grants: 558,200.

Total Aquaculture: 1,366,400.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, with the growth and the success of the oyster industry, has that placed any more of a burden on your resources as far as with the oysters is concerned?

Mr. McIsaac: You know what? That is, I would say, one of the most exciting parts of this whole department is in the oysters. With regards to resources, it is something that we actually started here and we took to the Maritime premiers and we met with the federal minister, Tootoo. And then Minister LeBlanc and we talked to him about – in agriculture we, because we're all agriculture and all the fisheries ministers, we talked about the Growing Forward 2 program that we had and the federal-provincial funds that we had to spread across our agriculture. We talked with him about a possibility of a fund similar to that that we could have for our fisheries industry.

Actually, I had the opportunity I was called to Halifax, for the announcement of the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, 325 million for Atlantic area to do a project similar to Growing Forward 2. The perimeters are not all there, but with the growth of the industry, the growth of the – the excitement within the industry, the marketplace, as well. We couldn't fill all of the orders for oysters if we wanted.

The deputy and I went to China and the Premier went to China on different trade missions and some of our oyster processors came with us, and lobsters, as well. It's just like I say, the most exciting part, really of

growth potential in the whole department is in the oysters. There is a lot of excitement, both in the wild end of things, and as well as in the farmed oysters.

Chair: Hon. members, I'm having a little hard time hearing the question. Thank you.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I'm glad to hear you bring up the Growing Forward 2 with regards to the fishery. I know we had this conversation last spring because at the eastern fisheries meeting there were a number of fishermen who had said to the deputy: Is there any way we can get some sort of a program like that?

I understand that there are some similarities to that, or the federal fund that you had announced, so I appreciate that.

I guess as far as resources there, is that mostly federal resources that we would have to expand because of inspections officers and that type of thing with increased lease space and then now, of course, growing it in bays, too?

Mr. McIsaac: No. We are much more positive towards it than that.

Different programs that maybe now we put 100,000 into – could end up being 40% of a program, which the feds will match with 60%. This is the way we're looking at it. Instead of 100,000 you get two and a half, 250,000 or something like that. It should really add to the growth of that.

We have a lot of different programs that we have for innovation, for equipment, whatever it might be that we think we can expand to grow with this fund. Again, we do not have all of the perimeters for that. We are meeting as ministers and again, for a quick meeting, actually the end of next week, to be prepared for our FPT meetings; federal/provincial/territorial meetings.

Again, we need to get this one solidified because actually it's not for all of the provinces. It is for the Atlantic area. We'll be meeting as a group on this one, as well as, some agricultural issues, and taking that to Minister LeBlanc to try to nail down

exactly what the perimeters are. And to give them some ideas and we're actually getting some suggestions from the fishing community already on where the dollars could be placed.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

With your indulgence if I could ask one more question. I'm not sure if it's with the department, maybe not this section, but, as far as cold storage. How are we doing with that, as far as working with some of the companies and businesses, especially in my neck of the woods, on accessing cold storage, or maybe helping them out create more space?

Mr. McIsaac: I believe economic development is working on that, too and have some funding with regards to that. We are in conversation on that, as well.

Mr. MacEwen: Is it looking good? Is it –

Mr. McIsaac: I hope so. We certainly have some people in the private sector who are interested in doing that, too. We'll certainly help where we can, as well economic development and tourism.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair, thank you, minister.

Chair: Total Aquaculture: 1,366,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Soil and Feed Lab

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the Soil and Feed Laboratory.”
Administration: 52,000. Equipment: 11,100.
Materials, Supplies and Services: 150,600.
Professional Services: 8,400. Salaries: 634,300. Travel and Training: 2,600.

Total Soil and Feed Lab: 859,000.

Mr. McIsaac: I just note on this area, we just get reaccreditation on this land. It was done in 2016 for a three-year period. It is a fantastic lab. We do work for, not only, our own province, you'll see in the next one, in

the dairy lab, but samples for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well.

A highly recognized lab.

Chair: Total Soil and Feed Lab: 859,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Dairy and Plant Diagnostics Lab

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the Dairy Lab and Plant Diagnostics Lab. Administration: 65,900. Equipment: 2,900. Materials, Supplies and Services: 208,600. Professional Services: 2,500. Salaries: 345,400. Travel and Training: 4,700.

Total Dairy and Plant Diagnostics Lab: 630,000.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Mr. McIsaac: You're going to have to make a note on that one, too. Just, you'll see some difference in the costs of running the programs here. A lot of the costs from materials are coming in from the States. That's what driving some of the costs up there for that.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Aquaculture and P.E.I. Analytical Laboratories: 2,855,400.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Total Department of Agriculture and Fisheries: 30,709,000.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Mr. McIsaac: Before, I'm just –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: Before I'm dismissed can I table these?

Chair: Sure.

Mr. McIsaac: Okay. There are documents here for some of the questions that you had. I'll table those before I – okay.

Chair: Thank you, Minister, thank you, Mary.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, great questions there.

Mr. R. Brown: Great job.

Chair: Hon. members we are on page 40.

I would ask the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism to come to the table.

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, 15 minutes. He'll be done in 10.

Chair: Hon. members, permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: What page?

Chair: Forty.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Okay.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Chair: Order, order!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism budget deliberation or estimates.

Could you please introduce yourself and your position for the record? 7

Shannon Burke (Director): It's Shannon Burke. I'm Director of Finance for the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Chair: Great, thank you. Thank you, Shannon. Welcome.

Minister, I'm going to turn the floor to you for an opening statement.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

It's good to be here again.

Just a few things that we're working on, relevant to Prince Edward Island tourism: We just completed, through the industry, a five year strategy that is being – final consultations, I believe, are actually happening today within industry. We also are taking a look at governance within the tourism industry – and somewhat in our own department for future. We're trying to advance the seasonal shoulder industries – our seasonal shoulder tourism industry in the spring and fall. We've had some great success dealing with Canada's Food Island and Fall Flavours.

We've also had some success with the shellfish industry as far as Shellfish Festival. We continue to provide, I think it's about approximately 500 grants, across Prince Edward Island to different entities that are catering to tourism.

We'll be moving our VIC in Charlottetown this year to Founder's Hall. We're in the process of doing that. We're in the process of hiring all our seasonal staff. We've been very successful as of late with experiential tourism. I don't know if anybody noticed last night, but on CBC, Perry Gotell was on and they had a phenomenal story. It was flipping from British Columbia to Prince Edward Island and Perry was the contact. So, it goes to show that we're being recognized in that regard.

We have many development programs that we assist with. I believe last year, the Tourism Industry Association – we assisted with 1.4 million in research and product development.

That's a little bit of what's taking place in tourism. We've had the best two years that we've had in a long time and we see, based on roofed accommodations, feedback that we're going to have another great year this year. We're also tagging on to – in Ottawa,

relevant to the 150 celebrations. So, that's tourism business development.

I should mention golfing and camping last year at all our parks were basically – we had good seasons. It was the first time in a long time that we didn't, I believe, lose any money in golf. So, we're very fortunate. We hope that is a go-forward positive.

Business development, I believe, is – we've got some, if I can remember – I think there are 19 companies that actually expanded with over 400 employees. We've got 8 new businesses in the past year and a half that opened up. We're seeing our manufacturing sales, obviously, – you've read it in the media – they've done very well – our exports, we lead the country in growth exports. We led the country in manufacturing over the course of the year. Retail sales, we lead the country per capita – car sales.

There are lots of good things happening. I was going to give you a list of the companies, but I can't seem to find it at my fingertips. This one? Ah, there we go. I'll give you some of the ones through the business development, I know some of you are aware of them: Trout River Industries; MacDougall Steel – there's about 180 new jobs in those two; New Leaf Essentials, Slemmon Park – up to 15 new jobs in the short term; Frontier Power Systems in Georgetown; Eastern Fabricators; Copper Bottom Brewing in Montague; Kaneshii Vinyl Press; Mrs. Dunster's, Cavendish Farms are going to require over 500 people in the next three years.

There are 88 applications into the Ignition Fund, it's the 25,000 fund that we give out. It's basically like a Dragons' Den, almost. We've increased that by two each year. We're seeing some success.

Most recently we read in the Budget that we have a venture capital fund that was initiated by this government to partner with the private sector. It's something that we have been working on, I think, since being elected. I think it's going to mean a lot to our young entrepreneurs.

Manufacturing, shipments and exports reached 1.7 billion in 2016. Fisheries have 42 extra million shipping for lobster to ship,

and 40 million of that, I think, went to China. We're doing very well and we hope to continue.

Chair: Thank you.

Do you have any handouts?

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct)

Chair: He has some handouts that he's going to hand out before we start the deliberations.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm interested in what your opinion is on, and I think this is a great program, but this year, of course, Parks Canada has extended free passes to all Canadians to visit Parks Canada sites.

I'm wondering what do you think about that possible impact on private campsites or private tourism operators or provincial parks?

Mr. MacDonald: What's my opinion?

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: Are you talking free access to the parks? Or free access to the camping?

Leader of the Opposition: There is free access this summer to all Parks Canada sites, right?

Mr. MacDonald: Not to the campsites, as far as I know.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: I hope you're not right.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't know, I'm just –

Mr. MacDonald: I think it's just entry –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – nothing camping.

Leader of the Opposition: You don't think there will be any impact on that?

Mr. MacDonald: I think it'll generate more traffic within the National Parks and the surrounding areas.

Leader of the Opposition: I think it's good (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: It's good, yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: I think, actually, we've been, as a tourism industry has been fighting for a few reductions in that, especially for Islanders as well. It's very similar to what we have done with the bridge that you're hearing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I'm just curious, are there any current law suits pending out of your department right now?

Mr. MacDonald: The only law – through Innovation PEI or tourism, I don't believe there are any law suits. IIDI, Finance PEI's could be different. But, we're dealing with IPEI in tourism. Is that what you're –

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just curious how many law suits are through Innovation PEI right now?

Mr. MacDonald: How many? I'll have to get back to you (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, I'll direct you to page 40.

General Administration

Corporation Management

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the Minister's and Deputy Minister's

offices; trade negotiations and policy; records management; and staff development.” Administration: 20,000. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 12,000. Professional Services: 36,200. Salaries: 915,100. Travel and Training: 60,000.

Total Corporation Management: 1,047,800.

I have a question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Minister: Can you tell me, yes or no, if there is a plan within government to move culture over to innovation and economic development tourism?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: There is? Was industry consulted on that?

Mr. MacDonald: There is presently a culture strategy being done. Quite honestly, do you want my opinion on it? I think it’s a good fit with tourism because tourism is a part, to me, as culture. I have been advocating for that to make it happen, so has some of the industry coming forth and saying –

Leader of the Opposition: When can you see this department’s culture shifting over to innovation?

Mr. MacDonald: The grants are already listed under Innovation PEI, in this, right here – (Indistinct) budget.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I noticed a salary drop in salaries. Why is there a salary drop?

Mr. MacDonald: There is one vacant research position, which was eliminated in –

Mary Kinsman Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: Just one position?

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Just one position dropped?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Just one position dropped?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Are you – there are no plans in firing anybody out of this section? Is there?

Mr. Currie: No, it’s not fired. It’s all about hire now.

Mr. MacDonald: They may fire me.

Mr. Currie: It’s all about hire now.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Right to the point.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) your job is secure (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. LaVie: You’re not going to fire anybody?

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

Mr. MacDonald: 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.

Hon. members, let’s have a little bit of order while the Speaker returns.

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.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, April 18th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Enjoy your weekend everybody. We'll see you next Tuesday.

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