

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 rise to welcome everyone back to the Legislature for another week, and those joining us in the gallery, my constituent John teRaa is here; Colton Profitt, who's vice-president of the Young Liberals and doing great work; Don MacEwen, who was a colleague for a number of years at UPEI, and soon to mark 40 years of great teaching and celebrating at a big event coming up at midyear; Jim and Ellen Carragher; and, of course, Eddie Lund; and everybody else who's watching from here in the gallery and watching from home.

We've made a number of mentions and just completed – of Easter – and just completed a great Easter weekend, and I would note that this evening marks the final day of the completion of Passover, the Jewish festival of peace.

We had a great visit to the province this morning by the Canadian ambassador to the United States, David MacNaughton, who is here and meeting with all provinces and territories to ensure the smoothest possible Canada – U.S. relations.

I want to, of course, congratulate all of the Islanders who participated in yesterday's Boston Marathon, including Stan Chaisson, who finished first among the Island entries with a time of 2:41:15, and congratulate everyone who took part in the marathon from Prince Edward Island.

And finally, to congratulate Gerard 'Turk' Gallant, who's returning to the head coaching bench in the National Hockey League with the newest franchise, the Las Vegas Golden Knights.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Welcome everybody in District 19 that are watching today and everybody that's in attendance, also, in the gallery, and the media when they also come in.

I'd like to say, I hope everybody enjoyed their Easter weekend, and this same weekend also marked the first day of opening of the fishing season, and I did take some time to go out and visit Scales Pond. It was very active. There were over 20-some people out there, and the Dunk River and all them were active too, so I hope everybody had a good weekend and a good catch.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody back. I'd also like to say a special hi to Colton Profitt; we're old friends from the dental – my past dental life; and John teRaa, of course.

I'd also just like to mention the passing of John Clement, a real pillar in the musical community here on Prince Edward Island and a man – it was a beautiful service yesterday, which the minister said in his opening remarks: A bow has been stilled, a baton has been put down, and the score of a musical life is complete. But John has left a very indelible mark here on the musical community of Prince Edward Island, and I wanted to send out condolences to his family and particularly to his wife, Jenet.

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 galleries.

A special hello to two individuals that are with us: We have Ellen Carragher in the gallery with her father, Jim, and all of us were introduced to Ellen and the great work that she did in raising awareness for mental health, and I know that there will be a statement; but also her mom, Denise, who works in government. I know that she's a grade 6 student and she's excited about heading into Birchwood for grade 7 with her uncle Ron, so I wish her well.

Thanks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery. It's certainly a pleasure to be back here after a wonderful Easter weekend.

I'd also like to say hello to everyone back in Evangeline-Miscouche, and a special congratulations to a fisherman in my district, Gerald Arseneault, who built himself a new boat this winter, and he was putting it in the water over the weekend to get geared up for herring fishing in the area, so I wish him all the best and all the fishermen a good catch and safety.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today, but I do have one special guest here today – and the Premier has mentioned him – is my father, Don MacEwen, is here in the gallery today. The Premier's right. He did work with dad for quite a long time. I think dad is one of the few, if not the only professor, or employee, that has actually worked under all five presidents at UPEI, as well. That's dad, he started really young.

This is his 40th year of teaching engineering at UPEI, if you can imagine that. I am one of many former students. Dad is happily retiring this year. Actually, I'm pretty sure he taught his – he oversaw his last exam just this morning, as well at UPEI, so another milestone.

Dad has achieved a lot in his career; outside of teaching he's been the presidents of Engineers PEI; he's been the national association president; a lot of teaching awards, too. The one thing that I'm probably most proud of and he probably is too, is talking to his former students.

During standing committees and a number of times we interact with a lot of engineers that come in and present to us. They always come over and they say: Oh, wow, your father is Don MacEwen. He was one of my favourite profs. I think that has a lot to say about dad and his career.

He also had a professional dream, I guess, of an engineering degree program at UPEI. It was a long time coming, but I'm glad dad got to be a part of that coming this year, and working with the government, as well.

I'm proud of your career, dad. I'm proud of your accomplishments. Congratulations on retirement. I have lots of things for you to do; three young kids to help out, even more than you do now, you and mom. I appreciate it. Enjoy the proceedings today.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone in the gallery today and especially Colton Profit here today, and everybody watching at home in Summerside-Wilmot.

I'd also like to congratulate Gerard Gallant for being named the head coach of the Vegas Golden Knights. I know Turk is really eager to get at it. I would especially like to congratulate Joey Blacquiere for making this correct prediction back in November.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I gives me great pleasure to rise today and welcome all my colleagues back from a long restful Easter weekend.

I'd also like to welcome all those that are viewing from District 22 at home, and give a special shout-out today to Colton Profit, who I see is here today in the public gallery, as well. Colton has been a very valuable person to me and my team over the last two years. He supported me in various ways, and I thank him for that.

I also want to give a shout-out to Ellen Carragher. Ellen, you are an inspiration to many. You are a true advocate for mental health on Prince Edward Island. I look forward to the change you will make in our world.

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 certainly like to bring greetings, as well, to all those watching online and on EastLink.

In particular, I'd like to send out a special hello to individuals in Andrews of Stratford and St. John House. I know that they are regular watchers, and quite often I get a lot of feedback from them, both positive and sometimes not so positive. Of course, when they're referring to the not so positive they're talking about other people, not me.

I'd also like to, of course, recognize Ellen Carragher and her father, Jim, who joined us here today. I'll have a little bit more to say about Ellen here in a few minutes.

On a more serious note, I'd also like extend condolences to the family of John Clement. John touched many lives, young persons' lives, in particular here on Prince Edward Island through the Singing Strings and the music program here on Prince Edward Island as an educator.

There is a little known fact about John, as well. He had an extreme passion, as well, for British sports cars. One of which, I did share with John. In closing, I would just like to say, my condolences to Jen and the entire family.

I'd also like to extend condolences to Robert Stevenson's family. He just passed away the last few days. He leaves a wonderful legacy behind through his children.

I'd also like to mention that I had the pleasure of travelling up to Miminegash yesterday and visiting with Jimmie Doucette at Doucette's Boat Building. Currently, I think he has about 52 boats on order with deposits. He's currently putting 10 to 12 boats through a year, but he's desperately looking for employees. If there are any Islanders that are out there looking for good quality work at a very good hourly wage, I would strongly suggest you go online, Doucette's Boat Building – they are looking for people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everyone who's watching from District 18, Rustico-Emerald and, of course, everybody here to the gallery. It's great to see you here today.

I wanted to recognize Jennie Orr, who grew up on the Snowie Road in District 18, Rustico-Emerald. She not only ran the Boston Marathon and had a personal best, but also got engaged to another fellow – Michael Bergeron – who ran the Boston Marathon and was a juggler. He juggled while he ran the entire Boston Marathon and they got engaged, so I wanted to recognize them for that.

Also, I just wanted to thank all the constituents of District 18, Rustico-Emerald for their patience with the roads this spring. They are breaking up quite badly. Many of the roads, coincidentally, that we had requested be repaved last year, but there wasn't enough money in the budget. I certainly thank them for their patience and thank the road crews for their patience as well, because I know they have to work with limited resources to try and keep our roads maintained and they do a great job. But I certainly hope that this year, in the budget, we see enough that we can fix our roads so we don't have the terrible conditions that we're seeing right now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleasure to rise here in the House today and welcome all the good people in the public gallery, as well as all the good people that are at home watching on TV or computer. It's getting a little busy there around Alberton now with all the fisherman getting ready to put their traps on the wharf – the wharf's filled with traps.

We're also involved in a national contest with Glace Bay, Nova Scotia and it's the Chevrolet Good Deeds Cup. We're putting a plea out to all Islanders, and even the opposition, too, to get online and vote for the Alberton Midget Regals. They're currently, in second place, behind Glace Bay by 1,500 votes, so we certainly appreciate any help we can get from everybody.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome everyone back for our start of another week. I welcome everyone in the gallery, the media – especially the media that gets our message out there. Don MacEwen – Happy Retirement, Don. After listening to your son give his little speech, I

don't know how retired you're going to be after looking after him for sure.

I'd like to congratulate a group of girls, the PEI Provincial Ringette Team that went to Montreal over the holidays. They won – they took home gold, actually. That's a big defeat for a little province like PEI to take home a gold out of Montreal. I believe there are seven girls from my riding on that team. Congratulations girls and keep up the great work. I know we'll be looking forward to see them playing for sure next year.

I had a phone call today from one of our local newspapers about my thoughts on people burning grass in the area. My advice to him was very short, it was: If I can give any advice to anybody burning grass, do not burn grass. It's just too dangerous. I've witnessed too many disasters because of grass burning. Let nature take care of the grass. That's what –

An Hon. Member: Tell Justin Trudeau.

Mr. Myers: Trudeau wants you to smoke it.

Mr. LaVie: That's what nature does. The only advice I can give is: Do not burn grass on your own. If you were even thinking of burning grass, call the local authorities, call the Fire Marshal's office, call your RCMP, call the people. There's people out there that does that. Try not to do it on your own because I've seen too many disasters. I've seen garages burn, I've seen houses burn, I've seen tractors burn, Ski-Doos burning. So, my advice: Do not burn the grass. Let nature take care of its own.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate Bev Gerg, a constituent of mine in finishing the Boston Marathon this weekend. It's a great accomplishment to finish any marathon, but the Boston Marathon, in particular, is challenging. Stanley Chaisson of Prince Edward Island, I think he came in 247th or something like that in the field, which is

really an incredible result when you look at the number of runners that are there. He was the first Atlantic Canadian to finish the race. So, congratulations to them on this great Easter weekend.

I guess we would also remember – and there were a few friends of mine and a co-worker that were down there a couple of years ago when tragedy struck at the Boston Marathon. We have to be quick to remember that we have liberties here in North America that we enjoy today because of those that have gone before us, and that can change in an instant.

Our thoughts are with those that were struck on that particular day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

Affordable Housing Projects

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

I was pleased to see the issue of affordable housing addressed in the federal budget, with the government pledging to free up federal land for affordable housing projects. The City of Charlottetown did the same thing in the mid-1990s with the Province of Prince Edward Island and built a number of duplexes in the downtown area providing good homes for many families.

When I look across the city, I see many examples of successful housing projects that have made a big difference in peoples' lives; King's Square Co-op, Hensley Green, Pownal Square, Gateway Co-op, and Hillsborough Park. All of these are great communities.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government had the residential rehabilitation assistance program, better known as RRAP. This program offered people funding for repairs and maintenance so they could afford to stay in their homes. The role of the federal government in affordable housing is critical and the offer of land or matching

dollars leverages more dollars towards affordable housing.

With a current vacancy rate of 1.7% in Charlottetown, the demand for affordable housing is high. Now that the new federal government has recognized the need to get involved in affordable housing, I look forward to working with our federal MPs to respond to the growing needs for housing for Islanders.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers that work on the various housing boards across Prince Edward Island. They do a tremendous job, and their hearts are in the right place and that is providing affordable accommodations for people in Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Easter Seals Ambassador Cameron Gordon

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a very amazing young man. Cameron Gordon is very proud to be named 2017 Easter Seals Ambassador for PEI.

It is his sense of pride and enthusiasm that will ensure another successful year for the Easter Seals campaign. Cameron is 16-years-old and is the son of Catherine McInnis and Kent Gordon. He is a grade 10 student at Colonel Gray High School where he is on the power lifting team. His power lifting abilities led him to Special Olympics last year where he came home with several medals. You might even know Cameron from seeing him volunteer at the Island Storm games.

If you ask Cameron his favourite thing to do in the whole world, is to dance. He loves to laugh and make people laugh. His joy is truly contagious. He will be spreading his positive attitude as he travels for the Tim Horton's Ambassador School Tour from April the 19th to the 26th. Funds that are raised during the Easter Seals campaign go

to support organizations that help Island children with disabilities.

I would like the House to acknowledge the efforts of this remarkable young man as he embarks on his tour representing all children faced with extra challenges in life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Ellen Carragher

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

It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise today in the Legislature to recognize a true hero of mine. Ellen Carragher is a 12-year-old elementary student from Stratford and is wise beyond her years.

This past January, instead of hosting her friends and family for her birthday, she wanted to do something special to raise awareness about mental health. You see? Ellen lost her uncle Fred back in 2015 to his battle with depression, and Ellen has also dealt with anxiety since she was five years old.

Ellen was quoted as saying: I was thinking that I get so much for Christmas, like it's ridiculous the amount of presents I get and so we're thinking, do I really need to get more presents for my birthday? Do I really need to be given money? Do I really need to be given all of that stuff? My mother and I thought why don't I do something good? Why not have a charity and then I thought, with my anxiety, maybe we could do something like that.

With a little help from her mother, she organized a public skate on February 18th at the Eastlink Centre in Charlottetown. Admission to the skate was by donation.

She also launched an online auction and accepted online donations.

The skate raised just over \$2,500, and the online auction and donations raised more than \$5,618, for a grand total of \$9,269.

Bianca McGregor with the Canadian Mental Health Association of PEI said they were blown away when they heard what Ellen wanted to do, and this is a quote from Bianca: It's kind of new territory for us. When we picked our jaws up off the ground and wiped the tears away, we're just so proud of her. She's doing huge things to bring awareness for mental health to get young people talking about it. What a pleasant surprise.

I want to personally congratulate Ellen on this amazing initiative and thank her for taking action to bring greater attention to the issue of mental health, and I'm being told by a very reliable source that this will not be a one-off, as Ellen is already in the planning stages for next year's event.

Ellen's empathy and leadership should be an inspiration to all of us.

Thank you, Ellen, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal and minister of development

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, will the minister of economic development tell Islanders who cooked up the Mill River sweetheart deal and when did they bother bringing it to your attention?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Easy one.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we talked about this last week and I think previous to that two or three times in the House, and to inform the opposition, it's relevant that we develop and maintain our

strategic product that we have in the tourism market, but not only that, more importantly in rural PEI, and this deal is for rural PEI, and we've heard it through the media, we've heard it through neighbours and friends, that this is a sunset clause for this government to take the taxpayers off the hook.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this winter when the minister was trying to sell this sweetheart deal he said, and I quote: When I was first brought in, I looked at the numbers and thought, holy jumpins that's a lot of money to give.

Minister, when were you first brought into this backroom sweetheart deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I actually did say that, but what's remiss was when I learned that how much money taxpayers are losing annually on this property and where this property was at.

When there was a study done in 2013 and it said that we're going to need an investment of \$40 million to keep this strategic asset in West Prince, you have to look at things through a business sense and also through a community and rural development sense, and that's exactly what this government has done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River deal and senior government officials

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this is a backroom deal that was cooked up by Robert Ghiz, the current Minister of Finance

who was innovation minister at the time, and their officials.

Will the minister of economic development admit the fact this sweetheart deal was cooked up by Robert Ghiz and senior government insiders from 2013 onward?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, this deal was done in the best interest of everyone on Prince Edward Island. As a minister responsible for the taxpayers and the lending portfolio of 370 some million in Prince Edward Island that work each and every day, from fishermen to small business to tourism operators to just about any business that you could think of – this is a government that is being very aggressive, and when we look at these types of situations there's many facts that come into play: One is the roofed accommodations aspect in West Prince; one is the visitation in West Prince; and most of all the employment in West Prince. You take 100 or over 100 jobs out of West Prince, what does that do to a community?

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mill River study and public money

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, just like egaming, I'm sure the finance minister will claim he knew nothing about the file either, and I'm sure Islanders will see through this as well.

Minister, how much public money was spent on your secret 2013 Mill River study?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, going back to 2013, I have no knowledge of that. All I

know is that the independent third-party study came back and said we're going to need a \$40 million investment.

But if we're going back, do we want to go back to Dundarave and see what we've done there as a Conservative government? Do we want to go back –

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. MacDonald: Do we want to go back to Polar Foods, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Oh yes, we got their attention, and if they want to go back, we can go back.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) Tories were in the (Indistinct) –

Release of report

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this secret study only came to light after a FOIPP request that was denied and a successful appeal to the privacy commissioner.

Minister, why did this tired Liberal government refuse to release this report?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the economy on Prince Edward Island is very important to us. I mean, we're leading the country in many entities –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) the question.

Mr. MacDonald: And you know we continue to be a leader in Atlantic Canada –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) –

Mr. MacDonald: And it's because we're a government that is very active. We're a government that wants to see Islanders do prosperity –

Mr. Myers: Islanders won't forget this (Indistinct) –

Mr. MacDonald: We're not a government –

Mr. Myers: Everywheres.

Mr. MacDonald: – that taxpayers are on the hook for \$31 million with Polar Foods, and how many jobs were lost at that time? No word of that in this House ever since I've been a member, two years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: You're not here long enough. You're still wet behind the ears.

Speaker: Okay, let's have some order here now, members.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) always crosses the line.

Speaker: When somebody is answering a question, at least listen to it. You may not like what you hear, but listen to it anyway.

Mr. Myers: I'd love if you'd answer the question.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

FOIPP request

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's probably the most frustrating part as opposition, as well as Islanders: We never get real answers. I don't think we've heard an honest answer yet.

Minister, why did you instruct your department to fight the appeal made to the privacy commissioner?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe solely in what the Auditor General has said recently and the corrections that we've made in our departments in growing transparency and accountability. I believe in the FOIPP, and I think it's a useful tool for anybody in the general public as well as government and the opposition.

Mr. Myers: You've never used it, then, if you believe that.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I think this deal for Mill River – I'm going to get back to the Mill River deal – is specifically targeted at the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island. I believe it's positive for the people of West Prince.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, they are going to pay for it. You're right on that.

Mr. MacDonald: We're maintaining jobs. We have a new infrastructure. And we have an individual that has invested in West Prince, that has grown up there, that is a well-to-do businessman with great intentions for the western part of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Minister, if you believed in FOIPP, you wouldn't be putting roadblocks up.

Secret study

Minister, what is this tired Liberal government trying to hide from Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think we're trying to hide anything. In fact, I don't know what –

Mr. Trivers: Answer the questions, then.

Mr. MacDonald: – exactly, we're doing, but we're doing the right thing when we're growing the economy and we're outpacing a national average on just about everything.

And it's interesting that the investment in West Prince is – when we take Georgetown-St. Peters, their investment there is almost \$29 million. I didn't hear anybody talking about that.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: Morell-Mermaid is \$34 million, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

An Hon. Member: – don't believe it.

Mr. MacDonald: So there's all kinds of money being invested in every constituency on PEI, and we're doing it in a manner that's fair and equitable, and we're growing the economy on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) West Prince.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. Myers: Ronnie's talking about you –
Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the secret study talked about opportunities for government: The opportunity to close the close the fun park; the opportunity to close the campground; the opportunity to close the provincial park maintenance unit –

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. MacKay: Lots of closure opportunities and balance sheet savings in this file.

Mr. Myers: Is that in that report?

Mr. MacKay: Minister, is this truth what your tired Liberal government was trying to hide from Islanders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Currie: Big investment in rural PEI.

An Hon. Member: Lots of opportunities –

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad you brought that up, because in 2013 when the study was done it was \$40 million, and I hope the hon. member doesn't expect the taxpayers to pay \$40 million and forever operate golf courses, because all I've heard since I came to this House is that we shouldn't be in the golf course business.

Here we make a deal with a sunset clause for the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island. We still get criticized for it. We are maintaining jobs. We're maintaining an important infrastructure. We're continuing to grow prosperity in West Prince, which is rural PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this is what the minister's own report had to say about its efforts: There is a general sense that Mill River has been de-marketed by provincial emphasis on Crowbush, Brudenell, and Dundarave; that it is the afterthought golf destination.

Minister: Is truth what your tired Liberal government was trying to hide from Islanders?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope all the tourism operators are watching this today, and hopefully not having a negative impact on any decisions they're making for likely one of the busiest seasons we're ever going to have.

Just recently we just invested over \$600,000 in golf carts for Brudenell and Crowbush –

Mr. Myers: Are you bragging about that for real?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, I am actually –

Mr. Myers: You tried to close my school –

Mr. MacDonald: – bragging because –

Mr. Myers: You tried to close my school and you're bragging about buying half a million dollars worth of golf carts –

Speaker: Order, order!

Mr. Myers: Do yourself a favour (Indistinct)

Speaker: Go ahead hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're reinvesting in what pays to keep those schools open and that's tourism; \$430 million in revenue generated. That's what keeps our hospitals and schools open.

Mr. Myers: Half a million in golf carts (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, it is getting harder and harder to believe this tired Liberal government. It appears they are not proud they are not proud of their record of long ignoring West Prince.

The secret study also said: There are virtually no complimentary tourism services or experiences providing for critical mass so most of the critical mass will have to occur on the site itself.

Minister: Is this truth what your tired Liberal government was trying to hide from Islanders?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) question.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. MacDonald: I think we turned the corner, Mr. Speaker. I think we turned the corner; they're actually starting to care about West Prince right now. This is really good because the last couple of days in the House, when I'm answering questions they didn't really care –

Mr. Myers: What's Ronnie saying?

Mr. MacDonald: We've been diligently investing in rural PEI. Over 60% of my loan portfolio is in rural PEI. I stated two cases. Eight per cent in one hon. member's riding. That's a huge investment. To me, those are some.

You take Cloggeroo in Georgetown, a \$20,000 investment. We do that on an annual basis. We have to continue to build in those rural communities to drive the economy and prosperity of people on PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this would explain the minister's attempt to justify the spin-offs of KFC and Greco in Prince County last Question Period.

Minister: Will you finally accept your ministerial responsibilities for failing to invest or proper market this Mill River property and turning around and dumping them in your sweetheart fire sale deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the hon. member doesn't think that there isn't a spin-off of 15,000 rounds of golf, and 6,000 room nights sold and 2,500 campsites

sold at Mill River; if they don't think those small businesses are gaining from that –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) you said it (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – I think your numbers should be – you should take a look at your business sense there. It is unfortunate.

The spin-off to that property; you take 100 jobs out of Georgetown; you take 100 jobs out of Kensington –

Mr. Myers: Which (Indistinct) did.

Mr. MacDonald: – you take 100 jobs out of Cavendish –

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) took 300 (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – and see what's left in that community.

We're taking a property with a sunset clause and we're leaving the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island millions of dollars –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) still doing it (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.
Business case for Mill River

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny hearing the minister talk about how great Mill River did last year. If we recall, Rodd's were the ones who marketed Mill River last year, and you took it from them. You not only took it from them you threatened them to get their signature on a piece of paper.

Readers of this secret document will find that most developments highlighted in it create this sweetheart deal.

Question to the minister: Why is the business case on which your fire sale sweetheart deal is based on secret study that Islanders paid for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I believe the study, if you're talking about the 2013 study. That study has been available for some time. It was even – there was an article in the newspaper in reference to that study, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

When the next question-asker gets up you don't get a reset. You just told him why you were – he was asking you questions, why you were trying to hide it from Islanders; were you blocking the FOIPP request? You did it twice.

That's how it got to the paper, they had to FOIPP it. You weren't giving it up freely. This minister knows how tired this Liberal government is and they know that sweetheart deals like this is the only way that they can get anybody to do business with them this day.

How is it that your tired government only requires a new owner to make \$1 million worth of renovations and upgrades to the property even though you're forking over \$8 million to this company?

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll reiterate again. This property was losing somewhere in the vicinity of \$850,000 to \$1 million per year. Now, anybody in the market for a property is going to look at that and say: What kind of investment do we need?

We, as government, and responsible to the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island, have to look at it long-term and say: How can we get out of this? How can we get – but without losing jobs, without losing an infrastructure, without losing a tourism product in West Prince, which is needed. How do we do this?

Over 12 years this will cost the taxpayers less than what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Discussions re: selling Mill River

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know lots of Islanders who would have taken a free golf course. There are lots of them. There are probably people in this room who would have taken a free golf course. I don't know what you're even talking about. It's a good deal for one person. It's not a good deal for Islanders. It's a good deal for one person. The only person you negotiated with was one person.

Will you admit to this House today that you've never had a discussion with anybody else but this one person for this secret sweetheart deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: The truth is coming.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This goes back to, I believe, it was 2012, when the first ROI was actually put out. There was an ROI put out for all of the golf courses on PEI. It has been no secret. We've been in the paper. We have been talking to several entities about golf courses. All three and we have to continue to do that. The private sector is telling us and the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island: We need to get out of the golf business.

Just go back to Dundarave. Go back to Dundarave –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) nobody else was offered (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – 1997. Even Binns Tories recognized how bad the deal was and tried to reverse it in 2000. Ultimate cost of Dundarave to taxpayers was probably between \$12 million to \$14 million.

The worst part: we're still losing money at Dundarave and it's costing the taxpayers each and every year more money to run that golf course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Releasing document of Mill River deal

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find it ironic, this minister standing up here and using a bad deal to defend his bad deal.

Question to the minister: Will you publicly release every document that has to do with your sideways, backroom Mill River deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Stop the secrecy.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, my department has worked closely with the Auditor General. Everything that she decided and wanted us to do, and we have made all of those recommendations –

Mr. Trivers: Back to the Auditor General.

Mr. MacDonald: – available to anybody. We'll continue to work. We're a transparent and accountable government. We're talking about figures. We have shown basically what we've paid, what we didn't pay. We did it in a press release.

We've worked with the new owners and we'll continue to work with the new owners.

If someone comes forward with Brudenell or Crowbush, we'll work with them, as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think you're being upfront with Islanders at all. Question again to the minister, you claimed: We didn't have too many options when this deal was done.

Will you yes or no: Yes or no? Was public money used to finance the \$500,000 that you sold the property for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, this was a deal that was put together for the benefit of the employees –

Mr. Trivers: Simple question –

Mr. MacDonald: – for the benefit –

Mr. Trivers: Answer the question.

Mr. MacDonald: – of the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Trivers: No answer.

Mr. MacDonald: It was a deal that was complicated –

Mr. Trivers: What are you hiding?

Mr. MacDonald: – there was a campground involved, a water park involved, a privately-owned resort involved and a golf course. They were all losing money. I shouldn't have to say anymore, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This was a sweetheart deal for one person and government basically gave away the entire asset, which was a resort, a golf course, a fun park, a campground all for the tune of \$500,000 but you loaned them the \$500,000.

Question to the minister: Why did you loan him the \$500,000 to pay for his share of the sweetheart deal?

Ms. Biggar: Five hundred thousand.

Mr. Myers: The \$500,000, sorry.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, you just got to look at this as a big picture. It's a sunset clause –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Answer the question.

Mr. MacDonald: – for the taxpayers.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) answer the question.

Mr. MacDonald: There's a sunset clause for the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island. I can't understand how the opposition is not even standing up defending this deal –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) the question.

Mr. MacDonald: We're getting out of the golf course business. We have an operable person in there that's going to take that and make more and build on that infrastructure. We're going to maintain jobs, and the taxpayer of Prince Edward Island is going to be off the hook in a number of years, whereas I just talked about Dundarave since the 1990s and we're still paying for it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Value of Mill River property (further)

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This whole golf course is worth \$7 million, and what this minister has told the House is that they found a buyer and the buyer put the \$500,000 in that they sold it for. But, what he didn't tell this House was that they lent him the \$500,000.

Question again to the minister: Why did you give away a golf course and not even get the buyer to put five cents of their own money into it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll go back to the study of 2013. If the hon. member really thinks that that's all the money that's going to have to be invested in that property – when the study said there was \$42 million, I believe, required to bring it up to where it was at one point in time in its life – if that hon. member thinks that's going to happen, then we did make a bad deal. We did make a bad deal if that's all that's going to happen.

But let me tell you, we didn't make a bad deal. The investment that gentleman is going to put in that property is going to keep a signature property in West Prince. It's going to develop, it's going to grow, it's going to keep jobs and it's going to get the taxpayer off the hook.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I asked this three times. I'm going to ask it again. These properties were worth \$7 million. It was a sweetheart deal that you gave them away for \$500,000. So fact: That's a sweetheart deal. What's an even bigger sweetheart deal was you guys gave the \$500,000, which meant it cost your buyer \$0. How many Islanders could afford to pay \$0 for a golf course and have all of their losses covered? I'll tell you how many: Every one.

Question: Why did you give the \$500,000 to Don MacDougall?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LaVie: I'll tell you why.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, look what this property has done to West Prince and what it has done to maintaining jobs in West Prince.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: These jobs are not high-paying jobs to any effect. These are jobs that keep that community going, and I can't understand how rural PEI is being talked about this way in relevance to: We're trying to grow rural PEI. We've done a number of things in this government to maintain rural PEI and we're continuing to do that. I just can't see for the sight of me that this establishment is not worthy of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Non-binding plebiscite on electoral reform

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

Motion 80 on electoral reform is still on the order paper, but as we know the so-called binding referendum outlined in it is, how shall I put this? Problematic in that it's not constitutionally valid. During debate last week on the *Election Age Act*, the Government House Leader revealed a new plan to create a larger package on electoral reform for the next election.

Question to the Premier: Is government still committed to holding a second non-binding plebiscite on electoral reform as outlined in Motion 80? Or if not, what is the new plan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, government indicated in the fall session of last year that there would be a referendum held in conjunction with the next election and it is constitutionally valid. I don't know where that language comes from, and indeed that will be done, and done in a way that will permit Prince Edward Islanders to make a definitive choice about a very important question of our democracy and of our constitution, which is how we elect government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Much of the criticism of the plebiscite on the electoral reform, especially from government members, was that the ballot question was too complicated. Government's new plan to put a larger package up on electoral reform for a plebiscite is potentially a far more complicated affair than the plebiscite was last fall.

Question to the Premier: How will you ensure that a plebiscite on this larger reform package is not complicated and that Islanders have a better understanding of what they are actually voting for?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the referendum has been put forward as an opportunity for Islanders to have a clear choice, an A versus B choice, between two options for their democratic and electoral future. In order to adopt referendum legislation, that matter will come forward to this House and we will have an opportunity to ensure that the choice is clear.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Open debate versus closed debate between leaders

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before resuming debate, the Premier wishes to wait for the new leader of the Conservative party to be chosen so that we can know where that party stands on the issue. This would suggest, at least in the Premier's mind, that a party's position on a topic is determined by the leader rather than by debate and democratic process within a party caucus.

A question to the Premier: Why has the plan changed from an open debate in this House to a closed debate between leaders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'd remind the House of two things: When Motion 80 was on the floor last fall the Leader of the Third Party tried twice to (Indistinct) all debate and asked you to stop it on the question of engaging leaders. I wrote to the leaders about campaign finance and haven't heard back from them.

I think we should all look forward to having an open and an active, and a clear debate in this House that will enable Prince Edward Islanders to make a clear choice about their electoral future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Good job.

An Hon. Member: Very good.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Strategy for minimum wage increase

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

My question is for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. Minister, I have been contacted by a number of small business owners that were caught off guard by the raise in the minimum wage.

Can the minister inform the House as to the strategy for minimum wage increases and what's being – a strategy for minimum wage increases has been prior to the most recent increase?

Thank you.

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minimum wage increased 25 cents on April 1st to put us up to \$11.25 per hour, which is the highest in Atlantic Canada. The reason minimum wage is looked at by the three provinces is for competitiveness and to keep our workforce here. This puts more money into the economy and into pockets of Islanders.

The *Employment Standards Act* requires that the Employment Standards Board reviews minimum wage on a yearly basis, and they take in many factors. As I had said earlier, the three provinces have shared a date of April 1st for any future increases. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Business community and future change to minimum wage

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

It's always important for employers to be aware of changes that will impact business operational costs. How is your department ensuring that the business community will be aware of any future changes to the minimum wage?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's very important that the business community is aware of any changes to upcoming minimum wage increases. There is always consultation before the minimum wage goes up, and that's encouraged by the Employment Standards Board.

Mr. Trivers: That's not what business owners said in my district.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: From this year forward, any changes to the minimum wage will be announced well in advance of April 1st so the business community can be prepared.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) 2:00 p.m. on a Thursday afternoon (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order, order!

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, your second supplementary.

Process for minimum wage changes

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

Minister: Can you explain to the House the process for making minimum wage changes?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I had mentioned earlier, the *Employment Standards Act* requires that the Employment Standards Board reviews minimum wage once a year and they take many things into consideration. One of them is the social and economic effects of minimum wage rates, the cost of living increase, the economy of the province, and of course, the reasonable return on investment for businesses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Good job.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Statistical information on university graduates

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is also for the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: I am personally aware of several university students who have graduated with a degree, but are unable to find work in their field of study. These students are either underemployed or fully unemployed.

Can the minister inform the house as whether statistical information is collected on how many of these cases we have here on PEI?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is statistical information that is collected on university graduates and my department studies that information annually. Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission recently found employment rates within two years of postsecondary graduation are approaching 90%.

From 2014-2016, the employment rate among those aged 20-24 has dropped by more than 2% and we have the strongest labour force participation rate east of Manitoba. Day-to-day, I see many success stories due to the entrepreneurial spirit young Islanders, whether it is through opening their own business, taking part in programs and startup zones at the business incubator or participating in programs like The Grove pop-up shop this past month.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mentorship program re: hiring of graduating students

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's tremendous value to having experience on a resumé.

Minister: Is your department offering any type of mentorship programs to encourage employers to hire graduating students?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My department is delivering a graduate mentorship program and it provides wage subsidies for employers to hire graduates to help them train in their field of study. In the past year alone, I am pleased to announce, that nearly 300 graduates were supported under this program. Through this program, recent grads had the opportunity to work in such Island businesses as: WEICan in North Cape, Vector Aerospace, Heartbeet Organics, AquaBounty Canada and Trout River Industries, to name a few.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Apprenticeship programs

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For those students who have graduated from college or have chosen a trade, does your department offer any type of apprenticeship programs to encourage job training and work experience?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's also support for college students who follow the mentorship route. My department offers a variety of support to students and recent graduates and unemployed Islanders. Those who have graduated with diplomas, can access the Graduate Mentorship Program and if they chose the apprenticeship route, they can access training through PEI – through

Training PEI. This gives them the opportunity to obtain on-the-job training and supports block release for the classroom components.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Landline telephones re: government

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the finance minister: Currently, how many landline telephones does government pay for each year?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's finally great to be standing on the floor of the House answering questions.

That's not a number that I would have at my fingertips, but at the earliest opportunity, I'll have somebody count the phones and I'll bring that answer back.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Indistinct) was up today and these ministers are not debriefed. This minister here was elected in 2011, you should be debriefed. There are over 6,900 landlines that government is paying for.

Question to the finance minister: Do we really need close to 7,000 landline phones in this day and age?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's certainly something that we've had the opportunity to take a look at and I'll be making an announcement a little bit later – later on in the House on the floor with respect to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess he's going to make an announcement later on in the House. He's not going to answer my questions when he's going to answer his own questions on his own statement.

Mr. Roach: Patience, patience.

Cell phones re: government

Mr. LaVie: Question to the finance minister: Currently, how many cell phones does government pay for each year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question. Good question. Let's see if he can go 0 for 3.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Although I don't have the exact number at my fingertips, which I think most people would normally expect that wouldn't be the case, but we've obviously done a lot of work in this area over the last while and we're going to be assessing that as well. And again, save for the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, patience. I'll give him a lot more as soon as I make the announcement in a few minutes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct).

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Phone costs to Island taxpayers

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the finance minister: There are nearly 2,000 cell phones that government is paying for each year – 1,952 to be exact.

Question to the finance minister: How much do these 6,900 plus government landlines cost Island taxpayers each year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct).

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we're talking about landlines for government and cell phones for government, that's a pretty broad area. We're talking about all of our departments within government, we're talking about education, we're talking – an awful lot of phones. We're talking about everything that are in the hospitals, everything that's in education, and you look at some of those departments and those phones are needed dearly – so are the cell phones.

We've certainly taken the time to look at that and we are now adjusting what it is that we intend to do and I'll be more than happy to talk more about that in an announcement a little bit later this afternoon.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question to the finance minister: That is a lot of phones. There is a lot of phones out there right across Prince Edward Island – government phones. It is, \$2 million a year, that's what it's costing, \$2 million a year. That'll put a school in Georgetown. That'll put an ambulance in Souris.

Question to the finance minister: Why are we paying for so many unused land lines?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the work that the Member from Souris-Elmira has done in figuring out what the costs are, but you can't just shut down every phone in government and say: That's it. Nobody's talking anymore. We're going to spend \$2 million here, or \$2 million there. We have to be reasonable about that. We have to assess that. We have to make the correct decisions. Part of doing that, and the part of the numbers that we looked at, those are certainly things that we've looked at that have enabled us to reach a balanced budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Cell phone costs to government

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He talks about a fake balanced budget. \$2 million is a lot of money. There's 1,952 unused phones out there – landline phones. With today's technology, emails, BBMs, text messaging –

Question to the finance minister: How much do the 1,952 government cell phones cost government each year?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira wants to know that, just take what he's paying for his cell phone and then he can multiply that by 1,952. It'll probably give him a pretty good idea of where it's at.

Mr. R. Brown: I bet he did it. I bet he did.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is not about the member from Souris-Elmira, District 1. Don't turn that around. This is not about the member – listen –

An Hon. Member: Another bridge. Another bridge.

Mr. LaVie: You were there for a while. You could have done your homework in this and you can't answer the questions. You can't answer the questions. According to the Freedom of Information – that's all you had to do – according to the Freedom of Information request from our office, the bill for government cell phones is over \$100,000 a month.

Question to the finance minister: Do you think spending around \$1.2 million on cell phones and another \$2 million on landlines is making the most of our – best for our taxpayers on Prince Edward Island?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Don't you have a cell?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

An Hon. Member: – Morse code.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've taken the time to look at the – of the hard lines, as we call them, and the cell phone lines, and we're also looking at all other areas of communication.

We're in a time and an era where it's very important for people to be able to be in contact for a variety of different reasons, and certainly as I said before when we look at the people that we provide cell phones to in government, whether it's doctors, whether it's nurses, whether it's – it doesn't matter who it is – within our education system. Some of these things are important and we think that that's money well spent for Islanders to have that connection in all forms of communication –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) cell phones.

Mr. Roach: – and we look forward to continuing with that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, this will be your final question.

Millions spent on cell phones and landlines

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know any time that opposition brings up an issue they're always looking into it. They're always looking into it. You've had 10 years now to look into it –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: You've had 10 years to look into it. You fellows have been there for 10 years now. When opposition brings it up: We're looking into it. We're looking into it.

We know that \$23 million went out the door from this tired Liberal government on its Bell high speed Internet. Now, we find out about another \$2 million on landlines and another million-plus on cell phones.

Question to the finance minister: How many more of these backroom deals will be dumped on taxpayers by this tired Liberal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Good question, that's a good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question posed by the Member from Souris-Elmira and the depth of which he has gone to research this and to look at that, but you know what? I think that I can look at the Legislative schedule for today and figure out where the questions are coming from.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: I'll table the documents.

Mr. Roach: Go ahead, table them.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) came back February 28th, did they not tell you?

Ms. Biggar: It's no secret.

Mr. Myers: They're like a house band; they just walk right in (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: I'll table it for you.

Speaker: Okay –

Mr. Roach: I've got something to table for you here later.

Statements by Ministers

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

T3 Transit Funding

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy recognizes that investments in infrastructure are investments in the economy of Prince Edward Island and the wellbeing of Islanders.

In making those investments, there is perhaps no ingredient more important than the intergovernmental cooperation on infrastructure investments.

When we pool our resources, the federal and provincial governments – combined with municipalities and community partners – can make important investments that enhance our province, keep travelers safe, protect the environment, and deliver reliable supplied of safe drinking water.

Together, we have been able to do great things for the people of Prince Edward Island.

In a few moments, I will be joining federal and municipal partners at the Confederation Centre to announce joint investments in public transit. Public transit is one vital component of transportation infrastructure.

Well-used, well-designed transit can help to ease traffic pressures, reduce parking congestion, and lessen the greenhouse gas emissions caused by daily commuting.

Transit can mean precious mobility for those with physical challenges. It allows people without access to a motor vehicle to travel for education and employment, and it enables our young people to access jobs and services across town.

To support the expansion and improvement of public transit here in the capital region, the Province of Prince Edward Island will partner with the Government of Canada and municipal partners to make substantial upgrades to the T3 Transit system serving Charlottetown, Stratford, and Cornwall.

This financial aid will improve the system with new bus shelters and signage, improved routing, and technology that will allow passengers to plan and track their own bus travel.

This project helps build capacity and mobility in these communities, but the economic and social effect these changes will have promises to benefit our entire province.

I want to thank the federal government for being responsive to Island needs, and for working with the province and our municipalities.

Together, we are encouraging economic growth, sustainable development and accessible transit for all residents of these communities. Investments like this show that while Prince Edward Island may be a small province, working with our partners we can make big things happen.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm glad to hear that the transit system around the core area of Charlottetown and Stratford is being expanded with the T3

program. But, I think the minister needs to look at expanding the accessibility to transit across the whole Island, so that we not only can add this service to other rural communities that need to get to work – and some young families that are hampered by not having the advantage of having two cars, but also I think we need to have the discussion also with the federal government on our infrastructure and our roads.

Over the weekend, I actually met with some road workers and they talked to me about –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: – how the secondary roads in PEI are not standing up to the moving traffic that we're seeing nowadays. I think that not only should we look at – we need to look at a bigger, possibly, packed with an infrastructure summit on not only looking at the transit system around PEI, around the core area of Charlottetown and T3, but we also must look at expanding that across the whole Island and how our infrastructure of today is meeting the needs of the travelling public of tomorrow.
Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I welcome this announcement, minister. We all know that we need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, and given that here on Prince Edward Island over 40% of our emissions are related to transportation; clearly a significant investment in public transportation will be part of the solution to our contribution to reducing greenhouse gases globally.

A hundred and fifty years ago on Prince Edward Island, we had public transportation. We had the tip to tip railway service. These days – we've gone backwards. We have gone so far backwards on this it's not true and I want to echo the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition there, that we need to look at expanding this province-wide.

There was a 2008 (Indistinct) report done, which laid out very clearly stepping stones towards the creation of an Island-wide public transportation system. I hope the minister's department will go back and look at that.

Of course, it's not just public transportation. That's just one part of the puzzle to creating a sustainable transportation system here in Prince Edward Island. We also need to look at the electrification of our system and the infrastructure required to support that, and we need to look at such things as car sharing, government incentives, to allow Islanders to car share, and even such things as land-use planning.

It's difficult to provide a public transportation system on Prince Edward Island because of the distribution of people on the Island caused by the ribbon development that we have been allowing for decades, so that needs to change.

Also, a part of this would be significant rural development so people can find the services that they need in their communities. It's a complicated process, but this is a good start.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Biggar: Here you go.

Mr. R. Brown: Here we go. You'll get your answers now.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) answers.

RFP for new government mobility contract

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to announce that the provincial government will be issuing a request for proposals for a new mobility contract for smartphone and cellphone services. The services will be used by core government, health, Crown Corporations and agencies, along with the Legislative Assembly.

The current contract with Bell Mobility will expire in August. The scope of the request for proposals includes; a standing offer for

devices, options for packages for voice and data plans, along with options for additional communications methods such as video, audio and text. The new contract will be for a period of two years with the option to extend it for two additional one-year terms. Services under the new contract will also be made available to other public bodies, such as municipalities, the education sector and other agencies if they wish to participate.

This request for proposals comes at a time of increasing competition in the mobile wireless service market. It also comes at a time of the emergence of new technologies for the delivery of mobility services. Across society, and within the provincial government, we are seeing a move towards a more mobile workforce. Approximately 35% of our government's frontline employees are mobile, delivering programs and services across the province.

With the ongoing deployment of mobility services, the Treasury Board secretariat has been working with departments and agencies to determine, both current and future mobility needs. At the same time, they have met with mobility service and communication providers to gain a better understanding of the services and technologies that are now available.

We hope to have a new contract in place by the end of August. This new contract is intended to ensure our public servants have the right tools to do their jobs while providing the best value for Island taxpayers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: How many phones?

Speaker: Order, order!

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks for everyone's support on my response.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I worked in government for probably, 12 or so years and I actually worked in IT, and it's funny. Whenever cellphones were going to an RFP, it was never an announcement in the House. Do you know what's not funny? Is the reason it has to come here is the backroom crookedness that has gone on with you fellows and your dealings with Bell –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – your backroom deals with Bell, and your \$23 million throwaway money that you gave Bell. That's why you have to be here today. That's why you're coming here to make an RFP announcement.

Mr. Roach: It has to be made here.

Mr. Myers: No it doesn't need to be made here.

Mr. Roach: Rules (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You could have had an RFP in January. You could have had one in February. You could have had one in March. You could have had one in June. You could have one in July. You could have one in September.

Mr. LaVie: Learn the rules.

Mr. Myers: The reason you're here is you're trying to save face because you have been so crooked over the years with your deals with Bell –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – that it's embarrassing, and you're trying to regain the trust of Islanders by using your leverage to stand here in the House and say: Look at me, we're being open and transparent. When you have never been open. You have never been transparent in the last 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Learn the rules.

An Hon. Member: Drama, drama.

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

Collège de l'Île presence at Holland College campus

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tomorrow, two great Island post-secondary institutions will enter into a partnership like no other in Canada.

In 2015, Collège de l'Île announced it would soon have a presence on the Holland College campus in Charlottetown, opening up partnership opportunities for the two colleges. Through an agreement to be signed tomorrow, students can take advantage of this partnership starting this fall. Students of either college will be able to take some courses offered by either college, in English or French, starting in this coming academic year.

This is a great opportunity, for students attending school in Charlottetown, to access the high-quality courses from both Holland College and Collège de l'Île. Students from both colleges will also enjoy other benefits such as campus access, health insurance, and language-training programs. By offering young Islanders imaginative new programs like this one, students have greater opportunity to pursue an education without having to leave Prince Edward Island.

This partnership will better respond to the interests of French students who wish to continue post-secondary studies in French in Charlottetown. Many successful Island businesses would benefit from having more employees who can speak French. This new partnership opens up both interesting academic opportunities and exciting employment opportunities for current and future students.

Our government is committed to helping Island youth compete in an ever-changing economy and succeed in their chosen path. A well-trained and adaptable workforce is a pillar of growth for our provincial economy.

This unique partnership demonstrates that Prince Edward Island, even for its small size, is undertaking some groundbreaking initiatives that are leading the nation. It shows once again what happens when Islanders work together to make things happen.

Best wishes to Collège de l'Île and Holland College on their new partnership.

Meilleurs vœux pour Collège de l'Île et Holland College sur leur nouveau partenariat.

Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le président.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This announcement and response will be probably a lot quieter than the last one, for sure.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. MacEwen: It is good news to see Holland College and Collège Acadie cooperate in this fashion for two reasons. One, we do have a growing French immersion population so it gives them more options in post-secondary and also the ability, perhaps, to attract other international students as well.

It's great to see this announcement and our best wishes to both post-secondary institutions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. J. Brown: There we go, next leader right there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Our post-secondary institutions, of course, are critical components of our Island economy and offer homegrown students here on Prince Edward Island an opportunity to further their education.

I won't say anything else, other than to welcome this announcement and to congratulate Holland College and the Collège de l'Île on their new partnership.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table answers to written questions 239 to 247 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the 2015-2016 Annual Report for the Department of Communities, Land and Environment 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 Health and Wellness did you have a –

Mr. Henderson: No, just a bill.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table government's tax assessment for Mill River, totaling a total of \$6,811,700 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Stratford-

Kinlock, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the Mill River Becomes Vision document from 2013 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Myers: I have one more.

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

Mr. Myers: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the accompanying financial documents that would go along with the report that were separate and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table all the cell phones owned by government right across PEI and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

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

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Building Codes Act* and I move, seconded by the

Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Building Codes Act*, Bill No. 69, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, do you want to give us a brief explanation about this bill?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The new *Building Codes Act* is intended to replace the existing *Provincial Building Code Act*. The act will allow for adoption of the National Building Code of Canada, which will make Prince Edward Island buildings healthier, safer, and more accessible and more energy efficient.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Maintenance Enforcement Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Maintenance Enforcement Act*, Bill No. 70, read a first time.

Speaker: The hon. Premier, do you want to give us an explanation about this?

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These amendments are part of government's initiatives to better support and protect children whose children have separated or divorced. Proposed amendments to the *Maintenance Enforcement Act* will better assist single-parent families by modernizing

the Maintenance Enforcement Program to bring it in line with other provinces.

The Maintenance Enforcement Program administers and enforces child and spousal support obligations under the terms of a court order or separation agreement.

These amendments will increase the director's ability to enforce support orders against payors who are able, and yet unwilling, to pay their support.

These amendments will also provide additional clarity to parents and/or their lawyers regarding what must be included in a support order for it to be enforceable by the Maintenance Enforcement Program. This will prevent the need to redraft support orders and decrease the legal costs to parents and costs to the justice system.

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act*, Bill No. 71, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Health and Wellness would you give us an explanation about what this bill is about?

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we are putting forward a number of amendments to this act, which are administrative in nature. They include amendments to a few definitions; updates and expansion to the duty to report issues, as well as disciplinary decisions and the expansion of regulation-

making powers related to accessing the competency of members.

The College of Pharmacists is currently the only body to which this act applies and they have been informed and are in agreement with the proposed amendments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled the *Registered Health Professions Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Registered Health Professions Act*, Bill No. 72, read a first time.

Speaker: An explanation hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, regulations helps to ensure the safety of all Islanders across the spectrum of health care services that are provided in our province.

On Prince Edward Island most regulated health professions are governed by the profession-specific acts and regulations or the *Regulated Health Professions Act*. However, there are several health professions on PEI, which do not have sufficient human or financial resources to carry out their regulatory function required for self-regulation.

This act will provide for the regulation of health professions that are too small to self-regulate. We have talked with key stakeholders through our consultation process and are confident that this act will be beneficial to various health professions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: 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 Economic Development and Tourism, 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 consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Hon. members, we are on page 40, and the General Administration Corporation Management has been read and we were under discussion.

Permission to bring a stranger on to the floor before we start?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: We'll give her a few minutes to set up before we proceed.

Good afternoon. Can you introduce yourself for the record and your title?

Shannon Burke Director: It's Shannon Burke, Director of Finance for Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Chair: Welcome, Shannon.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

You mentioned in Question Period today that you had 600,000 for golf carts in a tender. When I look in your tender site, I can't see where that tender ever was. Can you explain how that happened?

Mr. MacDonald: Sorry, I didn't hear. Can you repeat that, sorry.

Mr. Myers: The 600,000 worth of golf carts you talked about in Question Period – I can't find a tender for them on the tender site. Can you explain how you purchased them?

Mr. MacDonald: It comes into our Capital Budget – is that what you're –

Mr. Myers: No. You need to have a tender.

Mr. MacDonald: Didn't even go out yet to the tender, did it?

An Hon. Member: – last fall.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah. It was last fall that it went into Capital Budget.

Mr. Myers: What I'm saying is: I can't find the tender where you actually tendered it in a fair and open process.

Mr. MacDonald: I'll have to bring that back to you.

Mr. Myers: Okay. Thanks.

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

Mr. Myers: Can you explain further to us the contents of the Mill River deal with regards to the 500,000 you lent them?

Mr. MacDonald: We didn't lend them 500,000.

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

Mr. Myers: Why didn't you tell me that today in Question Period?

Mr. MacDonald: Because you were throwing all kinds of numbers, so –

Chair: Hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, do you have another question?

Mr. MacDonald: You didn't ask me if they did, you just said –

Mr. Myers: I asked you five times if they did.

Question – yeah, I'll have another quick question.

Mr. MacDonald: You said 'why'.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters has the floor.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Can you give us all the documents then? Or will I have to take my own to the House?

An Hon. Member: That's the question you wanted to ask earlier.

Mr. MacDonald: We'll have to review it with Legal Counsel as far as – because it's a third part entity, so I mean, we'll have to – if we can divulge them, we will. It's the same as any other contract that we've done so far.

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

Mr. Myers: Question then, yes.

Why in the Mill River deal are they only required to put 1 million upgrades in, but you're giving them 8 million?

Mr. MacDonald: Why are they only what?

Mr. Myers: Required to put in a million worth of upgrades in?

Mr. MacDonald: Actually, I think it's 1.5 million they're putting in. It's 1.6 that we're working with them on over 12 years. If you take the 850,000 that we're losing, and the property being in the state that it was in, you can't continue to go on. So, there was really no other options to – either close the property, allow it to go where, likely, we don't want it to go in West Prince, or to make a deal with someone. I can tell you and be sure that there's going to be a lot more investment from that owner/operator than 1.5 million. I can tell you that.

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

Mr. Myers: Do you have an exit strategy for 12 years time when government money stops getting pumped into it?

Mr. MacDonald: We'll walk away from it and he'll own it.

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

Mr. Myers: But by using your own argument, you can't not have a hotel in West Prince and that it's important and it's vital to the West Prince area. If you walk away from it and they decide to cease operation, where does that put West Prince and the hotel in the area that you said was so important?

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I think that with the upgrades and the contributions that Mr. McDougall is going to make – I can't speak for 12 years time, but I can speak for over a hundred jobs – 1.7 million in wages right now that if we take out of that community, or your community, or my community, it's going to have a big impact.

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

Mr. Myers: Yes, and they were there to begin with, so –

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, but the infrastructure was in dire need of investment so, it's either go back to the taxpayers and invest, or bring in a private entrepreneur that's willing to invest and have a sunset clause for the taxpayers of PEI to get out of that deal.

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

Mr. Myers: So, what is his total investment on the property?

Mr. MacDonald: Well, I can – do you know what the exact amount is?

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct).

Mr. MacDonald: I'll try to find out, but he is a private businessman so I know the 1.5

right there on the table, but there is a lot more investment than that – I can tell you.

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

Mr. Myers: What else have you offered him? You've talked about – you had a 1.5 million investment. What other money or services are you providing to him?

Mr. MacDonald: Off the top of your head, do you know?

I don't think there's anything beyond what has been announced previously – that I'm aware of, anyway.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

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

Mr. Myers: Will he pay government regular tax rate, like a regular business tax rate for the whole property?

Mr. MacDonald: As far as I know.

Mr. Myers: As far as you know?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. You might have to ask the hon. finance minister as far as taxes.

Mr. Myers: I guess it falls under you – so that's why I'm trying to get into this.

Chair: Hon. member from Georgetown-St. Peters, you know I'm kind of a stickler for keeping the discussion in amongst what we're discussing. That's in the tourism budget. Can we save some more of these questions particularly for the tourism budget?

Mr. Myers: You never gave me a chance to ask questions off the top last time.

Chair: Sorry?

Mr. Myers: You let everybody else ask questions off the top last time and you skipped me.

Chair: Yeah sure. I'm just trying to keep it organized so when we go to find – in the Hansard – when we're trying to find answers, we'll be able to go direct to that.

I'm not limiting your questions, I'm just saying: Can we maybe keep the questions to this section and then we'll come back. You can ask any questions you want, but maybe just in the other section.

Mr. Myers: Okay, question?

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

Mr. Myers: How did you come to have Billy Dow represent government on the sale of Mill River?

Mr. MacDonald: If I – correctly, the last signature on the last letter of discussion was signed by Barb Stevenson.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

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

Mr. Myers: Was Melissa MacEachern involved in this deal?

Mr. MacDonald: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

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

Mr. Myers: Question, thank you.

You talked about the sunset clause and you talked about the value of the property itself. I guess what I'm trying to wrap my head around is, where we actually are on this deal as a province. What I'm trying to figure out is: Besides the keeping it open, which I supported. Either way, I supported it when you owned it. I don't think I was ever involved in any questions about losses there. Can you tell us: Are you sending government employees up to help open the golf course?

Mr. MacDonald: Not that I'm aware of.

Chair: Are we going to continue this line of questioning when it's in tourism and not in this section?

Mr. Myers: I'm just asking a question.

Chair: I know, but I respectfully asked you if you could save the questions related to what you're asking for the tourism section so we can keep it organized when we go to find answers.

Mr. Myers: Right.

Chair: I don't mind coming back to you for those questions –

Mr. Myers: I only have a couple left.

Chair: Yeah, but they're not in that section, so I'm going to move onto somebody else, give you some time to formulate your questions –

Mr. Myers: I'm just going to come back to these questions.

Chair: – pertaining to this section.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I've got a couple questions on Mill River as well, but it's more on the innovation aspect of it.

So, minister –

Chair: Does it relate to this section, hon. member?

Mr. MacKay: Well, I think it does. You know, it's –

Chair: Well, let's ask the question and then we'll see if it does and if not, I would respectfully ask you to hold it for that section.

Mr. MacKay: Okay. I'm curious on the property taxes. Was there any leeway with Mill River getting property taxes waived?

Mr. MacDonald: It's got nothing to do with my department. You'll have to ask the finance minister.

Chair: Thank you. Related to this section? Minister's operating office, deputy minister's office –

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

This is where I'm struggling, because I guess that the finance comes out of innovation for tourism, right? So we can certainly ask some of these questions – I'll write them down when we go through tourism, but at any time just say and I'll go back to them.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. MacKay: Minister, you've made a couple of comments that there was no other options or you were going to have close it. I don't think anybody has ever talked about closing Mill River. That hasn't even been discussed. The concern is more how it was presented and nobody had the chance to do anything, and I'm just wondering why with something with this much value how come it was never tendered out.

Chair: And you're going to save that question for tourism, right – the tourism section?

Mr. MacKay: (Indistinct) so does tourism lend money out for something like this, or is this through innovation?

An Hon. Member: That's a (Indistinct) question.

Mr. MacDonald: (Indistinct) two departments. This is all –

Chair: You tell.

Mr. MacDonald: This – you're talking about IIDI, right? The only departments that we're dealing with on here are department of tourism and Innovation PEI, which is basically your grant money.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, I'll make this easy Chair, if I can.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Has Innovation had any dealings with this Mill River deal at all?

Mr. MacDonald: On – in any capital grant that it would, if there was a capital grant given.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: So I'll save some of my questions once we hit the tourism budget.

Last week, I asked if there was any lawsuits through Innovation. Right now, I was wondering if you brought them back.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, I have a handout here.

Mr. MacKay: One more question –

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Is there any loans in default right now?

Mr. MacDonald: Loans in default?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: Through all the lending portfolio?

Mr. MacKay: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: That's not – we wouldn't have that information here because it's IIDI. IPEI doesn't loan money.

Mr. MacKay: Okay. Thank you, Chair, I'm good for now.

Chair: I have, next on the list, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: You're welcome. Related to this section, right?

Mr. Aylward: It certainly is, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking at the handout that was provided, and I just want to make sure that I'm not missing any other handouts.

So the handout that was provided pertains strictly to page 40, am I correct –

Department of Economic Development and Tourism?

Unidentified Voice: Correct.

Mr. Aylward: The handouts for the next sections, are we going to receive those soon, or?

Thank you, Chair. I'd just like to get those handouts as quick as I could so I could start going through them.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald did you have a question?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, I do, actually –

Chair: Related to this section?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: So, we just received a list of lawsuits that were levied and a list of defendant and of plaintiff. I was wondering if you could give us an idea for each one what the lawsuit was sort of about.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, it's Legal Counsel. You can't provide any information if we put any – because they're in court, or before the courts, so legally we'd be putting ourselves into –

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to clarify: These are all active lawsuits, right now, before the courts?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Are you not able to provide information about the amounts being asked for, even?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't even think some of them are settled yet as far as the amounts.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, related to this section?

Mr. Myers: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Myers: The CMT lawsuit that's on there – is that the 50 million one, or is that a separate lawsuit?

Mr. MacDonald: I assume so, but I don't have the exact amount.

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

Mr. Myers: Where would we find the money that you guys set aside for costs on that one?

Mr. MacDonald: Where would we find money that we've set aside for costs on that? Did we set aside money somewhere? Is that what you're insinuating, or?

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

Mr. Myers: Well, generally you have a contingency fund, in this case the 50 million lawsuit.

Mr. MacDonald: Well –

Mr. Myers: Not only that, during the original lawsuit, you guys said if they were going to file again, that they'd have to put up a million dollars because that's what it costs, and the court agreed that a million dollars is what it would cost. So if it's going to cost a million dollars in legal fees by government where would we find that 1 million?

An Hon. Member: Special warrant.

Mr. MacDonald: We don't accrue any funding in that regard towards that, the 50 million against the taxpayers. Wouldn't that be coming out of justice?

Shannon Burke Director: No, there would be a letter that would (Indistinct) –

Yeah, we – at the end of the year when we do an audit, we send out a letter to lawyers

about active lawsuits. They provide it to the auditors, and if there's a recommendation or if they can settle on a number, that they have some sort of assurance that will come to fruition, then it would be disclosed in the financial statements, likely in the notes.

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

Mr. Myers: So, I guess back to – it was more the second part of my question, but I'll make it the primary part to simplify things.

The government said it would cost them 1 million to defend the lawsuit, so before – in the original time that the first lawsuit was thrown out, the judge said if you were going to come back again you'd have to post 1 million, which they did, to cover your legal fees in the event that you guys won the lawsuit.

But if it was in fact going to cost you a million dollars to defend it – which you intend to, is my understanding, defend it – wouldn't you have to show the 1 million? Like your – this all happened prior to the budgeting period.

Mr. MacDonald: I don't have an answer for you, so I don't quite understand what you're coming from.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair. I'll say it again, then.

When the original CMT lawsuit was thrown out, the judge said if you were to re-file you would have to put up a million dollars to pay for the cost that government says they would incur defending the lawsuit in the event that the lawsuit wasn't successful and CMT had to pay for your legal fees.

So, what you guys had said was that your legal fees would be a million dollars.

Knowing that this has been filed – you were given notice in the middle of the winter, prior to the Budget coming in, so it's not in the Budget year, it's well before the Budget year – and that you intend on actually defending it, it would mean that you are intending on spending a million dollars to defend yourself.

If that's the case, that 1 million would have to be somewhere. So, the question is: Where is the 1 million?

Mr. MacDonald: The 1 million is put up by the company, that's suing government. They put the money up.

Mr. Myers: Only in the event that the judge rules they have to pay your legal fees. The judge didn't say they have to pay your legal fees. The judge said: We have to have it in a bond in case they decide that you have to.

Mr. MacDonald: How would you budget for that?

Mr. Myers: You guys were the ones that come up with the money.

Mr. MacDonald: No, we don't come up with the 1 million –

Mr. Myers: You guys were the ones that told –

Mr. MacDonald: – they put up the (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – that your lawyer told the judge that it would cost 1 million to defend it. So they got that number from somewhere.

Shannon Burke Director: We wouldn't be able to accrue that in our financial statements.

Mr. Myers: Quick question –

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

Mr. Myers: You have six law suits against you now, but you don't have budgeted any money for lawyers?

An Hon. Member: Special warrants.

Shannon Burke Director: We have a budget for lawyers, or for –

Mr. MacDonald: Professional fees.

Shannon Burke Director: – professional fees within the department that we'll spend during the year.

If we came to the point where we did have a law suit that did cost 1 million, we would have legal fees that would come to us. We would have an invoice that would come to us and we wouldn't have to accrue that at that time.

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

Mr. Myers: How much money do you have set aside for legal fees right now?

Shannon Burke Director: Thirty-six thousand in this section, which is the minister's and deputy minister's offices.

Mr. MacDonald: In this section, it's 36,000, which is the minister and deputy minister's office.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: There would be money in IID. Money in Finance PEI, and likely money in Innovation PEI under professional fees, and risk management. Risk management manages all the law suits.

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

Shannon Burke Director: Which is Department of Finance.

Mr. Myers: This is where we're coming to then. You guys don't have the money, but risk management does. Is that the case?

Mr. MacDonald: They manage it, but I don't know –

Shannon Burke Director: We don't have anything for you right now for this.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Here's the problem with it, I guess. When it comes right down to it is, the Minister of Finance told the House that the Budget was balanced, but if you know for sure you're getting sued for 50 million, which you are, and you know for sure that you're defend it, which you're telling everyone you are. And you know for sure that it's going to cost 1

million because you told the court that's what it would cost. Then, at the very least, you should have 1 million set aside for this one lawsuit. If you don't it means the Budget isn't balanced.
Can you confirm that the Budget is balanced or not?

Mr. MacDonald: You'll have to ask the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Chair: Total Department of Economic Development and Tourism: 1,047, 800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Hon. members we're now on the top of page 42, Innovation PEI.

Corporate Management

Corporate Management

"Appropriations provided for administration of the Corporation." Administration: 240,500; Equipment: 6,000; Materials, Supplies and Services: 34,000; Professional Services: 50,000; Salaries: 901,200; Travel and Training: 46,000.

Total Corporation Management: 1,277,700.

Total Corporation Management: 1,277,700.

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

Mr. Trivers: The hon. minister of education.

Chair: Okay, I've got you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I was wondering if you have a breakdown of what the professional services would be budgeted for.

Chair: Hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, did you have a question?

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to get the handout.

Chair: Okay, good, thank you.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I guess my first question would be, the handout, tab 2: Innovation PEI Corporate Management Chief Executive Officer. The salary range is blank there. Is that position currently unoccupied?

Mr. MacDonald: Go ahead.

Mr. Aylward: Or what does –

Shannon Burke Director: Sorry, that. I did notice that before I came today that it was a blank.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah.

Shannon Burke Director: It should be 122, 612.

Mr. Aylward: Sorry?

Mr. MacDonald: 122,612.

Mr. Aylward: 122,612.

Mr. MacDonald: 160,873.

Mr. Aylward: 160,873.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

I wonder, can you advise who the individual is that currently is the CEO of Innovation PEI?

Mr. MacDonald: David Keedwell.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Chair: Hon. members, you're going to keep your questions focused to this one section. I really appreciate that.
Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm curious on what the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters said. I look at professional fees, here you have got 50,000 allotted for. I don't understand. If I go back to this handout that talked about the six outstanding law suits.

Why you wouldn't put in there how much money you actually could spend on lawyers' fees because 50,000 wouldn't cover it. Why would you not budget in there what possibly you could spend in 2017-2018?

Mr. MacDonald: All the law suits are managed through risk management, which is Finance PEI, or the Department of Finance, sorry.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Even though they have to do specifically with your department?

Mr. MacDonald: They are the ones that actually provided the list of the law suits.

Leader of the Opposition: Would –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Would your department not have to consult or meet with them and brief them on what files that possibly could be going before the courts?

Shannon Burke Director: We would meet with them in terms of details on the files, but they manage the files on behalf of government.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: If there are six files on the docket and you're staff have to advise the legal teams or firms on these firms, I could see theoretically, very quickly, you could go over 50,000.

Mr. MacDonald: We'll take the information back, but assumingly that that would be, there would be funds set aside in the risk management for law suits.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't see where it's a true picture then, of the budget for your department then, minister.

I'm just trying to – if you can follow me on this. If your team has to advise legal people about six law suits then we have your team meeting with that legal and then we'd also have a team from the Minister of Finance's also meeting with the same legal team. In actual fact you would have – would that not be almost like double-dipping?

Mr. MacDonald: We'll take the information back to you what we have.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

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

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

I was pleased to see the alignment of the budget on culture, particularly around the grants. Is this the section that that would fall under because of the – the cultural strategy has been launched, and there is a lot of enthusiasm right now in the cultural community to look at this sector and to take advantage of the culture economy and to really allow the sector to really flourish.

Is this the area that that would fall under?

Mr. MacDonald: No, it's coming up.

Mr. Currie: Okay. I'll save my question.

Chair: Can you hold your question for the section?

Mr. Currie: Yeah.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

Can you tell me, what is corporate management? In this section that we're looking at, what do they do?

Shannon Burke Director: It's the CEO's office and it would administration for the

Innovation PEI, the whole Crown corp. They manage all the professional fees, the equipment and materials, supplies and services.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Thanks, Chair.

Those folks in the corporate management office would then direct the business development and the BIO | FOOD | TECH and the other kind of categories we see underneath that?

Shannon Burke Director: Some of them would, the CEO certainly. We do have some salaries in some of the other sections that work on specific areas of business development.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Inside of some of the those headings that are down further, they could have direct supervisors in there, but ultimately, I think, everybody comes up to that corporate management line?

Is that correct?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, basically, up through the CEO.

Mr. Palmer: Okay, thanks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, did you have a question?

Mr. Myers: Sorry. Yes, I did.

We're into the innovation side.

Chair: We're talking about corporate management.

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

The trip that you just took to China. Who went on that trip? Specifically, not companies, the people.

Mr. MacDonald: From my department –

Mr. Myers: The companies.

Mr. MacDonald: Which companies?

Mr. Myers: No, not which companies, which people in the companies.

Mr. MacDonald: I can bring a full list back to you.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thank you.

That's all I had, yeah.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I would like to ask a question about the administration line here in the corporation management. If you look at administration lines in other departments, Communities, Land and Environment, for example, is 19,000. Tourism in your own department is, 17,000. Even education, a much bigger department, the administration cost is half that.

I'm just wondering why the administration is so high.

Mr. MacDonald: There is 87,000 of that paid to Finance PEI. It's rent for the building.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: For the building, yeah.

That's all, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I was looking at section 1 of the handout, corporate management professional services. I was wondering who represents the numbered company 6462910 Canada Inc. that was paid 19,000 for a consulting fee and what those fees were actually for?

Mr. MacDonald: Go ahead.

Shannon Burke Director: We actually had a transition project this year. Our payroll for all of our Crown corporations used to be handled by Ceridian and we've moved over to the government PeopleSoft system. Those fees are related to that transition.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Who is 6462910 Canada Inc.

Shannon Burke Director: I believe it was formally DeltaWare, I believe –

Mr. Trivers: It was formally DeltaWare?

Shannon Burke Director: Formally DeltaWare, I think, but I can get back to you on that.

Mr. Trivers: That's good.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just going through your handout, here, and I see Mill River experience, development of Rodd Resort. There is 500,000 spent there.

Could you explain what that 500,000 is?

Mr. MacDonald: Those are recreational programs.

Shannon Burke Director: He skipped ahead.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, which one are you on again?

Mr. MacEwen: Can I have 500,000 to have recreational programs in Morrell?

Mr. Myers: In your handout, handout number 10 –

Ms. Compton: Section 10.

Mr. Myers: – development fund.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, okay.

It's part of the capital grant.

Mr. Myers: You did get the 500,000?

Shannon Burke Director: That's just part of the amount that was already announced that was provided to them for capital assistance.

Chair: Pertaining to this section?

Mr. Myers: Absolutely.

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

Mr. Myers: It's part of the handouts that you just gave us from corporate development –

Chair: Thanks, just checking.

Mr. Myers: You told us that you didn't give them 500,000. I asked you: Did you give them 500,000? You said: They didn't give them 500,000. And now you're saying you gave them 500,000.

Mr. MacDonald: Do you want to explain it?

In reference to your question was: Did you loan them 500,000 –

Ms. Compton: No, they gave it to them.

Mr. Myers: So you gave it to them.

Mr. MacDonald: We gave them 500,000 for capital.

Mr. Trivers: Oh.

Mr. Myers: That's not better.

Ms. Compton: That's not better.

Mr. Myers: I want the record to show I don't think that's better.

Mr. MacDonald: It's two separate – you may as well (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: Different (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You wouldn't know that 500,000. It goes to a different school.

Shannon Burke Director: I believe the question on the floor when I was listening earlier was: Did you loan them 500,000 for the purchase of the property? The answer to that was no, but we did announce that we were going to provide, I believe, it was 6 million for capital improvements to the property, which have already started as far as I'm aware –

Mr. MacDonald: The first 500 has been –

Shannon Burke Director: This is the first 500,000 and we'll be providing that amount of money. We'll be providing the 6 million over time. The first amount went out.

Mr. MacDonald: That's part of the first part.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Question again.

Earlier I didn't say 'loaned.' I actually said 'gave.' I did say 'give' when I was on Question Period earlier. The minister didn't deny it. Then, we got him to the floor here, the very first thing he did was deny it. Now, we find out we were right all along; you gave them 500,000.

Whatever fancy footwork you want to take, I find it very hard to swallow, as I'm sure Islanders do, who view this as a sweetheart deal.

What we need is a much better breakdown for what's going on here because, quite frankly, I think you gave them the 500,000 to buy his share.

What I was told, and I'm told by somebody in your department, was that all he had to come up with was his legal fees. Is that the case?

Mr. MacDonald: He come up with his what?

Mr. Myers: His own legal fees, 10,000.

Mr. MacDonald: Not that we're aware of.

That first 500,000 has been dispersed and the remaining of that is part of that 6 million that will be ongoing.

Chair: Do you have another question, hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters?

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I – what's that?

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) check.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, I guess. Yeah, can you provide to the House the invoice that was sent in for this?

Mr. MacDonald: That shouldn't be an issue, but –

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: We'll look into the agreement and see what we can provide, but –

Ms. Compton: Pig in a poke. A pig in a poke that's what they got.

Mr. Myers: I'm actually flabbergasted. I'm quite – I can't believe that you would treat me the way you treated me through Question Period and then when I asked you point blank when you hit the floor here and you told me that you didn't give them 500,000. Then, you handed me the book and it says that you did.

Mr. MacDonald: The 500,000 is the first disbursement of the 6 million.

Mr. Myers: I asked you: Did you give them 500,000?

Mr. MacDonald: You asked me – you said – you were making accusations saying that we were giving him, loaning him 500,000 of our money, of taxpayers' money –

Mr. Myers: You gave it to him. You said.

Mr. MacDonald: It's part of the full package, which you fully understood.

Mr. Myers: I don't understand, yet.

You know what? All this talk isn't making it any less confusing. I think that we need to see all the documents. I think, like immediately, need to see all these documents. I'm quite concerned that you're in a deal that you gave a golf course away and didn't require the purchaser to put any money into.

Mr. MacDonald: We'll release whatever we can release. If it's a contract to third-party that we can't, we can't.

Mr. Myers: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Total Corporation Management: 1,277,700.

Shall the section carry?

Carried.

Mr. MacKay: Question.

Chair: Do you have a question in that section?

Mr. MacKay: I (Indistinct)

Chair: Or the next section?

Mr. MacKay: It's a general question. I don't know where to find it.

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

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering where I could find Slemon Park? What section?

Mr. MacDonald: That's through IIDI.

Chair: Can you hold your question until we get there?

Mr. MacKay: I'll (Indistinct) for a (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay. You don't go to IIDI, okay.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: I'm trying to get my head around this IIDI. So, you say it's through IIDI. Whose department is IIDI?

Mr. MacDonald: It's ours.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: So why is it when I'm asking questions you're referring everything to IIDI and you're still the minister of that department?

Mr. MacDonald: There are two sections in here: Department of Tourism and Innovation

Prince Edward Island. IIDI and Finance PEI are separated.

Mr. MacKay: I'm good for a couple of (Indistinct).

Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Business Development

Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors

“Appropriations provided for leading the attraction of new businesses and business partners to the Province which complement the provincial economy. In particular, firms are targeted in the aerospace, advanced marine technologies, information technology, bioscience and select manufacturing sectors.” Salaries: 1,314,100; Travel and Training: 107,500. Total Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors: 1,421,600.

Shall it carry?

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock and then the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

I just have a couple of questions, again, on Tab 10. So, Innovation PEI Small Business Approvals, April 1st, 2016 – March 31st, 2017. Are these actually loans, or are the grants? How does this money transfer work?

Mr. MacDonald: They're actually grants.

Mr. Aylward: They're grants?

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

The Subtotal Development Fund is 4,822,589, but then it says: less total reversals for 1.4 million. Can you explain to me what the total reversals would be?

Chair: The minister's advising me that's in a different section. Could you let the hon. member know which section that's in so he can hold the question?

Mr. Aylward: Chair, it's – we're currently on Innovation PEI, are we not?

Chair: Yes. We're in Business Attraction section.

Mr. Aylward: So, do all of these small business approvals – all of these grants –

Shannon Burke Director: They're all under programs.

Chair: (Indistinct) get to that section?

Mr. Aylward: Great. I can hang on until then.

Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: I have a question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. Thank you, Chair.

I was wondering – in this section, Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors, do you have any mandate to attract micro business? That is one and two person companies that want to relocate the entire company to PEI, as opposed to just having a branch here?

Mr. MacDonald: Micro – say that again, sorry? So I understand.

Mr. Trivers: Micro business. So it could be –

Mr. MacDonald: Two people.

Mr. Trivers: It could be partnerships or sole proprietorships. Where one or two people work, typically out of their home, and, of course, would relocate permanently to Prince Edward Island. Often, people with those sorts of businesses want to live in rural areas of PEI. Do you target them at all in this department, or are these just for corporations?

Mr. MacDonald: No. We target everyone. There's a good example of two Indian gentlemen, actually, working out of the Holman Building in Summerside. (Indistinct) – is that the name? I forget the

exact name. It's just a two person and they actually – one lives in, I believe, close to Kinkora and the other one – I'm going to say Middleton or somewhere in that vicinity. So, yes we do.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm curious. What sort of actions do people take in this Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors to do that?

Mr. MacDonald: You mean the prospectors?

Mr. Trivers: I guess, yes. There's no grants in this section. There are salaries and there's travel and training. So, I'm just curious as to your approach to business attractions –

Mr. MacDonald: They have access to anything that we have available once they're here. If that's what you're –

Mr. Trivers: I'm just trying to figure out how this section works. What are your strategies to attract business in emerging sectors because here, there's no grants in this section. Are they trying to access grants over in the Business Development and Innovation section?

Mr. MacDonald: Quite honestly, yes. That would be part of their sell.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, so these are –

Mr. MacDonald: These are the guys that go out and actually try to bring business to Prince Edward Island.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Just to clarify. These are specialists that go out and try and recruit people to come and live and work on PEI?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Total Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors: 1,421,600.

Shall it carry?

On that section? Sorry hon. member.

Summerside-Wilmot, you're right there on the list.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

Can you let us know what the sales targets are for the people inside of that department – that Business Attraction and Emerging Sectors?

Mr. MacDonald: You mean a numerical?

Mr. Palmer: Yeah. Is it jobs or is it – how do they get measured?

Mr. MacDonald: Not necessarily. In reference to the member from Rustico-Emerald's, business attraction is business attraction and it can be one person, which could lead to larger employments, or it could be a company with a hundred as you've see in Summerside, and things like that. Like New Leaf Essentials East in Slemon Park at the Humpty Dumpty, I think they're going to be up to 15 employees. When they came here it was two.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: Is there targets for each one of the individual investment officers or business development officer, sector specialist, of trying to attract a certain number of companies a year? Or is it certain headcount or is it certain revenues per year? What is it that they're measured on that you can look at the end of the year to say: Yeah. They did a good job.

Mr. MacDonald: Basically, you wanted to have an analytic, but some industries and sectors – like the aerospace industry is a much more tougher sell than maybe an IT industry. Obvious reasons – because of cost.

Mr. Palmer: Sure.

Mr. MacDonald: So your IT sector may be able to bring more businesses quickly as opposed to aerospace or even a bioscience. There's a difference there and they're monitored all the time to see successes, and so far, we've been pretty fortunate with the team that's there.

Chair: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Mr. Palmer: So there is a number that you measure against at the end of the year to look at it to say: Yes, you did it. That's good. You get to keep working here. How do you determine those?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't think you can just put a number on it and say: You're hired, or you're fired.

Mr. Palmer: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: I think there's a bigger picture and you have to look at what's in the pipeline. Some of these transactions may take three years.

Mr. Palmer: Right.

Mr. MacDonald: So, to do this on an annual basis – it has to be reviewed and monitored.

Mr. Palmer: Right.

Is that what the people in the corporate management group do, would review some of that?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Mr. Palmer: Of the people in there? Okay.

All right. Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't know actually, Chair, where this falls in – in this section or the next one or Global Trade Services, but I'm wondering: Do we have anybody in the government that takes everything in the manufacturing sector in PEI, whether it be from Allen's, or Dunk River, or Trout River and then they go out into the world market and try to find places where these local companies can sell to, but might not have the resources to actually go out and do that? So yeah, if you can follow me on that.

Mr. MacDonald: I think there's a continuance of the sales force to go out and to seek new markets for products that we've developed. I think if that's ongoing, in

particular there's individuals there that – some specialize in maybe aerospace, IT or manufacturing. But, usually the companies will come forth and say: I see some opportunities in – whether it be China, or whether it be India or someplace like that and then we'll give a push towards that area if that's the case.

Or, we may come across – because some of these – if you look at marine technology and aerospace, they're very much combined now, to some extent, in what they do. If you take Nautican and Babcock Canada now are talking and speaking closely with MacDougall Steel in Borden to look at different avenues where they may have potential in the marine business, as opposed to just building bridges or infrastructure, like grocery stores or churches – what they do now. So there's a real – and we're small. We're able to do that.

As far as just sending someone out worldwide to seek out new markets – it's tough. That's why we do these expeditions to China and places like that. We come back with saying: Here's potential here, here's potential here. Let's put somebody on it and see if can exploit the market.

Chair: Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I'm almost wondering if we also could not set us up as leaders in the farm manufacturing sector. As far as the equipment that we use – where we're small – then we can put money in innovation, maybe with the engineering at UPEI and we could be leaders in farm machinery for the world. So, I'm sort of wondering if we ever thought of, they may like that idea.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, there was. In fact, the minister responsible for agriculture was in the Caribbean not too long ago and was speaking with dairy farmers over in the Caribbean on how we can take some of our products, I guess or something to that effect, to the Caribbean in that regard so (Indistinct) start that process.

Leader of the Opposition: Like –

Mr. MacDonald: They were actually here visiting farms as well.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: One area I see was, of course, I was on vacation there a month ago down in Mexico and I was watching a Mickey Mouse wind rower going up and down the beach or resort collecting the moss and I thought: I wonder if that's something that Alan or Linkletter has ever thought about approaching; using our farm machinery, maybe, for different sectors like that.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, like I said, Allan equipment was on the mission to China and they were looking specifically for something and I can't remember if they had success or not. Do you remember?

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) had some good discussions, but I don't think (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, that's exactly what they're doing, too.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: The staff that we have in this area, do they have targets or goals or performance objectives as to what to bring back to the province or for business?

Mr. MacDonald: Many of them are – similar to Chris's response – many of them are specialized in a certain area, whether it be Steve Thain and Cody Clinton in IT – that's kind of their specific areas and they'll go where there's opportunities. Brad Mix may be more into aerospace and he'll go where there are opportunities in aerospace and they will lead missions and things like that, and they'll bring back companies.

Last week we had a company here from China in regards to our trip and next week we'll have another individual from – and that was aerospace, but next is in a week or two weeks, that there's another one coming back for bioscience from China.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Culture Development and Growth Fund

“Appropriations provided for the Culture Development and Growth Fund.” Grants: 653,900.

Total Culture Development and Growth Fund: 653,900.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I see that this department has been moved from Education, Early Learning and Culture and I'm just wondering why.

Mr. MacDonald: Part of it – the department is moving it – the funding part, the grant part has been moved into Innovation PEI and EDT, tourism. Reference to that is we feel that we have business development people right across PEI within that department already and we were approached several times on – because of the close relationship with tourism. Tourism is culture and culture is tourism and we felt that we could service, maybe, those grant sides better than how they were. No offence to any other department, but it was just something that we felt that it was better connected.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I see that most of the culture department is still within early learning and education, over 80% of it. I'm just wondering why, in particular, this part of culture was moved there.

Mr. MacDonald: If you look at some of the entities that we fund are through grants through Tourism PEI, they're basically cultural product. If you take something like Georgetown – I mentioned earlier today – and Cloggeroo, or if we do something with Canada's Food Island, which we've been doing a lot, or if we do something relevant to music, Music PEI with Rob Oakie.

There are two funnels that were there and we feel that if we can build and leverage from that same funnel, we may be able to even do more for culture.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Do I take it from that that culture is being looked at primarily as an economic driver than the value for art sake?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't think so. I think we're looking at it as product development and continued support of the culture. I think people – that's part of the tourism. I mean any time I speak, we talk about our people and people are the culture and culture is, I think, part of tourism.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Are we still going to have an arms-length council or a board that decides the artistic merit or whatever program – whatever person or group you're talking about in order to determine who gets the money?

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, there's a lady by the name of Michelle MacCallum that will be working out of our office and from what I know and know of her, she is very good at – she has been around awhile with culture and she will be responsible those.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But, will there be an arms-length board of directors or a council or somebody who will decide on where the grant money goes?

Mr. MacDonald: Since this transaction just happened in the last three weeks to a month, I'll – Doug, do you (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Currie: A good questions and this is a change. But really when you look at this discussion, it's really about the culture economy and which this \$600,000 plus does transfer over – which I think is a nice fit. The cultural institutions and the culture and heritage board is still with education.

To your point, and I believe it's your reference, regarding the adjudication of the grants – with the changes that were made in the arts council – Michelle MacCallum, which was an arms-length, created a board or a committee that adjudicated the recent round of grants and did a good job, and the

feedback that we've gotten from the individuals who received the grants was that they were very pleased. They felt it was a much more accessible, informed and transparent process with less bureaucracy, I guess, in respect to the delivering of that.

I think that the cultural strategy, the conversations have started and I think that this is going to be a nice fit in respect to what we hear from the cultural strategy, the final product after the conversations because the arts community, the Becca Viaus of the world, which is our – are really trying to create and drive an entrepreneurial spirit in the whole cultural sector. I think this is a good fit, but on the cultural institution side there is still in the responsibility of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I have a final question on this. Are there any plans coming for the rest of the culture department, and heritage, to – of education and early learning?

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

Mr. Currie: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you.

Who did you consult with when you made this switch from education over in this part?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, do you have an intervention?

Mr. Currie: This is just a – this is about how we can continue to support the cultural community. If you're talking to artists and people that are making a living in the culture sector, they are extremely committed to – and they want to be able to make a living. They want to be able to be independent and with the resources and the work that's going on in innovation at this point in time, it's a really good fit. To me, from my perspective, it makes sense.

Was there a public consultation on it? No. There has been no decrease in the grants. It's just been handed to another department that is more in line with entrepreneurship and tourism development. This sort of encompasses the culinary experience, the tourism experience, culture – it's all very much a part of the conversation.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Minister, who actually started the conversation? Where did the actual request for this come for this to be moved over? Was this just something in government that –

Mr. Currie: This was the decision that was determined inside government. This was a way for us to better provide supports and build on what we're seeing. The cultural strategy – the conversation – the money is still going out the door to the cultural community. It's just with the assets and the sort of more complete circle of services around the culinary product enhancement and what's going on in innovation and tourism. It's a better fit.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Last week I met with an individual –

Mr. Currie: Pardon?

Leader of the Opposition: Last week I met with an individual who is concerned over this and she didn't – she wasn't against the move, but she questioned why government wouldn't at least have consulted with some of the key stakeholders that are involved in receiving these grants and so on. Can you explain that?

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

Mr. Currie: I think the sector – I don't think there have been no issues that I'm aware of. You're always going to get different opinions, but the investment is still there. The conversations that are going right now – the preliminary conversations that are being led by Michelle MacCallum, the community is very interested in looking at ways that they can sort of profile

themselves, not only provincially, regionally and nationally.

There was no consultation on the decision. It was a decision that the money just goes from one department to another, and the same amount of investment is going out the door. I think, personally, I think this is a strategic move for the sector. I think that they'll benefit and there'll be significant gains and growth in this decision.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I guess, to both ministers, Chair: At the end of the day, the group that accessed these grants will not see less funds available to them?

Mr. Currie: No, the whole decision that would be made when we – when there was over 200,000 of funding that was delivered to the arts council, and the council was disbanded and as a result we were able to reduce the amount of administrative overhead and operational costs and get more hands – more resources and more grant money in the hands of the artists, which is – which just makes sense.

Yeah, that's good.

Chair: Thank you. The hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, I had you on the list next, but you've already made your point.

Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

This may have already been answered, but I wanted to be clear about it. Are the breakdown of these grants in section 10 of the handout?

Shannon Burke Director: No, these ones aren't, actually.

Mr. MacDonald: The culture ones (Indistinct)

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah, because we just (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: The culture ones aren't, but the – yeah, (Indistinct). We can bring it back to you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, thank you.

I do want to see the breakdown of the grants. It seems to me – given that it's been 653,900 budgeted and forecast and that we're doing that same amount – seems to me that, really, there's no room for new Culture Development and Growth applicants, but it's being given out to the same people year after year.

Again, I'm asking for the grant breakdown to check that out, but can you confirm that's the case? And if it's not the case, how come you're budgeting and spending the exact same amount every year?

Mr. MacDonald: I can tell you that by combining these two, to some extent, tourism and cultural product together, I think we give out tourism grants – and you have it – I think 2.2 or 2.3 million a year in grants, and I think this will actually allow the cultural entities to have more access to – whether it be – business development officers in regions that they may not presently be aware of, more education for them.

If you look at – I always use Rob Oakie as an example of this, someone who's always lobbied to bring more business and economic wealth to cultural side of things, and allow them to grow as a business; not just as a cultural product, but to grow it as a business, to make a living at it. He's talked about this for a long time, and I think we have – I think it's really, honestly, a good move to align with the department of tourism.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I do agree with you, minister. But for example, Catherine MacLellan is one of my constituents and would love to take advantage of a program like that.

But really, that wasn't my question. My question is: How come you budget for the

exact same amount and spend this exact same amount if you're targeting growth in this area? Is there really room for growth? Could this be 700,000?

Mr. MacDonald: Well it possibly could, because if you take in – if you combine them into the department of tourism 2.2 million, there may be more accessible funding for these individuals or businesses.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Why did you budget 653,900? Is that based on the grants given out last year?

Mr. MacDonald: What – yes, that was spent last year.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Do you anticipate the amount of grants you're going to give out here under Culture Development and Growth Fund increasing this year?

Mr. MacDonald: It'll depend on demand and what happens, I mean, what it'll allow us to do –

Mr. Trivers: I mean – Chair?

Chair: I'm going to allow the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture to make an intervention; might help your question.

Thanks.

Mr. Currie: As explained from the leader's perspective, we will table all the grants that went out. We can bring that information forward to be tabled.

I shared earlier, we made a decision. The whole focus of the dollars that we have in this section was to get more grant money to more artists and reduce the level of administrative overhead.

Basically, we disbanded the arts council, or they made a decision to disband as a result of some of their internal challenges, and as a

result of that we were able to get more dollars and more grant money out the door to more artists, so the budget line is there, but the number of artists that are benefiting from that envelope of money is greater.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, maybe I'm just not getting it, but if you're planning to give out more money in grants for Culture Development and Growth, then how come you're not budgeting for more here in the budget? I mean, it seems like the amount is wrong, right?

Mr. Currie: I think -

Mr. Trivers: Really not what you're planning to do?

Mr. Currie: Yeah, to answer that question, there was – last year for example – there was over 220,000 that was given as a grant to the arts council. A high volume of that money was tied up on administrative overhead and to running the council.

When we made a decision or when the arts council disbanded, that money was captured and redistributed back to artists so it's the same envelope of money, but there's just more money going towards grants as opposed to administrative costs to run the arts council.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: The bottom line is you're taking the same amount of money and you're reallocating it, which is why it's the same budgeted amount.

Mr. MacDonald: And that's less administration.

Mr. Roach: Going right out to the frontline.

Mr. MacDonald: And really, last year it was 400,000, approximately.

Mr. Trivers: You're saying because you made the move into the Innovation PEI department from education and early learning, you were able to cut down the

administration and reallocate more of that directly to artists partly.

I'm just wondering if there really is – and I just want you to verify this – there is actually room for new people to come in and receive Culture Development and Growth funding.

Mr. Currie: Yes and the whole mandate of the change was to use the resources and the professionals that are working in tourism and economic development to support the cultural sector on the entrepreneurial side.

The cultural strategy which will – is in conversation right now – will clearly demonstrate. That will be, I anticipate, will be a focal point of the cultural strategy.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Just on the development fund, can you explain to us what projects are eligible for funding under your development fund?

Mr. MacDonald: For development funds in what regard? What do you mean? Like anything at all?

Mr. Myers: Well your tab 10 on your handout.

Mr. MacDonald: Not there yet.

Mr. Myers: It's called –

Mr. Roach: That's down the road.

Mr. MacDonald: We're not there yet (Indistinct)

Chair: I'm advised that we're not there yet. If you could hold your question –

Mr. Myers: We're in business development.

Mr. Roach: No, culture.

Chair: No, culture development.

Mr. Myers: It's under business development. It's a division called business development.

Chair: Yes, but there's a whole section on business development, two sections down.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, but we're under business development. The whole thing is called business development.

Chair: Yes, but right now we're under culture development.

Mr. Myers: Yes, and my question – I'm asking my question.

Chair: Okay, ask your question, but there's another –

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Chair: I'm just saying the minister has advised me that business development and innovation is two sections away.

Mr. Myers: I know, but does he not want to answer the question?

Chair: Yes, he'll answer it under that section.

Mr. Myers: All my questions are getting pushed down the road. We're in business development.

Chair: Well, if you ask your question pertaining to the section that we're in then you can ask your questions, and everybody else in the House has been doing that. You're not the only one I've told not to do that.

Do you have a question related – actually, the section has been read; I've got a couple more people on this section. I can come back to you, I don't mind.

Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. Myers: It's ridiculous.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Mr. Myers: It's completely ridiculous that I can't get my questions (Indistinct) –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: My question is regarding the cultural strategy which the –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: – been asking (Indistinct) questions, been shut down. Are people not getting frustrated?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – we just started consultations for the cultural strategy, and the document I believe is due in the fall. I'm just wondering whether the funding for that process is coming out of this or whether that's from somewhere else.

Mr. Myers: You're not treating them like that. You let Doug Currie step in (Indistinct)

Chair: Order, order!

Shannon Burke Director: It will be managed from Innovation PEI by –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) said I'm going to go to the minister of education and let him talk about this.

Chair: Order!

An Hon. Member: Actually, I'll pass my opportunity and I'll give it to the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Chair: No.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) when they ask a question anyway.

Chair: Order, order!

Mr. Myers: Ridiculous.

Chair: I've asked everybody to ask their questions pertaining to the –

Mr. Myers: We're in business development.

Chair: – to the section.

Mr. Myers: We're in business development.

Chair: I've advised you, hon. member, that are under business development, but there's about –

Mr. Myers: Well, how come I feel like I'm not treated (Indistinct)

Chair: – one, two, three, four – there's five sections under business development.

Mr. Myers: Oh, so we are in business development.

Chair: Yes, and there's five –

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

As I said, we're in business development, so my question –

Chair: Don't mock me or you will not get any questions asked.

Mr. Myers: I'm not – what's that?

Chair: I said if you are disrespecting the Chair you won't have any questions.

Mr. Myers: I won't have any questions?

Chair: No, you won't. I will not recognize you if you disrespect the Chair.

Mr. Myers: What if I call the Speaker back to rule on it?

Chair: You're not going to call the Speaker back. Let –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: Please. All I'm asking is you ask the questions pertaining –

Mr. Myers: I know.

Chair: – to the section.

Mr. Myers: That's what I'm trying to do.

I don't feel like I'm being given a fair shot. I come (Indistinct). You tell me that we're not there yet. Well, we're in business development. In my opinion, where else would I ask it?

Chair: The reason I've gone to the minister of education is because the section we were talking about was moved and somebody asked the question why was it moved from education to business development, and often I'll allow the minister to intervene because they have something that they can offer to the question that has been asked. That's the reason I will interject with the

minister, because they have an answer to the question.

Mr. Myers: I don't feel like he's the minister of that anymore, so if we're not in the right section for him to answer it –

Chair: I'll –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) person who should answer it is the person that's on the floor.

Chair: I'll be the judge of that, thank you. That's why I'm chairing the meeting.

Thank you. I've been very respectful to you the whole time.

Mr. Myers: I don't believe that's the case because if you –

Chair: We'll –

Mr. Myers: – (Indistinct) try asking a question.

Chair: Ask the questions, everyone, in the section that we're carrying.

Thank you.

Mr. Myers: Ridiculous.

Chair: I'm going to go to – I'll come back to you, hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) ridiculous.

Chair: I'm going to go to the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'll just repeat the question. It was about the cultural strategy which is just underway, and I'm wondering where the funding for the development of that document is coming from.

Mr. MacDonald: Michelle MacCallum will be looking after the cultural strategy and what – that money hasn't been transferred, so that's not effectively coming out of the 635, or whatever that number is.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, that's where I was going. Is it going to be (Indistinct) –

Mr. MacDonald: We'll be invoicing the department of education for that, and culture.

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

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: I was just going to question for a vote on this particular section that is Culture Development and Growth Fund.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Roach: Question.

Chair: All right, I don't have anybody else for this section on my list, so shall this section carry? Carried.

Global Trade Services

“Appropriations provided for the development of trade and export opportunities for Island businesses.” Salaries: 515,300. Travel and Training: 51,000.

Total Global Trade Services: 566,300.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Business Development and Innovation

“Appropriations provided for the delivery of information and assistance to businesses in Prince Edward Island. Specifically, assisting in the start up, expansion and diversification of Island businesses, and ensuring the long-term success of these companies.” Salaries: 700,000; Travel and Training: 22,000.

Total Business Development and Innovation: 722,000.

I have a question from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) in the right section.

Chair: It is.

Mr. Myers: No, it's not. I want to talk about product development and business expansion fund.

Mr. MacDonald: It's the next section.

Chair: Thank you.

Next section, sorry.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Programs

“Appropriations provided for the development of business.” P.E.I. Tax Incentives: 24,400,000. Business Expansion and Product Development: 9,120,400. Trade and Export Development: 600,000.

Total Programs: 34,120,400.

Total Business Development: 37,484,200.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Can you answer: What projects are eligible for funding?

Mr. MacDonald: Do you want a list of the – program list? It’s pretty extensive.

Mr. Myers: No, what types of programs are eligible for funding?

Mr. MacDonald: Advanced marine technology, tax assistance, marketing support, LaunchPad, publishing assistance; there’s all kinds here.

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

Mr. Myers: According to your website, it’s: Bioscience, value-added, information and communications technology, aerospace, professional services, and advanced manufacturing.

Could you explain to us how capital expense would fit under this guideline?

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Capital acquisition assistance, I would assume that could fall under there.

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

Mr. Myers: By your own criteria, no it doesn’t. By your own website, it doesn’t.

I’ll read them again: Bioscience, value-added food, information and communications technology, aerospace, professional services, and advanced manufacturing.

Can you explain how capital expenses at Mill River fits into that?

Mr. MacDonald: I have a list here, an IPEI program list, so –

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – are you listing the strategic sectors you’re (Indistinct) on the website? Because I can produce the list –

Mr. Myers: It says what projects – your website says what projects are eligible for funding, and then it’s the list I just read you.

Mr. MacDonald: Here’s the list if you’d like. Do you need a copy of that?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) tabled.

Chair: Table it again?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, sure.

Chair: The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, do you have another question?

Mr. Myers: Yeah, I do.

What process was followed for the application where you approved the 500,000 for Mill River?

Mr. MacDonald: It’s the same process that would be for any application for our funding would be brought forward and then put through Treasury Board and then (Indistinct) –

Shannon Burke Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Treasury Board and then Executive Council for information purposes depending on the amount.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you. Your webpage says: “Accepted applications will move to a peer review process.”

Who peer reviewed this Mill River transaction?

Shannon Burke Director: Without having the website in front of us, but we do have a group of grants that – for prosperity – that go to a peer review project or to a peer review board and are competition-based. Are those the ones that you’re speaking about?

Mr. Myers: It’s your development fund.

Shannon Burke Director: Pardon me?

Mr. Myers: It’s your development fund.

Mr. MacDonald: Like Ignition Fund?

Shannon Burke Director: Oh, ignition – yeah –

Mr. MacDonald: Are you talking about ignition and –

Mr. Myers: It says development and commercialization.

Shannon Burke Director: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah, those are the – yeah, those are specific. The full list that you have or you’ll get.

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

Mr. Myers: Your webpage also says that: “Applicants may recommend up to three professionals with expertise related to the project to evaluate their application...”

Did you have any experts in golf course accommodations review your sale or any of this funding application?

Mr. MacDonald: There’s a different process for the Development and Commercialization Fund and the Ignition Fund. There’s a different process.

The Ignition Fund, for example, could be a board of independent – or a group of independent people like a *Dragons’ Den*

type thing for the \$25,000 grants that we give out. Those are different from what you’re going to receive on your list.

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

Mr. Myers: All the book says is development fund, and the tab says development fund, so that’s all we really have to go on.

When did Mill River apply to the development fund?

Mr. MacDonald: Sorry, I didn’t hear that.

Mr. Myers: When did Mill River apply to the development fund?

Mr. MacDonald: I’d have to bring that back.

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

Mr. Myers: Who suggested Mill River apply to the development fund?

Mr. MacDonald: It’s open to the public on any business applying for any development fund. Anybody that’s getting into business, I would hope they’d have the opportunity to apply.

The CEO (Indistinct) up to 500,000 can approve for those funds, and thereafter it goes before Treasury Board.

Shannon Burke Director: It’s in the regulations.

Mr. MacDonald: So the legislation and regulations.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

If the CEO can approve without getting any higher approval for 500,000, is that why you capped it at 500,000 so that the public wouldn’t find out about it when you were announcing what a great deal this was?

Mr. MacDonald: No, it was at 2.6 million, and that’s why it went to Treasury Board.

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

Mr. Myers: What date was Mill River approved for this 500,000 from the development fund?

Mr. MacDonald: I don't have a date here.

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

Mr. Myers: What date was it approved?

Mr. MacDonald: We don't have that date right here in front of me. We can bring it back to you.

Mr. Myers: Thanks you.

Mr. MacDonald: Are you talking about, though, the whole package or just the 500,000?

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Mr. MacDonald: Which one?

Mr. Myers: The 500,000.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Who at Innovation PEI reviewed that application for 500,000?

Mr. MacDonald: I'll bring that back to you.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Can you bring back a copy of their application for 500,000?

Mr. MacDonald: If we can legally, sure.

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

Mr. Myers: Will you bring back a copy of the project review and the assessment.

Mr. MacDonald: If we can, legally.

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

Mr. Myers: Will you bring back a copy of the letter of offer?

Mr. MacDonald: If we can, legally.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

PEI tax incentives, 24,400,000. Can we receive a list of who gets those tax incentives?

Shannon Burke Director: You have them.

Mr. Aylward: We have them?

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: What section is that?

Shannon Burke Director: It's in handout 10 and they're labeled tax incentives.

Mr. Aylward: Sorry?

Shannon Burke Director: They're in handout 10 and labeled tax incentives. There are a number of programs that fall under that. Aerospace tax incentives, advanced –

Mr. Aylward: Okay.

Shannon Burke Director: – manufacturing, enriched investment.

Mr. Aylward: I see total tax incentives; aerospace, just shy of 9 million.

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Mr. Aylward: Tax incentives, advanced marine, point 8, tax incentives.

Thank you.

I just have few questions with regards to the small business approvals like the grants.

On the first page: Buchanan Technologies, Ltd., Capital Support Buchanan expansion 2016-2017 for 10,000.

Who would be the owner of the business, Buchanan Technologies?

Mr. MacDonald: We'll have to bring that back to you. I know the gentleman's name or ladies name.

Mr. Aylward: So, you can bring that back?

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Copper Bottom Brewing: Establish a new craft brewery, 10,000.

Where is that brewery going to be set-up and who would it be?

Mr. MacDonald: I believe it's set-up in Montague. The gentleman's name, I'm not familiar with.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

Is this the brewery that's going into the *Journal-Pioneer* or the *Eastern Graphic* building?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Chair.

The Prince Edward Island Brewing Company: Purchase capital equipment, 10,000.

There's been a lot of money over the years lent to the Prince Edward Island Brewing Company. Do you know currently how much is on loan to this company?

Mr. MacDonald: These ones we're dealing with now are grants, right?

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, but I'm just – I guess my question would be, like when I go

through this I see some companies in here that, the owners of the companies are very successful and much to their credit. They're great entrepreneurs and business people. Some of them are probably millionaires. They've got a huge amount of assets and they've been very successful.

I'm wondering why – I'm all for helping out small businesses to get a start and to get established. That's what we want to see is: supporting small business on PEI. But when we have very successfully established businesses on PEI, I don't know why the taxpayers are giving them essentially a grant.

If they need money for capital investment or new equipment, why wouldn't they be looking to get that money through another lending agency, like RBC or something like that? Or from their own funds?

Mr. MacDonald: As a grant or we can't discriminate against anybody based on –

An Hon. Member: Their success.

Mr. MacDonald: – their success or the individuals or whoever it is. I think we have to treat everybody at the same level.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you very much.

Chair: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock do you have another question?

Mr. Aylward: I do.

I see here where the Charlottetown Islanders received 40,000 for sponsorship.

I'm just wondering does the Island Storm receive sponsorship, as well, through any grants?

Mr. MacDonald: I believe it does. I don't know the exact amount off the top of my head. Do you see it there? I know it did the year before, for sure. Unless, they didn't apply for it.

There are 500 of them – unless it's under a different name.

Mr. Aylward: Yeah, I went through it. I didn't – unless –

Mr. MacDonald: I can see the Storm name but there might be another business name –

Mr. Aylward: I looked at Island Storm, so on and so forth.

Chair, you can go on to the next person for now, I will have more questions after.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, just back to the grant to Mill River. It's going through in this budget year. Will they have to reapply every year for that 500,000? Or where is that money going to come from moving forward?

Mr. MacDonald: Go ahead.

Shannon Burke Director: So what we're showing here is actually what would be expensed in that year, but the approval would have went up and been approved by Treasury Board for the full amount.

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

Ms. Compton: Sorry, I didn't hear what you said.

Chair: Hon. members, the member asked the question and she can't hear the answer.

She'd like you to repeat the answer.

Shannon Burke Director: What the handouts are showing is what was expensed in the current year for accounting purposes, but the approval would have – that was approved at Treasury Board would have been for the full amount.

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

Ms. Compton: I mean it's gone through as a small business grant in this year.

Shannon Burke Director: It's been expensed.

Ms. Compton: Expensed as a small business grant, so we can assume that that might happen again?

Shannon Burke Director: Right, so –

Ms. Compton: Because it has been approved.

Shannon Burke Director: Yeah.

Ms. Compton: They do not have to reapply; we know that that's going to happen.

When we look through this, it's by far the largest grant. The province has made a commitment for that.

My concern is how that's going to affect the ability for your department to make grants to other businesses moving forward for the next 12 years, at least.

Mr. MacDonald: Basically, yeah – we've increased those monies already by almost 3 million for the funding line. Also, we've increased our exports and we're earning more money, based on what's going out in exports in our (Indistinct)

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

We're assuming then, moving forward, you're going to keep increasing it for that 500,000 because of the good year you had this year?

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Ms. Compton: That's where it's coming from?

Mr. MacDonald: We don't want it to see – small businesses be detriment to the budget in any way.

Ms. Compton: You're going to commit that the budget for the next 12 years is going to be increased by that 500,000 because that's where it went – that's where it's expensed this year.

Mr. MacDonald: Depending on what the request is from small businesses year over

year, it could drop way down or it could go up.

Ms. Compton: But you've already made a commitment. This government has already made a commitment to a business –

Mr. MacDonald: Yeah.

Ms. Compton: – for 500,000 every year and you did expense it through small business grants so that is going to affect the bottom line of small business grants moving forward for the next 12 years.

An Hon. Member: And future governments.

Ms. Compton: And future governments, yeah. There's that.

Ms. Biggar: It doesn't mean they're going to reduce.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) disappeared.

Mr. MacDonald: We've been also subsidizing that to 500,000 a year already, that project.

Ms. Compton: I understand that, minister, but the money has to come from somewhere. If you're going to say it's going to be part of this small business grant moving forward for the next 12 years, it does affect other small businesses who are applying –

Mr. MacDonald: Right, we've increased it this year by 3 million.

Ms. Compton: And you're going to commit to do that for the next 12.

Mr. MacDonald: I'm not going to commit that we're increasing it by 3 million a year.

Ms. Compton: Okay, so –

Mr. MacDonald: It has to be approved every year.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

We'll change the topic now. On the bottom line you show reversals of quite a significant

amount for a million dollars. I'm just wondering what those reversals would – what would they entail?

Shannon Burke Director: For accounting purposes a lot of these programs, when they're approved we expense them. If, for some reason, one of the clients didn't draw down on it, or the project didn't happen and the money's not out the door, then we would reverse –

Ms. Compton: Okay.

Shannon Burke Director: – what's left and you would see that down at the bottom. Typically, you're not going to see too much in there. They're probably old projects, for the most part.

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

Ms. Compton: So, it's money that wasn't spent or was committed to but wasn't used. Is that –

Shannon Burke Director: Correct.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque requested a document be circulated to the House and I'm going to ask him to explain what the document is before I circulate it.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

So it's the criteria for the development loan that we've been discussing (Indistinct) from the website, from the Province's website, government's website – so this is where some of the questions are coming from.

Mr. MacDonald: Development Commercialization – is that the one you're circulating? That's a different one than the Development Fund.

Chair: Minister, do you want to clarify that for the record?

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. LaVie: Extend the hour until we get this circulated?

Mr. MacDonald: Mill River's not under that fund if that's what you –

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

What is the name of the fund that Mill River is under?

Mr. MacDonald: It's development fund – it's a separate –

Mr. MacKay: It's just a development fund?

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.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

This House will recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Motions Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would now like to call Motion No. 62 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock who is the mover of that motion. Hon. member, you did close debate on it so you may continue.

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

Just before I begin, if I can indulge you for a moment.

Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Aylward: I just want to recognize the individuals that have joined us here in the gallery this evening. I'm not going to recognize you all by name for fear of missing somebody. The last thing I'd ever want to do is be in trouble with a grandparent, especially a grandmother.

Thank you very much for joining us here this evening. I can assure you that there has been some great discussion on this motion and we hope to continue that this evening and hopefully get unanimous support in recognition of the great work that you do. Hopefully get some results to support you as you support your grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that.

As I said previously, it's my privilege to rise to advocate on behalf of grandparents in this province who have found themselves, due to various circumstances, taking over the care of their grandchildren.

As you know, this issue has gone before a Legislative committee on health and wellness. Indeed, it was a motion that was tabled in the House previously by our very own Minister of Family and Human Services as a backbench MLA, that sought public input on this issue.

The minister, in her motion, urged her government to offer more support for grandparents caring for their grandchildren including more financial aid. It did pass unanimously, but to date, unfortunately, there has been little action on this matter.

I think this is a very important issue. There are currently over 200 grandparents who are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren and as I said previously, great-grandchildren in some cases. I believe that if various supports and financial assistance was available there would be more of these great individuals stepping forward.

We all know of situations where a parent or parents are having difficulty looking after their child due to reasons such as; physical health or disabilities; hospitalization; addiction; mental health; death and various other circumstances.

In most cases the child or children are not in the need of protection; they're simply in the need of someone to look after them and to provide them with the love and security of home.

I believe this arrangement is a much better solution for most children. Most children love their nannies and grampies and their nannies and grampies love them. Often grandparents can still ensure a relationship between the parents and the child.

I, for one, do not think that is a bad thing. I think that it's very important that children are in contact with their parents when it is possible so they know that they still have lots of love for their parents.

I think it's equally important to the parent or parents. Often the love of their child is what sustains them in whatever personal battle they may be fighting. Knowing that their child is in the loving arms of their grandparents certainly is comforting.

There can be no doubt that grandparents want to help their own child as much as they can. Naturally, some may have their own disabilities or mental health issues, and caring for a child can be very demanding.

The other issue is financial strain. Sometimes there is only one grandparent and they might be financially strapped.

The Guardian recently carried a story of a couple that became the primary caregiver to the couple's great-granddaughter, a 23-month-old. They estimate they have spent close to \$30,000 caring for the great-granddaughter since taking her into their home in April, 2016. But, as stated in the article, the reason they chose to take their great-grandchild under their wing is simple, "First of all it's love – love for that child – and keeping her within the family... We just do it..."

The individual involved sought support and travelled to Summerside to meet with a grandparents' group there and has now started his own support group here in Charlottetown, which attracted 13 people at the very first meeting.

I believe we can all understand some of the many challenges that face both the grandparents and the grandchild as they try to build a new life together. They both will need supports as they cope with their new lives, whether it's through counseling or respite care.

As we are aware there is a grandparents' support group and members did make a presentation to the committee. They stressed the need for medical benefits and living allowances for grandparents as primary caregivers. While the committee did learn that there are a number of programs available to grandparents through the Department of Family and Human Services, unfortunately most Islanders don't know about them.

Also, many Island grandparents may find that they're not eligible for assistance due to their income. Although, many still experience the strain of additional costs in raising their grandchild.

Motion No. 60 was debated and passed in the fall Legislative session of 2015. Our Legislative committee heard many concerns about the lack of support for grandparents who are taking care of their grandchildren. Again, sometimes great-grandchildren.

It is now 2017, and well over a year since this motion passed. I believe it is now time for action. We can talk. We can study. We can produce reports, but in the meantime our lack of action is impacting the lives of so many Island grandparents, who have chosen to take on the care of their grandchildren. It is also affecting the lives of the children that they are looking after.

We are always talking about putting our children first. I believe by taking action to ensure that providing increased supports for grandparents we will be benefitting these children. It's not about ensuring that these children have lots of fine clothes, it's about ensuring they have the necessities in life. It's about ensuring that grandparents are not

suffering the stress of trying to support their grandchildren. Instead of being a financial burden they can have the security of knowing that they will have help to look after their loved ones.

It is time to put a program in place and make life a little better for all concerned in these situations.

I would ask the support of this Legislative Assembly for this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion would be the seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise to support this motion and to second this motion for greater supports for grandparents. We know that if a child cannot be with their parents, probably the next place they should be is with a grandparent.

I've heard it in my own district about parents, or grandparents that are struggling with providing what grandparents feel they need to provide for those grandchildren. They need help with supports and financial assistance.

We all know the struggles and the burdens that they face. We have all heard it in our districts from different constituents who want to do what's best for their grandchild. They're suddenly faced with expenses such as child care if they are working grandparents, transportation, prescription drugs, dental care, vision care – whatever is needed for that child. They may have to supply diapers and cribs. They may face costs for enrolling a child in various programs like music and sports; all the things that a grandparent wants to see their grandchild partake in.

Hockey and soccer, the cost of transporting the children to various events and taking them to see the doctor and the dentist; all of the things that a parent would do and now a grandparent is doing. They want to do what's right for that child, and they want to

give them all the advantages that we all want in life.

Many of our grandparents who are doing this wonderful job are on a fixed income or maybe mid-income earners, or they could be the working poor and they are not eligible for assistance. They want to do a good job. They want their grandchildren to fit in to the schools and with their friends. The costs of new clothing, gifts for birthday parties and any other small items all add up.

Grandparents who raise their grandchildren not only face financial challenges, but they also face the emotional and social challenges that young people face in today's world and when you are the full-time caregiver of your grandchild, you want to face those challenges with your grandchild.

It is indicated that children who no longer live with their parents or grandparents will also have their own challenges. Difficulty in school, maybe a change in eating habits, the unwillingness to interact with other children, or possibly daydreaming; all challenges that children face in a day-to-day life and probably face even more so if there has been turmoil in the home. Children themselves may have experienced trauma or violence in a home setting, or they could have learning disabilities or autistic challenges; all challenges that children face in school today.

Grandparents are thrown into situations that they may not be prepared to deal with. Some may feel that it's been a long time since they parented and are not equipped to deal with it, or maybe need help and that's what we're asking government to do; show the supports that are needed, both financial and through counselling.

Another expense that may be new for a grandparent to provide for a grandchild is the Internet. Children in school now need to have access to Internet and Internet services. It's part of the way children learn. It's part of the day-to-day school program that the children have in school. Grandparents, maybe, need training or upgrading to help their grandchild with that. There are a number of challenges, and we, as a government, need to help with those challenges. I believe it's necessary for a continuum of services and financial

assistance be made available to these individuals to assist in their transition.

When you hear of situations like group homes taking in infants, I think the onus is on government to provide the support that's needed for the grandparents that are taking on the challenge that they need. A group home is not an appropriate place for a child, especially a young infant. We need to do everything we can to help support grandparents if they are taking on the responsibility of raising their grandchild in their home. We must also ensure that they have some level of legal status to provide the care that is needed.

With the proper support programs in place and the financial assistance available, the lives of these caregivers and their grandchildren can be made a little easier. I would seek support for this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, may I have the podium please?

Speaker: Yes, you may have the podium.

Ms. Biggar: Just be calm.

Mr. Currie: Just be real.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to respond to this motion and to reiterate our government's commitment to supporting grandparents as primary caregivers, and of course, I will be supporting this motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: I would also like to thank the hon. member opposite for acknowledging the fact that it was me who did bring this motion to the floor of the Legislature to raise awareness –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Mundy: – because I did have many heart wrenching conversations with many of

these grandparents that are sitting right here this evening. The issue of grandparents – and again, I'm going to try and stick to my notes this evening because I don't want to get too emotional this evening and I want to make sure that I do cover all of the things that I do want to cover, and I fear that if I wander from my notes that I might not get through everything that I want to this evening.

The issue of grandparents acting as primary caregivers to their grandchildren is very near and dear to me, and I first became aware of the issue of grandparents and other family members caring for their grandchildren long before I became an MLA and Minister of Family and Human Services. However, I have since met with many grandparents' groups, including the two that are sitting here this evening, over the last two years. Again, their stories have left a lasting impression on me, as their deep love and genuine caring for their grandchildren has.

Grandparents have a major influence in our lives. They help shape interests, guide career paths, give advice, pass along stories and family traditions, teach the younger generation how to be productive members in their communities; they are our first teachers. They teach us to love.

Grandparents balance many roles as volunteers, coaches, mentors, participating in the workforce, managing businesses, and other leadership roles across our province, and without that, I can't imagine where we would be as a province.

Sometimes grandparents find themselves as primary caregivers for their grandchildren. There are many reasons why parents are unable to care for their children, including employment, mental or physical illness, substance abuse, financial or legal issues, divorce, death or child protection matters. It is a gift when grandparents are able to step in and take on some, or all, of the responsibility for their grandchildren.

We all know that I have personal experience with this. I lived with my paternal grandmother when my father was serving in the military. My relationship with my grandmother was very special and she played a very major role in my life. She was instrumental in shaping my values and my beliefs. Many times in my life she was the

only female in my life. I miss her very much. She did this on her own, as many of these grandparents have. There wasn't a second thought. When they were needed, they were there and again, I thank each of these grandparents, as I do my grandmother, for stepping in when my sister and I needed her most. She was not only a support for me and my sister, but also my father, who over the years had to battle many of his own demons and if it wasn't for my grandmother being there for him, as well, I can't imagine where we would have been.

I looked at her, as I do my father, but if it wasn't for my grandmother I wouldn't be the woman I am today, and my children wouldn't be the successful, loving and caring children that they are today if it wasn't for my grandmother and she stepped in selflessly, as each and every one of these grandparents have done, without care or concern for their golden years. They may want to be spending their golden years sunning on a beach or traveling around the world, but instead they're here. They're here for their grandchildren.

I can tell each and every one of you, as a grandchild, that what you're doing for your grandchildren is going to be leaving a mark on their soul and they won't be the people – that they will grow into and flourish and blossom if it wasn't for the sacrifices that you've made – not only once, for your own children, but now also for their children.

There are also many benefits for grandparents when they do care for their grandchildren. The relationships between the generations are strengthened, and I can say this one from experience: The children feel a sense of security. They are cared for in a loving and stable home with people they know and trust. There is less transition for children, meaning that they may not need to change schools or to make new friends.

What do we know about grandparents caring for children in PEI? Well, based on the 2011 census data, there were 355 grandchildren being cared for by grandparents in our province; 195 of these children were under the age of 18, and 160 were over the age of 18, meaning that once a child reaches 18, that grandparent is still in their lives.

Research also suggests that grandparents who raise grandchildren are more likely to be female – sorry, Don – indigenous, employed or retired, and grandmothers caring for their grandchildren are also more likely to be single and often have health problems.

Government recognizes that grandparents face challenges when they parent their grandchildren, as well as experiencing many joys and rewards. My grandmother used to say that we kept her young. She says that she welcomed my sister and I because it kept her running every day. She used to joke, though, that she didn't get to watch her soaps as often, but she was always there for us. She could have been bitter and she could have been angry for those years that we maybe took away from her, but every single day she thanked us and she said: You kept me young. Even though we knew what she had to sacrifice, because again, back then, there were no programs. There was no help. There was no help at all.

My dad was off in British Columbia and we were there in Saint John, New Brunswick. He'd send home what money he could, but it was never enough. But, she always made sure we had pretty Easter dresses. We had a present or two under the tree, and it all seemed so normal to us. We didn't know any different. Yeah, most families had a mom and dad, but mine had a grandma and grandpa.

Government also recognizes that grandparents do face challenges when they parent their grandchildren, as well as experiencing the many joys and rewards. In our response to the *Child Protection Act* review in January, supports for grandparents was identified as one of the many priority areas.

We will give consideration to best approach and take action to support grandparents, including the introduction of a demonstration project during this mandate. This project will support grandparents who are providing safety plans and loving care for their grandchildren when child protection is involved.

My department is exploring the types of supports and services provided in other jurisdictions to determine what will work

best in our province. I am confident a pilot project will be in place before the end of our mandate.

It is important to recognize that government does deliver many programs and services to support Islanders raising children, including grandparents who are raising their children. The first recommendations that came back from the standing committee asked us to set out an education process on the supports that are available on Prince Edward Island, and as a result we developed an easy-to-read booklet outlining supports available for children and grandparents acting as caregivers.

For example – and many of the Summerside grandparents didn't know this until I met with them – but for example, grandparents can apply for the provincial childcare subsidy as well as the federal Canada Child Benefit.

I can remember when I met with the Summerside group and I was speaking to them about the Canada Child Benefit, and one grandma said to me: Oh, that's what that money is left in my bank account for. I thought the government made a mistake. So it was something since she'd already been filing her taxes, it was an extra amount that she was getting; but she was too afraid at first to spend it, because she thought it was a mistake, but was so happy when she realized that that was hers now to spend on the children.

Our social assistance program also provides a basic level of financial support for Island families when they need it. There are also many other programs and services for children which grandparents can access, including the research document – right here, I will be tabling tomorrow, with contact information. The document is called: Raising a Second Generation: Resources for Grandparents Parenting Their Grandchildren and Supports for Children. It can be found on our government website or by calling my office to request a copy.

Government does have a responsibility to review programs and services to ensure they are meeting the needs while keeping fiscal responsibility in mind. Government is also committed to protecting the best interests of children. As community members, we all

have a responsibility to keep our children safe. This shared duty involves families, communities and governments.

One thing I remember my grandmother always saying: She taught me that there was the five P's to any planning. She used to say: Proper planning prevents poor performance. So a comprehensive, integrated approach involving all partners is essential in moving forward.

Grandparents are an important and essential source of support for Island children. I look forward to the process over the coming months and the development of the pilot project, and I will be so proud, pleased and honoured to be able to invite each and every one of these grandparents back to the House when that pilot project is developed and rolled out.

Once again, I want to thank them for the advocating, for always showing up, always having insight, always having an open mind; and as I remember one – and I'm looking right at her right now – I can remember one of the grandparents saying to me, she said: Minister, this isn't really about me. She says: I know that things take time, I know there's a process, but if I can make it easier for all the grandparents that come after me, if my fight and my advocating can help one grandparent that comes after me, it will be all be worth it.

I thank her for that, and I thank her for her openness, and I thank all of you for again making the trek to Charlottetown today and taking an interest in this motion. And again, I can't wait to stand in front of this Legislative Assembly with a pilot project that we can roll out that will help grandparents that are raising their grandchildren.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I also want to thank the grandparents that are here tonight. The work you do is tremendous and I think of the children that you take care

of and the amazing work you do. You're a benefit to all of Prince Edward Island.

I also want to stand tonight and thank the minister in charge of this program. I know her and I know she's going to do a tremendous job here. In her efforts she's a strong advocate for grandchildren and I've seen her in action and I know that once she gets a topic on her plate, she will do her best and she will do the work and I commend her for that.

As being an MLA for a long time, I've had a number of grandparents come to me and talk about having access to their grandchildren and not being able to have access to their grandchildren. I think that we have to take a look at that also in terms of taking a look at that because when children are used as pawns in a divorce or a breakup and it's terrible for the children. When the grandparents see the need for the children and not being allowed to help the children that must be a tremendous – because I've seen in a number of grandparents that have come and seen me and literally crying all the way through and bringing their friends.

You call up and you say: If we go this step, if we make a complaint, you could lose the children – they could bar you from seeing the children altogether. They have to make a choice of potentially seeing their grandchildren or not seeing their grandchildren at all. I think that's the hardest times I've had meeting with grandparents, trying to help their grandchildren – and their grandchildren are locked in a dispute between the parents.

I just noticed the government of Ontario has just introduced legislation that orders the courts to take in grandparents when they're deciding custody cases – to take in the role of a grandparent in deciding in this area. I hope the minister would take a look at this also to see that children that are being denied access to their grandparents, or grandparents being denied access to their grandchildren – to help them. I think we have to look at those children too.

I'll be definitely supporting the resolution and I've seen you around a number of times and, again, on behalf of the Legislature, I know that you do a tremendous amount of work and thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the members that moved and seconded the motion and to government members for speaking to it. As the minister said, 200 kids being cared for, but there's more than that counting those that are 18 and over. Grandparents who have custody of their children – we know that love runs deeply. We've heard many examples of it here this evening. That's their comfort zone, their safety net. The financial struggle is real.

The mover of the motion has made mention of many different reasons: daycare, babysitters, and clothing – we've all been through it. We know the expense of these children. I happen to be in the middle of it right now: footwear, diapers, actual healthy lunches – it's expensive, school snacks, keeping them involved in sports – that's big, and it's hard to do on those fixed incomes. The cost of travel to sports, the cost of travel to extra-curricular activities, missed time at work, medications, and the appointments that they have to miss work for. These grandparents will never let their grandchildren go. They'll sacrifice everything. That's not fair that they have to do that.

We've talked about a number of things here tonight, but there are other issues too. There's consent to immunizations, there's the family allowance funding – based on grandparents' income and not parents' income. We're looking for funding similar to foster parents.

I'd like to acknowledge a friend of mine in the gallery here: Kathy Miller from Morell East. Her kids and myself and my sisters grew up together and now my kids and her grandkids are growing up together. I see Kathy at the birthday parties. I see Kathy at the fields. I see Kathy at the fundraisers, and it's tough.

I really appreciate, minister, your kind words and your experience. I do understand it's difficult and I appreciate the member

from Charlottetown's comments, but it's – no more studies, no more considering the idea, no more during this mandate, no more exploring the ideas. It's the lack of action that is the problem, as the member said. Let's move on this quicker.

We've heard the lobbying, we've heard the stories – we've all heard it. Surely there's something that we can move quicker on than a pilot project before the end of the mandate. Is there something that we can put in right away? And do you know what? If we lost a few dollars on it because people are getting a few extra dollars, so be it. Let's move on it quicker, and then reassess after the fact because we've heard the stories and I really appreciate all the lobbyists being her tonight. I do appreciate the government members. Let's act quicker. That's all I can say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do thank the mover and the seconder for bringing this important issue back to the floor of the Legislature and I do want to thank the minister for the progress that is being made on this issue. I think it was the standing committee just less than a year ago that made recommendations to start moving on this.

I've just been looking online at the pamphlet that came out and it is a good resource. I was also reading the Hansard, from May 12th, 2016, which was almost a year ago, and I have to say a lot of the points we're making today were made a year ago. It's a long time to wait. I can only imagine when you're someone who's living day-to-day and trying to support your grandchildren, how long that wait must be.

It's important that this motion does say – it urges immediate action. A year ago I did refer to the *Child Protection Act* review. I requested another meeting be held in Hunter River for my district because one wasn't scheduled and we had many people attend. Really, one of the biggest issues that came

out of that meeting was grandparents as primary care givers of their grandchildren. And not just that, it's aunts and uncles who are looking after their nieces and nephews, for example, and that sort of thing – when their parents can't step up.

There were three cases that were brought up at that time. I just wanted to mention them again because I think we've heard a lot from the subjective side of this topic tonight, but I think there are real, practical things that can be done immediately to help. For example, the one case that was brought up to me is when grandparents are asked by Child Protective Services to step in and look after their grandchildren because they want to give the parents a chance to improve enough to have those grandchildren come back.

That's very important and I appreciate the position of the family and human services staff there – are doing that. But what happens, is that grandchild is with the grandparents and then the situation doesn't improve, there's no follow up, and the grandchild stays there long term. The grandparent looks after them, but there's no revisit on that. To me, that doesn't require pilot projects. That just requires a simple change to policies within your department. I'd just like to see more regular revisitations of that just to make sure there are – when the grandparents are given the responsibility of a grandchild, and it's supposed to be temporary, that the follow-ups are made.

As we know, the grandparents in that situation don't have legal custody, they can't legally make decisions about the grandchild, and the parent can legally come back and take that child at any time. It's just not a great situation. I wanted to raise that, as well.

The other thing that was sort of conveyed to me was grandparents or other caregivers that were looking after grandchildren, and they were afraid to call Child Protection Services or Family and Human Services because they were afraid that the child would be taken away from them. They didn't know where it was going to end up. They were afraid that they're situation would not be deemed good enough for the grandchild to stay there, or the child.

Again, I'm reading the document that was produced. It does state very clearly: Just remember you are not alone. I think it needs to be even more clear, that if you're looking after a child and you call in and you cry for help that Family and Human Services is going to act in the best interests of the child, but in the best interest of you, as well. It's just no good if you're afraid to call and ask for help because of the consequences of your action.

I really do want to urge the minister to act as immediately as possible to address this issue. I think a pilot project by the end of the mandate is a good goal to have. Yes, proper planning does prevent poor performance as you say. The mandate, really officially is fall of 2019. I'm just not sure that people can wait that long. I would urge the minister and this government to take even more urgent action and not delay this until a pilot project, but see if there are practical interim steps that can be taken immediately.

I do, of course, support this motion. I want to thank all the people that came here in the gallery for the work they do looking after and providing care for their grandchildren, or children that might just be relatives of theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to urge immediate action.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's certainly an honour and a pleasure to rise in the House tonight, especially in your company.

The raising the next generation of children is surely one of, if not the central purpose, of society. To nurture the next generation in order that our communities are sustained as both a natural instinct, and at times, a necessary duty.

Society is constantly changing. As things evolve, alongside the enormous leaps

forward that always happen, sometimes unanticipated consequences occur. Change in the nature of the nuclear family has been a slow, but ongoing process. Many of the things that were naturally passed on from one generation to the next have been lost. We have severed an ancient connection. A story that was written by each generation building on the experience of the one that came before it.

I think that has happened to a lesser extent here on Prince Edward Island than some other parts of the world, but we're not immune to the consequences of such changes in our society. One of those changes is the rapid increase in the number of grandparents, and great-grandparents, (Indistinct) who are forced into a primary caregiving role.

It's one thing to willingly and joyfully participate in your grandchild's lives or grandchildren's lives, as countless generations, of course, of Islanders have done before us, but it's quite another out of necessity to involuntarily have to take over the role of being the primary caregiver.

Having said that, I don't know a single grandparent or great-grandparent who begrudges having the responsibility of parenthood thrust upon them, but I do know many who are struggling in that role. Financially, they're struggling. Emotionally, they're struggling. Physically, they're struggling practically.

There is a reason that we cannot continue biologically to have children beyond a certain age; it's darned hard work. It's beautiful work. It's wonderful work. It's meaningful work, but it's exhausting. Children also come at a time when parents can arrange things around them; maternity leave; division of labour; daycare; flexible work schedules, and so on, to make the family and the children the centre of their lives.

Our world and our society is not set-up to make it so easy to assume this role at any other time of life. Social supports are not designed to cater to this expanding group of unexpected parents living on a fixed income with only one's retirement needs budgeted for, often, does not have room for diapers and daycare and dresses and dental visits.

Grandparents who step up to become primary caregivers are almost always doing it in the context of a family crisis of some kind or other. The responsibilities of caring for a child or children are compounded by the stress of family discord or breakdown. Addiction and mental health are common threads that run through so many of the stories that I have encountered when grandparents and great-grandparents become caregivers.

There are so many ways in which this situation is hard. The least thing we can do as a society should be to make it as comfortable and as practical as we possibly can.

The children affected, when families breakdown, are unwittingly placed at the centre of an often turbulent and unstable situation. Other options, of course, may exist. Adoption, foster and group homes, for example, but the familial instinct to want to step in and maintain the wholeness of your loved ones is overpowering. Many grandparents, despite the challenges and recognizing fully the extent of the commitment, go ahead and assume that responsibility anyway.

A recent *Globe and Mail* article features an interview with Don Avery, a great-grandfather from my District 17. He lives in Bonshaw, on PEI, who is inspiring, not only in his dedication to his great-granddaughter, but also in initiating a support group. The article in the *Globe* describes a couple of real life situations. It does a thorough analysis of what could be done by governments to ease the burden on people like Don and his wife Catherine, who choose to step up when things fall apart beneath them.

I'm going to read a couple of excerpts from the *Globe and Mail* article now.

"Don Avery, 63, lives in Charlottetown... It's the *Globe and Mail* so they're allowed to make little mistakes like that. "...with his wife, a 66-year-old schoolteacher. The couple have been raising their two-year-old great-granddaughter for more than a year." Don says, "'She's growing like a weed,' ... The cost of diapers, food and clothes is eating away at their retirement savings.

"The financial strain, Avery said, is always top of mind.

"'It's constant. ... We're at the age where we want to retire. Can we retire? That becomes the difficulty."

"According to census data, there are 200 people raising their grandchildren..." on Prince Edward Island.

"To help others in his situation, Avery started a support group this year. "We have some grandparents who are in their 80s," he said. The group's twice-monthly meetings feature discussions of the many problems grandparents face - accessing government services, solving legal issues, coping with addiction and mental health issues in the family - and what can be done to solve them."

"'Most grandparents don't know where to turn," Avery said.

"Kathy Miller joined the group as soon as she heard about it. She and her husband have been raising their granddaughter, five-year-old Hayley, and four-year-old grandson, J.J., since her daughter left the house more than a year ago. "Money is a big challenge," said Miller, whose daughter is now in an addiction treatment facility. "We should be getting at least some [financial] support."

"The financial demands of parenting again are compounded by life on a fixed income. Grandparents can receive the federal child care tax credit and other provincial subsidies, but they don't add up to the amount foster families receive, a subsidy many say they deserve.

"People who are raising grandchildren within the foster care system receive that financial support, but those outside the system do not. So some opt to let a grandchild enter the system and then apply to be the child's foster parents.

"But that doesn't always work.

"Often, authorities contact grandparents to tell them they must pick up the child immediately or allow the young one to enter the system - perhaps as the ward of other

foster parents. "Are you going to say no when you get that call?" says one grandparent.

"But governments need these grandparents, says Esme Fuller-Thomson, a professor of social work at the University of Toronto who researches grandparents as primary caregivers: "We want to keep the children out of the welfare system," she said. If you put them in the child welfare system, it's going to explode.

Fuller-Thomson says governments should at least try to create "kinship navigation offices," which are common throughout the United States. "It basically tells you what you can do and what kind of resources are available to you," she said. "That includes everything from how to access treatment for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders to how to get legal custody of a child."

Of course, the effects of such things are not just borne by the children. They affect the grandparents as well. "A lot of grandparents lose their friends... They can't go to the bridge club anymore. They can't take trips like they wanted to... They have financial responsibilities now that they..." never expected "...to have."

That's the end of the article, by the way – the motion calls for an assistance program, and I absolutely support that, and I'm happy to hear of the pilot project that the minister just announced. There is, of course, another pilot project that she and I have talked about often, which would have an immediate impact on your welfare and that of your grandchildren, and that is of a universal basic income, and I urge once more the minister to pursue this with her federal counterparts with all of her vigour.

I'd like to close by saluting those on Prince Edward Island who have come forward for the welfare of their grandchildren. It is an act of love that is inspiring to so many of us who have met you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly I'd like to welcome all the grandparents that come in this evening. It's nice to have you here. I certainly support this motion and I think everybody in here by the sounds of things supports the motion.

Every MLA in every district gets these calls as well, and I always like telling stories but I've had two occasions here now since I've been elected that I've gone through the same thing with grandparents.

To me, I just thought it was black and white, you know? If a child is in need of help and grandparents are there, it shouldn't be an issue, especially with the shortage of foster homes and so forth. I can only imagine how scared some of these children must be when it's time to leave their home that they're used to, right? So it's great to have the grandparents there, and there certainly should be some support towards them.

In this one circumstance which I went through with this family, it was low income seniors. They're struggling to keep food on the table themselves. This occasion, there was three grandchildren, and from what I had seen there was very little support. Basically, the way we seen the system unfold, the support was there if they wanted to go into a foster family, but the support wasn't there for them to stay with their own grandparents and loved ones.

I couldn't believe it. I was mortified that this was the case, right? For little children to be scared and going through the system this way, and you've got grandparents in open arms, and these grandparents weren't looking for a lot. They're saying: Get me some gas cards, get me some grocery cards, get me something small.

I can just imagine the cost of some of this. Right now my wife's pregnant with twins and she's ordering some stuff for the babies coming, and I can't believe the cost of diapers now. I can't believe the cost of – like, you know, I'm a working Islander so I can't imagine a senior having to try and pay for some of these things on their own.

I certainly give credit to all the grandparents that are doing this because there's no doubt

in my mind when these children get older, they're certainly going to remember what their grandparents have done for them.

I'm still trying to get my head around this, because to me this is a simple fix. This is some legislation, some discussion, we're all on the same page. This isn't something that needs to drag out forever. Let's sit down and get through it and compromise, get all parties working together, and come up with a solution so time does not pass. This was two years ago since I've been elected and went through, so we've already seen two years go by and now it could be a couple other years.

I think it's unacceptable. This is something we're all agreed on, we're all on the same page, and to me it's a simple solution. We've heard there's a shortage of foster care. We've heard that grandparents – they're not looking for a lot. They just need a little bit of help to keep the children in their homes.

I urge all government members to not only support this, but let's put our head down, work together and come up with a solution as quick as we can to help these grandparents raise these children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have any notes prepared, but I think I can speak to this on a number of levels. First of all, I want to welcome everyone here and thank you for the work that you all do; and I thank the Minister of Family and Human Services for the motion that she brought last year and for the continuation of discussion tonight.

As an MLA, I, too, have encountered several situations; from grandparents who raised their infant granddaughter because the mother was struggling with addictions and still have that granddaughter who is now 10, but they – it's not so much that they're looking for financial support, but some of the concerns they have, they can't even sign

a permission slip for that child to go on a field trip unless the mother, who still is not the primary caregiver, I'll say, signs that.

Those are some issues as well that have been brought to me, that they are looking for more support in that way to have more legal ability to make some decisions for their grandchildren that they have raised since birth.

I also – similar situation, except this is a great-grandmother, who because the granddaughter was estranged from her parents, because again of addictions, wanted to ensure to help her granddaughter keep her child, so was assisting her as much as she could in regard to childcare.

Those are all parts. They're able to stay connected to their family unit. I think it's very important that we recognize that that work is happening, and I know that through the pilot project that the minister's department is putting in place will help to raise awareness as well of that.

From my own perspective, I have shared this before I guess, but when I was a young child our family was not able to stay together. At four years old, my grandmother came and took me from somewhere that I shouldn't have been staying and she kept me until I got married.

But for my grandmother and my grandparents raising me and my paternal grandparents taking some of my other siblings, first of all we would not have stayed connected as siblings, but secondly, because our father was not in the picture, so that father would have a role, we would have been in the orphanage here in Charlottetown.

But for our grandparents taking us and nurturing us and loving us and caring for us with no financial support at that time other than, I think, whatever the family allowance was at the time, I would not be standing here today probably in the role that I am. They didn't live to see me here, but I thank them for that support.

Sorry – and as a grandmother myself now, who is supporting my grandchildren in a similar situation, I really feel it important that we support the grandparents in looking

at what rights grandparents have, legal rights.

I know we went through a review a number of years ago in 2007-2008, and I didn't discuss it at the time because of respect for my mother who is still living, but I think it's very important that – I can't imagine, as a grandmother whose grandchildren don't have support from their other parent, don't have financial support from the other parent, that if it was a situation where I had to step in and take custody, that I would not have any legal rights by the courts. I think we need to look at that and review that.

Anything that we can do to support grandparents and the role that they are playing in helping raise the next generation of children and of citizens. It's very valuable work that this group does, but I think we can all impact on how we support and provide support for grandparents. Also, I encourage us, as the MLA from Charlottetown mentioned, to also look at what legal rights grandparents can have.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome everybody to the gallery tonight. I see my friend Krista Shaw is here as well as Kathy Miller, who I've talked to on a couple of occasions about this. And I just notice, rolling in, is Eddie Rice from city council.

This is an important issue and I think it's one that can be quickly rectified by the government. Like everyone else in here, I deal with it in my district and I hear the issues that come with it. I hear about grandparents who can't take their grandchild to get needles; that they need approval from social services to do that. They willing take the child because they want them to have a good life and they're doing the right thing, but all of a sudden, social services strikes them off as case closed and then they don't have anybody on their side anymore and it's almost like they're.

It's not that I blame social services because I know they have a heavy caseload and they

look to be able to close some of their workload. Even simple things like school issues grandparents aren't able to deal with while they're the primary caregiver. Notwithstanding the costs associated with it, and we all know how expensive it is to raise children in this day in age. I commend the grandparents for doing what's best for the children, I really do. I think it's wonderful that you've chosen to do that and that you're able to.

With the exact same amount of caring and emotion towards children, I think this government should do the same thing. It should recognize that these grandparents have done a wonderful thing and helped them – even a little bit. If these grandparents hadn't come forward, they'd be in the foster care system and you would be paying for it. I don't know how the same mathematics can't be applied to a grandparent to say: There has to be some monetary help for what you're doing. It's just not fair to leave grandparents swinging in the wind.

I've talked to people who are nervous about coming forward, who don't want to talk about this because they feel like they're in a quagmire. They feel like, because they don't have any rights as grandparents, if they say too much, that the system may start working against them and then the grandchild will end up in the system and they don't want that – and they desperately don't want that. I don't blame them. I don't blame them – not even a little bit.

I also talk to people who have enquire about becoming a permanent guardian and they are basically told that if you follow through the process, you have to get a lawyer and it'll cost you – you know what it costs to get a lawyer, it's like \$10,000 to get this done.

Mr. Aylward: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Yeah. Not that kind of lawyer.

I think that those things are important hurdles for the Legislative Assembly to understand, and they're hurdles that need to be rectified. I hear the Premier's talked about bringing in a child lawyer so that there's somebody to help navigate situations where there are custody issues. I hear him talk today about his maintenance enforcement bill. I don't question that those

things aren't important, but I think, to me, it still comes back to a child advocate.

If this province had a child advocate, the best for the child would always exist because there'd be somebody who had the ability to make those things happen. That the child would always be put – why would you shake your head at me, Paula?

Ms. Biggar: I'm not talking to you.

Mr. Myers: We all know that a child advocate is the right thing to do. Many of you are here – you have children, you've put in an enormous amount of time into children's activities over the years. Lots of you have coached, been Scout leaders, have done numerous things with children. It's important that you have the same approach that you had then when you look at children today. They're somebody else's, yes. You may not know them, yes, but they still need the same leg up and the same help that existed when everybody was at the soccer field or at the ball field – or at whatever it is they were involved with – with their children or any other children.

I know if said this in the House before: The children of Prince Edward Island are the future of Prince Edward Island and we need to be doing everything we can to make sure that they have everything they need to lead when they get there. These are small amounts of money. We talk about – here on the floor – everyday now we're debating Budget Estimates – where we're talking millions of dollars; \$500,000 that was approved and nobody has any – nobody can provide any receipts or applications or anything from the Mill River thing today, \$500,000.

We talk about large sums of money here. I'm not sure why we can't talk about it when it comes to children as well. I'm not sure why this always has to be fight. The operative clause in this says: Therefore it be resolved that this Legislative Assembly urge government to take immediate steps to develop an assistance program for these grandparents who voluntarily take on the primary care of their family's children.

Basically, when we all vote for this tonight, and I haven't heard anybody say that they wouldn't, I don't want this to be the end of

it. I don't want this to be – everybody agreed, but nobody takes any action to make sure that grandparents get help.

The Leader of the Third Party here had a motion for a livable income pilot and he spoke of it here. That night that that was on the floor, we all spoke of it and it passed; there wasn't a person in here that voted against it, but there's no action. It really doesn't do any good if everybody stands and votes for this tonight if there's not somebody who's going to take this and take that operative clause and put it into action. That's where leadership comes in. It is one thing for us all to agree on something, it's one thing to stand in front of a group of grandparents and say: I agree with you. Unfortunately for us over here, that's as far as we can really take it. We don't have the ability from opposition –

Mr. J. Brown: You can't put a bill together to provide additional support?

Mr. Myers: Did you want to speak to this yourself, Jordan?

Mr. J. Brown: I think I probably will, actually.

Mr. Myers: You should. You should because everyone knows what a caring individual you are when you're running people down at meetings – we see it all the time.

It's government's responsibility because they have the budget, they have the staff, and they have the ability to make this happen. What I'm asking is, when this passes, and it will, that it doesn't end here. Like so many other motions I've watched since I've been elected – pretty near six years. Come here, everyone says it's great, and then nothing ever happens.

Leadership is what takes it to the next step. Yes, I could put a bill on the floor, but I'm not allowed to put a bill on the floor that costs government money – everyone knows that. I can't make amendments to bills that costs government money, I can't make amendments to the budget that's going to cost government more money. That's the rules. We can't over here. All we can do is ask the questions: Why aren't you? Or we can take money from somewhere – we can

amend the budget over here and take money from someplace else and put it there, but we can't cost government new money.

I commend the members who brought this forward tonight and the grandparents who came in here tonight, the people who spoke positively on this here tonight, and I urge government, when this passes to not turn the page tomorrow morning to a new page and get ready to vote yes on the next thing that you'll forget about the next day.

People aren't buying that anymore. When people come into this Assembly, the people's House, and hear their voices on this floor and their concerns raised to this level and watch every member stand up and vote yes, they do expect action. And over on this side, we're going to keep your feet to the fire on this to ensure that there is action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

I'll be brief on this. I certainly support this motion, particularly as it stands with the wording, and I would mention that this is the kind of issue that can impact any number of different people in different settings, financially, from different backgrounds – whatever the case might be.

I can think of two very different situations in my own district, where in one case there's a very well-to-do family that had a son that had significant addictions issues that have led to health problems, and they have assumed the care of their grandchild – at a time in their lives where I'm sure they thought they were going to be doing other things – and take that role very seriously.

I can think of another situation where, again, due to addictions, a lady has taken over the care of a severely disabled child on an ongoing basis, and she struggles day in, day out, and I know we've had to help her out with things like the provision of a computer for the child who's autistic so that he can get through on a day-to-day after they had suffered a break-in at their home.

All that being said, it troubles me that the hon. member has made this a political piece here tonight –

Mr. MacEwen: Give me a break. He didn't make it political at all.

Mr. J. Brown: Well, he did make it political –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct).

Mr. J. Brown: – what I think we need to be very cognizant of here, and specifically what I'm referring to is, again, a tangential piece where we're talking about the child advocate wrapped up into this motion.

A child advocate is not a frontline service, okay? And I fully support this motion, and I would support budgetary allocations going towards frontline services for grandparents, and that's what grandparents appeared before our committees and asked for, and they asked for things like a presumption to be inserted into legislation that would allow that if there were parents that were in a situation where there were addiction issues or whatever the case might be, the grandparent could step in there presumptively to take guardianship of that child, which is not currently in the legislation, and is certainly something that an amendment could be moved by this opposition.

Those are the kinds of things that when we stand up and start to say things that are totally not related and totally tangential to a subject matter of very important motions like this in this House, that they totally water down the subject that we're here to talk about and that is very important and that deserves our immediate attention, and make it something way different than what it started out and was intended to be.

I would say I support this motion. I'm not sure that I support the comments of the hon. member that were just made, and I think we all need to be very cognizant of proposing those kinds of things when we're dealing with a motion like this, and the impact that they have on the actual motion itself and on the people that are here advocating for the different kinds of things that they're looking for that are very practical and cost-effective

ways of dealing with the problem that is in front of them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be brief, but most of my comments here tonight are already said.

I just want to thank the grandparents for coming into the Legislature and listening to all the comments.

We've got to think of the child. That's the most important thing is the child. And if the child – wherever the child is, if he's in social services, if he's in foster care, if he's with the grandparents, we got to provide for this child no matter where he is, we got to provide.

So why not provide to the grandparents? These grandparents love their grandchildren. These grandchildren love to be with their grandparents, and that's where they should be. And we should be happy that they're with their grandparents. We should be happy.

Our social services system is overburdened. Our foster care – we're always looking for foster parents, so we should be glad that these grandparents are stepping up to the role, looking after their grandchild, and they want what's best for this grandchild or they wouldn't be doing it.

Let's just help these grandparents out. That's all they ask, is for a little help.

I will be supporting this motion, and I want to thank the mover, and I want to thank the seconder.

It is an emotional motion. It's not political. There's nothing political in here. This is something that everybody in this Chamber cares about, and that's our children.

Like the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters said: Our children are the future of

Prince Edward Island, and we got to provide for these children no matter where they are.

I do agree with the member from Kensington and Georgetown, we got to move on this fast. It's enough talk. We've spoken to this now. It was in committee. We've talked it. We're over-talking it. We've got to take action now. These grandparents want it now; they've been looking for it for a while and they deserve it for what they do.

These grandparents are living on a fixed income. They're looking after the children of Prince Edward Island. We should be providing to these grandparents.

I do agree with a pilot project, but a pilot project, that's all we do is pilot projects. Let's just sit down and do it. We're smart people in here. We can figure out how this is done. Like, why a pilot project? I've seen more pilot projects in the last five-and-a-half years and studies, and it doesn't go anywhere.

Let's do this for the grandparents of Prince Edward Island that are looking after our future.

We should be proud of these grandparents. These grandparents are what gave us in Prince Edward Island today. They gave us our rinks. They gave us our schools. They gave us our churches. These are the people that did it for us. Let's give back to these grandparents today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak?

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will be brief.

I want to thank everyone who took the time out of their evening to come in here for this very important motion. We appreciate it very much on this side of the glass, I'll say.

I want to thank the Minister of Family and Human Services for bringing this to the

forefront just a little bit, maybe even, less than a year ago.

I want to thank everyone who brought this back on the floor, and for those who are going to support this and for the comments that were made tonight, and certainly we've heard some very impassioned words that have come out of members in this Legislature who know firsthand, and I thank them for sharing that.

Mr. Speaker, and all of you here, I've had the opportunity just as a young boy growing up in a small town to see grandparents raising their children just as a matter of course when I was a young boy.

I've had the opportunity in a lengthy former career before this to have had a tremendous amount of involvement with children and parents and grandparents and how difficult situations are. I have been right in the middle of them. I can assure you that I appreciate the difficulties that many, and the many different situations that can be faced by the parents, the grandparents, and the parents. Each one of those is not cookie cutter. They are each – most for the better part they're all very different. There are all different circumstances. There are a lot of different free-flowing parts that have to be considered. Sometimes, it's not just as easy to say: We can just deal with that. Because there are differences, there are different situations. Unless you have seen it, perhaps you may not understand it.

I want to thank everyone in this House tonight for getting up and speaking. I will be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other hon. members who would like to speak to the motion?

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to lend my support to this particular important motion as it pertains to grandparents and the supports that they give their grandchildren.

I have now become a grandfather as of the end of December. It's quite an honourable feeling and I'll say there wouldn't be much I wouldn't do for my granddaughter in any particular situation that she found herself in. I think that's part and parcel of what grandparents do, as well as parents to try to lend their support to make sure that those children get as honourable a start as they possibly can.

I know as an MLA I have had encountered numerous situations where grandparents had issues in trying to work through issues with their families. It's an extremely frustrating component of being an MLA and trying to advocate and understand the problem and the complexity of the problem and working within the bureaucracy to try to do what everyone felt was right. It's always hard for me as an MLA, and I'm sure for grandparents, and I'm sure even the bureaucracy to figure out what is right in these particular situations. It is very complex.

I do know of a number of grandparents in my community, in my district. I can think of Leith and Elaine Milligan and what they have done for their grandchildren. It's very honourable. I've had the chance to go and visit and speak with them. I'm sure that they would be really appreciative to see this motion pass. I can think of others. I don't want to get into naming them all by any means, but I did want to single them out as people who are doing great work in raising their grandchildren.

On behalf of the citizens of O'Leary-Inverness and this House, I'll be supporting the motion, too.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think this is a very important motion. There are some things I don't like to speak about in the House because sometimes it brings back memories from years ago and things I have seen in the past, along with other hon. members across the way.

In my garage, in my barn out behind the house, you go into my barn I have a little workshop on the side. You go inside the door and up over top of it there are four pictures. The four pictures are of my grandparents. They have been there ever since I built the shop. There is not a day I go in the shop, I don't look up and I don't remember my grandparents and how they were there for me and my brother and our family, and I'll never forget that.

Over the years as a policeman, the honourable person there would that we have been subjected to things and have seen things and had to help parents out and grandparents that didn't have the money to give to children. Sometimes, I have seen policemen and firemen have reached into their pocket and they've pulled money out and they've left it on the table or they've put it in an envelope or Santa Claus will arrive in the middle of the night and leave stuff on the doorstep. I've done that.

I can remember Christmas time going home and you'd raid your kitchen and take stuff out of the freezer and you take it down the road and you put it at a senior's doorstep or another family member. That stuff is hard.

This is not rocket science. We deal with millions of dollars every day. It wouldn't actually take much money by the government to put into a long-term project, a pilot project is a good source or a good start. It would not take much money to actually put it on the table within a budget and add it to the Budget as we go through estimates in the next two weeks and make an amendment. I'm asking government to consider that.

I'm asking the Premier, in the next little bit, maybe make an amendment to the Budget. Let's put some money into social services where it's needed to help grandparents that are across this Island today help with the children they're dealing with.

I do not think it would take much Legislative change by the Legislative Counsel across the road to make an amendment to a bill that we could put through in this session to put the funds and the guardianship where it needs to be to the grandparents of this Island.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other hon. members who would like to speak to this motion?

If not, I will go to the mover of the motion to close debate on the motion.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I'd certainly like to thank all of the hon. members here this evening that did speak to this motion, and are intending to support it.

I would; however, like to correct one error that was mentioned a couple of times here this evening. I think by the minister of transportation, the Minister of Finance. They had mentioned that the then backbench MLA, who is now minister, had brought this forward last year. In fact, she actually brought the Motion 60 in the fall of 2015. It wasn't last year it was closer to a year and a half ago. I'm bringing that up because every day, every week, and every month that passes by, I think, we're failing these individuals.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton made some excellent points when he said: This is a very important motion. It deserves and requires immediate action. I don't think any of us in here could disagree with that.

I've been to several presentations where many of these individuals have come forward and have told their stories. One in particular really sticks with me. That is the individual, the grandmother, that talked about her money jars up on the counter, and how, each week, when she had a little bit of spare change she would put a little bit into each jar for different things down the road. I'll be honest. I'm standing here and I could not, I can't even comprehend budgeting my household in such a manner. I just simply could not. I'm being honest and forthright with you.

This individual also then spoke about how one of her granddaughters required braces.

She had to think long and hard which money was she going move from one jar to the next to try to accommodate that medical need? Then, there were eyeglasses, as well.

There was some discussion, as well, here this evening about rewriting or amending current legislation this spring and I think that's a wonderful idea. The minister, and again, I give her due credit for being a strong advocate for this cause and for bringing it forward when she was first elected, and to speaking so passionately about it this evening. Thank you, minister. Thank you for that.

Again, this is an urgent matter. I think these individuals and the children, as well, have been waiting too long and they can't wait any longer. We were elected to do our jobs. That is to ensure that Islanders are looked after. Let's get on with our jobs, and let's do it.

I would also like to see an amendment to legislation come in this spring. It's not all about the money. Again, the Member from Charlottetown-Brighton brought up some valid points with regards to custodial issues. I think that that would be fairly straightforward for the Legislative legal minds to adopt that. I would implore them to do so, as well.

There was also some talk here this evening about a child advocate, and I might sound like a broken record. I'm not going to stop calling for a child advocate here on Prince Edward Island until we finally have one.

We have a different kind of child advocate here tonight that we're talking about. We have 11 child advocates sitting in the gallery listening to each and every one of us speak. Again, it's incumbent upon us as legislators to do the right thing and to put the programs in place that they desperately need.

I do have some good news; however, for everyone here this evening. There was an announcement made here not too long ago by the Minister of Finance that he is bringing in a balanced Budget with a surplus of \$600,000. What I would like to propose is that \$600,000 surplus be given immediately to the Minister of Family and Human Services to put this pilot project in place no longer than the fall of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will close.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are we ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Standing vote.

An Hon. Member: Recorded division.

Speaker: Okay. Sergeant-at-Arms, a recorded division has been requested. You can ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, government members are ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker the opposition is ready for the vote.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

All those voting against the motion, please stand.

All those voting in favour of the motion, please stand.

Clerk: The hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services, the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development, the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness, the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Opposition House Leader, the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the hon. Member from

Summerside-Wilmot, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton, the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: Hon. members, the motion is carried and it is unanimous.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would now like call Motion No. 58 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron):

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, the following Motion:

WHEREAS openness and transparency are crucial to ensuring accountability and public confidence in the governance of our province;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly offer its support to the current administration to achieve a high standard of transparency in the administration of our province.

Speaker: I will now call on the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, to speak to the motion.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is one of these motions, and I feel like over the course of the last six years I've probably moved or seconded or spoke to this motion about six times. I can't believe we're still having this conversation.

If we go back to what we'd talked about earlier today when the Minister of Finance took the time of the House to announce in a minister's statement an RFP. When it gets to the point where confidence in government is so low, and confidence in their ability to be accountable is so low, when confidence in their ability to be transparent is so low that a

minister of the Crown has to come into the Legislature and announce and say: Guess what, we're doing an RFP, we're following the rules.

There are countless RFPs. Anybody who's been even remotely involved with government over the years – well, look at their tender page. There's all kinds of tenders. Can you imagine if we had an announcement in the House every time you guys called a tender? You know what? Islanders expect that you're following the ruler. It's not a minister's announcement. Following the rules isn't a minister's announcement. Following the rules is a must. Being accountable is a must. Being open and transparent in this day and age is a must.

I know I've said this before, but there's a real souring movement out there about governments and the way that they operate. Over the Easter weekend, I heard a lot about Mill River; and already, one of the issues with Mill River, notwithstanding the fact that you gave away a golf course for nothing, and guaranteed that somebody wouldn't lose any money on it for 12 years, notwithstanding all that, it's the fact that there's a whole part of that deal that nobody knows anything about.

They feel like that's a crown asset. For a long time, government has owned that asset, and they've nurtured the asset, they promoted the golf, kept the course in good shape, had an arrangement with Rodd's, whatever the arrangement was, nobody knows that even really either; but then all of a sudden you're whisking this asset away, telling Islanders next to nothing, and expecting them to say: Yeah, you're right, that is a good deal.

I don't know where this government got the idea that everybody was desperate to sell golf courses. Yeah, there may be some talking heads out there that are in support of getting rid of golf courses. The Premier's buddy is one of them. That's fine. He can think that that's a wonderful thing; but not when you're giving them away, when they're free. Those are the things that people are getting sick of.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: There's nothing in that that says anything about accountability.

We'll give you another example. All winter long, government has been going through this process where they were in a school review. The school review had two pieces to it, and we talked about it in the House. One was rezoning, and there was a significant portion of rezoning that was a major improvement to the system. The other was school closures, something nobody had asked for and nobody wanted.

Government went down this road and allowed the school board to walk it all the way to April 4th where they voted to close two schools. Next morning, the Premier announced that they weren't going to close because now wasn't the time to close schools. January was? Or February was? Or December was? Come on. You expect people to believe that? You expect people to believe that that is the current level of openness and transparency, that that's the current level of accountability?

The Premier of Prince Edward Island didn't know enough to say in December now is not the time to close schools, to say in January now is not the time to close schools, to say in February now is not the time to close schools, to say in March now is not the time to close schools, wait until they were closed to say now is not the time to close schools, and expects Islanders to believe that wasn't the plan all along? All right. I know what they're saying where I live. I know what they're saying in downtown Charlottetown, too. People just aren't buying it.

When I first was elected in 2011, at that time, one of the major things that government had messed up was PNP.

In the dying days of PNP, the member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park – I'll bet you he had carpal tunnel from signing PNP sheets at the last minute. I bet he had to ice his arm that last day when he signed 3,000 PNP letters to give people money. Then the whole thing blew apart at the seams. Federal government shut you down. Number one: The federal government shut you down – as we all recall, federal government stepped in and said: Well, what's going on down there? What is wrong with you guys? You can't just do that. You can't sign 3,000 people in

in a day. Where's that money going? All those things.

Mr. Trivers: Just watch me.

Mr. Myers: Just watch me, yeah. Justin Trudeau says: Just watch me – and you did.

An Hon. Member: Instead of Pierre Trudeau. They're cut from the same cloth.

Mr. Myers: Cut from the same cloth. But, you know what? Then there was no amount of transparency at all. Nobody wanted to talk about it. Nobody wanted to say who got it. Nobody thought people deserved to know. Nobody wanted to say how it all happened. But people lost faith in your government at that point.

Let's not forget, in the 2015 election you only won 40% of the vote. That wasn't a glowing endorsement of the work you had done in the prior term. And to be perfectly honest with you, if it wasn't for the popularity of the Leader of the Third Party, you wouldn't have formed government. You guys know that. You really wouldn't have. It was his popularity that allowed you guys to stay in power – which is fine. That's the way governments are formed. But none of you should take it as a glowing endorsement for the work that you've done; 40% isn't a – you know what I mean? Unless you're batting fourth for the New York Yankees, 40% is not a good stat. If you're playing baseball in the majors, you're all right. You're probably a millionaire – like your friends that you made millionaires through PNP and stuff.

One of the more recent ones was e-gaming. So, I remember – now I watched this video not that long ago – the Premier right after he became Premier, he was in the studio with Bruce Rainnie and he was adamant – you know what? I believed him. When I watched the video, he believed him. He believed he was going to change things. He believed he was going to set things straight and he believed that he wasn't going to allow that to happen anymore.

Whatever happened after that 2015 election, I'd love to know. Maybe it'll be in his book – supposing he gets to write one. John Turner already had a book that had the title that he probably should use: *Reign of Error*.

Whatever happened between that election and the Public Accounts hearings in e-gaming, I'd love to know. All of a sudden – and you all recall last fall, the questions that were asked here: Whose emails were deleted? Well, nobody wanted to answer. Nobody seemed to know. There were no rules broken. There's all kinds of rules broken. The Auditor General told us there was all kinds of rules broken. There's stuff that went on in there that, perhaps, we'll never know. Perhaps you fellows will never know, for all I know. I don't know how much the Premier tells you fellows, but he knows.

Somebody said something interesting to me and it really stuck in my head and it had to do with the e-gaming file. They said: Government has done an awful lot to protect the million dollars that disappeared. Don't you think that's funny? Considering how many times this government got into some sort of a jackpot deal where they lose a million dollars. Three or four times a year it happens where money just evaporates. You lose money on loans, you lose money on GeoSweep –

Mr. Trivers: Bad deals for a golf course.

Mr. Myers: Bad deals for a golf course. This stuff happens all the time with you guys. Why was it? And this person asked me that. You know what? It's the question that's in my head. Why did this government go so far to make sure that the e-gaming information never saw the light of day? Great question. Somebody's being protected – I think. One would have to think.

Mr. Trivers: You could bring a witness to standing committee for once.

Mr. Myers: You can't. We got shut down.

An Hon. Member: You could with reading the AG's report.

Mr. Myers: And bullied for bringing any information forward.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) transparency that's what this motion is about.

Mr. J. Brown: Not when the Member from Stratford-Kinlock is bullying you.

Mr. Myers: You know what? It's funny that I don't know what everyone – what makes everyone such a great protector from the Liberal ranks on the Public Accounts Committee. There has got to be something that you're all – one of the things is probably that everyone is getting paid the extra to be on committees now. You're all – now everyone hails to the chief. Everyone answers to the boss. That's one thing. We all know that no one is allowed to step out of line with this boss, there's that.

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: What's that?

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I'm happy. I'm happy to bring this to light. I'm happy to bring this to your attention.

Look, and I feel bad for you, and I've said this before: You would have been a better premier. No question. No question about it. I told you that before the last leadership. You know what? I'm going to tell you this before your next one because it's upcoming and everyone knows it.

Accountability and transparency, the Member from Rustico-Emerald has talked about it at different times. IT guy, pretty smart, knows his way around, talks about open data. Open data might be a way to create a new level of transparency for government.
Why is it –

Mr. Trivers: We might even know how much recap every member got in the district.

Mr. Myers: We might know a lot of things.

Why is it that we wait until 18 months after the books are closed and then the blue books come and we then we got to sift through them and try to find out –

Mr. J. Brown: What would the cost be of open data?

Mr. Myers: What would the cost be of open data? Nothing. It's already in. Ask the Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park: What would it cost for open data? Nothing.

The data is there. You just have to put it out in subsets. The subsets already exist.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) no big deal (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: No. Do you want me to do it for you.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) just put everybody's private information out there.

Mr. Myers: What would be private about how government spends money? What would be private about where the departmental budgets go?

It's stuff like this folks, it's stuff like this over here. This makes me wonder, what would you be promised? Nobody – you couldn't – the payment couldn't be high for that type of work. It couldn't be.

I just wonder why it is that, and I'll say it, 27 because there are 27 of us, why anyone would think that that type of information is private to 27 people, or five or six or whatever it is over there, that actually has access to any amount of information on the dealings of government.

Why should that information be kept from Islanders? Why isn't it their information? Why do they have to go through – you should see the hoops that we go through to do FOIPP requests.

The finance minister was talking about it today like it's a great system. It's a terrible system. The hoops you have to jump through to get information. We have piles of them up there. They take beyond 60 days to get. Government is always trying to block the information on them. That's when somebody is not out telling people on the street who actually is looking for the information.

I can't tell you how many times somebody has come back to me and said: I hear you're FOIPing by whatever it is.

In the act it's clearly laid out, that my privacy is also protected. This government doesn't take that seriously. They don't take any of it seriously.

There needs to be a major overhaul in the FOIPP system. There needs to be a major overhaul in transparency. And there needs to be a major effort by government and all Islanders to ensure government accountability. I don't care who the government is.

I remember there was a time when I, myself, thought, you know, the regular person is so far away from the decision-making it's not even funny. Little wonder that the rise of populism is so huge in the world.

People don't feel like the people that are here – not everyone, and I'm going to use it as a general term – they don't feel that governments or politicians are necessarily there to protect their interests or to look out for their interests. It seems like it's a game where, once you get there and once you get to power, you look after your own.

I had said during the debate on electoral reform and I presented to the committee, and I, myself, wasn't in favour of change, and I accepted there was a vote for it and that's the way the vote was.

What I had said at the time was after the election was over and I'm the MLA for Georgetown-St. Peters, I represent everyone, not just Tories. My job is then is to represent everyone; not just everyone's needs, but everyone's viewpoints. If you take the time to listen to the other viewpoints, you'd be amazed at how rounded and stronger your own view will become.

There are lots of things that five-and-a-half years ago I would have been like: Ah, I'm not sure if I buy that. But if you spend the time and talk to people and listen to people, you're like: Yeah, okay, I can see that that's a need.

One of them was – and I talked about it when the Leader of the Third Party brought forward the motion on the basic livable income – when I said: I see it now, but five years ago I didn't. I see it now, and I see it in my district, and I see it right across Prince Edward Island that there's a need, unlike, I probably would have believed, before I dealt with it firsthand.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) transparent budgeting process (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: The transparent budgeting process.

So, over here on this side, when we do Budget Estimates and the minister of tourism was on the floor today and there was probably, I'm going to say, upwards of 15 things that he didn't have the answer to but he said he'd bring it back. We find over here that we rarely get them back. Once in a blue moon, if it's an easy answer.

The minister of education has promised me stuff for six years and never brought anything back to the House; not even once brought anything back to the House.

Ronnie MacKinley –

Mr. Currie: Gave you 200 questions.

Mr. Myers: Ronnie MacKinley was golden. If Ronnie MacKinley promised you something, you got it. He didn't sit in the middle of that floor and just say: Yes you can have it. If he didn't want you to have it he said: No, you can't have it. You had no choice but what could you do? You could argue with him all day, but he loved that. So you were pretty well – if he told you no, it was no.

But you know what? You'd be surprised that we can handle those over here. You'd be surprised that if you don't want to be open and transparent, at least be open and transparent about the fact that you don't want to be open and transparent.

That's what I believe. You're saying: No, we're going to keep that information to yourself, we're going to keep it from Islanders. We'd sit here and say: Okay, well, thank you for being open and transparent about your unwillingness to be open and transparent. Not a lot to ask for.

It's one of those things for me that I think we owe it to Islanders. The Budget's big. You guys spend a lot of money. You ratcheted taxes up. You ratcheted spending up. Tax-and-spend Liberals – they're saying it all over the countryside, tax-and-spend Liberals.

And you know what? It's the tax-and-spend – if you're going to raise taxes and you're going to raise spending, Islanders deserve to

have openness and transparency every step along the way.

Things like the Mill River deal, we can't stop them from happening. The executive branch of government makes those decisions, fine. Do I think it's a bad deal? Yes, absolutely. I suspect many of you over there do, too, and that's fine. You should. Because you should think it's a bad deal because it's a bad deal.

But if government wants to defend it, I welcome them to it, but I also urge them to come forth with all the information: All the correspondence, all the letters, all the loan agreements, all the offers, all the evaluations. Let Islanders decide for themselves.

This isn't a private entity. You're not selling your potato warehouse. This is actually open for public debate whether or not it's a good deal. If you own your house and you sell it, it doesn't matter to me what you sell it for nor does it matter to anyone else and nor is it any of their business. But if you buy a house and government covers 90% of the costs and then you find another 500,000 to cover your portion of the cost, there's an issue with that. I have an issue with that.

Can you imagine how many Islanders would be happy if government bought them a house? Well somebody in West Prince got bought a golf course and a resort and a campground and a fun park. Like, what world am I living in?

You know what? If I had been in a coma for five years and I woke up and read that, I'd be like: No, get me the real paper, not the joke one. That can't be true. That can't be really news. Nobody does that. Nobody makes deals like that. Then I'd look and say: Oh the Liberals are in, of course. That makes more sense now. It makes more sense because the Liberals are in.

We just need government to listen to what we've been saying for six years. We just need government to listen and say: Yeah, I can understand that this isn't my money.

Some of you came in here in 2007, and I know the minister of economic development was talking about Polar Foods. Don't forget what happened in 2007 and all the

information that – you had access to it all. You may as well tell your own story now as to have somebody else tell it for you later. The Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park knows exactly what I'm saying. Tell your story now, because when somebody else gets to see the books they're going to tell your story on you. That's what open and accountability brings to any government of any day.

Mr. LaVie: Still wet behind the ears.

Mr. Myers: There's an opportunity here to be a different kind of government after 10 years. Probably unlikely, but there's an opportunity after 10 years to bring something different to the table: Honesty, openness, transparency, and accountability; the four pillars of government. Things all people are really looking for. People see through all the rest of it.

Everyone knows it because everyone spends time out and about. Everyone hears it. Everyone goes to the coffee shops. You all know this, and you know it's what people want – except the Premier. He probably doesn't go to the coffee shops, but –

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: At the law firm water coolers. I've got to get my information somewhere. You should be worried about where I'm getting my information, if you only knew. You'll know – I'll tell you by the end of next week, you'll know. By the end of next week you'll know.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) water coolers (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: It's going to be great. I can't wait. Born on third and he thinks he hit a triple.

Anyway, folks, there's a time for accountability, there's a time for openness, there's a time for honesty, there's a time for transparency, and I believe that time is now. Join us, stand with us, the Tory party of Prince Edward Island, and support open, honest government.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I will now call on the seconder of the motion to speak to the motion, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour to rise today and speak to this motion. I want to thank, actually, the Liberal government for – they're probably the biggest reason I'm here, because I had no interest in politics at all, and following the last eight years – I guess nine years, now – but eight years prior to the election and seeing the corruption that was happening on Prince Edward Island and the scandal, it was a pretty easy decision for me to put my name in the ballot.

I was your average Joe Islander. Went to work every day, worked hard, came home to my family, and I was getting tired of seeing what was going on, what was saying.

I'll never forget the first one. The first one was an election promise in 2008 by Robert Ghiz that HST would not come into effect, right? I remember that like it was yesterday.

Three months later, what happens? HST comes into effect.

Something so simple, and that sticks in my mind to this day. And why: Because it affected my household. It affected Islanders' households.

It started from there. That was probably the first day I really got interested in politics and watching what took place.

Mr. Trivers: And it wasn't revenue neutral.

Mr. MacKay: What also I've seen –

Mr. Trivers: Like the carbon tax isn't going to be revenue neutral.

Mr. MacKay: – the PNP program. That was a great program –

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, April 19th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry?

Carried.

Have a good evening.

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