

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Hansard, Published by Order of the Legislature

Second Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly

Tuesday, 9 May 2017

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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.

Welcome everyone back to our week six of this sitting of the Legislature. A special welcome to those watching at home or via the Internet – want to extend a particular welcome to the group of nurses led by Mona O’Shea: registered nurses who are in the gallery and will be introduced later.

I’d like to recognize on the order of 30 neighbours who got together last night for the annual cemetery clean up at the West Covehead cemetery. I have been at this many years and I don’t think we’ve seen a year when things were so vibrant coming from the soil. The grass is growing. It’s a great spring to get to this point.

This being National Nursing Week we are, of course, ever mindful of the work of nursing professionals across our province and for the tireless contributions they make to our health and well-being.

As I have mentioned the President of the PEI Nurses Union, Mona O’Shea is here. We spoke earlier today. She said that’s the first time she got a call from the Premier about nurses’ week. The organization represents 1,150 registered nurses in various capacities across the province.

Yesterday, Stacey Turnbull, an RN, who works at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, was presented with the annual Marjorie Vessey Award. I might say that I’d make a special acknowledgement of a nurse, who I see, directly, making things work in the office of the doctor where she works, Cheryl MacDonald. In fact, was before with Dr. Harry Callaghan, and now Dr. Peter Hooley.

You can get a sense of just how important nurses are – in the same sense, I want to recognize my aunt Wanda Mallett may be watching today: a nurse of longstanding. I was just counting it up, I have six first cousins who are registered nurses. I want to

salute all the nurses in the province and thank them for their work.

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 everyone back to the Legislature and I especially want to welcome all the nurses here, Mona, you and I have talked before and I’m actually very proud. My wife is a nurse, and something I was always against was, she gave her license up to help me enter into private business and small business on PEI. She has gone back to university. I’m very proud of the fact that Debbie is enrolled in the University of Edmonton. She is on her second block now and she hopes to be back nursing, possibly, in Prince County by the end of the year, first of January. I’m very proud of her for that.

I would also like to recognize Alan Mulholland, welcome to the Legislative Assembly today. I’m actually looking forward, Mr. Premier, to a week number seven. Let’s not rush week number six. Let’s get on – way we go. Have a good day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: I’m looking forward to 10.

Mr. Myers: As they say in Cardigan: Buckle up.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to welcome everybody back to week six. Also, to the nurses who are here. I, particularly, say hi to Mona, and to Karalee McAskill who is here. I have spent some time with Karalee recently on a number of things.

I also want to make mention of a couple of things that happened over the weekend. There was a fundraiser in Crapaud at the

community hall organized by Kelly MacKinnon who lost her son a couple of years ago to suicide. It was a really lovely event. Kelly has sort of turned around her sadness and her pain and she's putting that forward in all kinds of positive ways. I don't know how much money they raised ultimately. Last year, it was over \$3,000. From the look of the crowd there I would imagine it would be about the same this year.

I was happy to be part of Reading Town week this weekend, where I read some of the books that I used to read to my kids 25-30 years ago. It was a really poignant thing for me to do and I loved that.

I also want to make note that 25 years ago today was the date of the Westray disaster in Nova Scotia. Given that my dad spent some of his working life as a miner, I have some sense of what the demands of that job are and the dangers. I think it's appropriate that we remember that it was 25 years ago that all of those miners lost their lives next door.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, here would like to recognize all the nurses in attendance today; Eddie; Mr. Mulholland; and Ewen Stewart, that's – used to go back to my road runner days.

I'd also like to remind everybody that the Rotary Radio Bingo is tonight, Tuesday night, and I'm hoping everybody will get their bingo cards.

On a pleasant note, I'd like to mention that my daughter Tara Jeffery is graduating from UPEI this Saturday with a Masters in Education.

On a sadder note, I'd like to recognize that Rielly Flood Docherty has passed away on Sunday. He was a twelve-year old with cerebral palsy and the son of Glen Flood – Glen, and Glen has been a great advocate for his son, taking him everywhere in the last little while, and it's so great that they spent

that time together that they could before he passed away, and he's done great work for us, the Rotary's Easter Seals campaign in regards to cerebral palsy, and I'd like to extend my condolences to the family.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'd like to rise and welcome all that may be viewing in from home today – watch the proceedings here in the House – and to say hello to all in the gallery today; a very full gallery it is.

Eddie Lund is back. Ewen Stewart, who's in the gallery today, and Ewen has done a solar project at his house that I'm hoping to get out to see very soon. I'm looking forward to having a look at a great project that Ewen has done.

As well, all the nurses that are in the gallery today, and as referenced already, Mona O'Shea, I'll say a lifetime friend of mine, as well as her husband Matt; it's great to have you in the House, Mona, as well as all the nurses.

Karalee McAskill is also in the House, a known Island environmentalist, and does a lot of work in their North River watershed group as well. Welcome to all of you today

The work that nurses do on PEI is certainly invaluable. I have several nurses in my immediate family, and I know exactly just how much it means to go to work every day and take care of people and how much people appreciate that you do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise again today, as well, and welcome all those back from the weekend and those that are in the public gallery and especially those that are viewing at home on TV or online in District 22 Summerside-St. Eleanors.

This past weekend, Summerside was alive and hopping. I was down at Credit Union Place on Saturday, and where the chamber of commerce was holding their first annual Choose Summerside event, and it exceeded everyone's expectations. There were over 1,500 people through the doors of Credit Union Place that day. We had 75 businesses there. There were food vendors, community organizations, and the feedback has been absolutely incredible. Nancy Quinn, Jane Sharpe, and their team pulled together an amazing event that exceeded everyone's expectations, and I want to congratulate them, tip my hat to them, and say I can't wait until next year.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

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

It's my pleasure, as well, to rise and welcome Ewen Stewart to the House here today, and Eddie Lund, as well as all the nurses.

I think the nurses are really the unsung heroes of our health care system. It was a couple of weeks ago I had watched a video on Facebook that came up where there was a nurse that came upon a car crash and he took the victim of the car crash out of the car. He was non-responsive and required CPR, and the nurse provided it until the first responders came. Right after that he got up and went to his shift at work with no hope of any praise or anything like that; and that's exactly what our nurses do every day and they do it so well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone back in the House today. I'd like to recognize the nurses in the gallery today, notably Audrey Fraser, a good friend, and Mary MacPherson – we call her Mary Lynwood out our way as she's Lynwood MacPherson's wife, former MLA for the area, and it's great to have you here. She's a neighbour of mine on the Ponds Road.

I want to also recognize all the nursing staff at the Dr. John Gillis Memorial Lodge and the caregivers there. They do a fantastic job with the residents – and really, all nurses across the province and the valuable contribution you make to society and to Islanders.

I'd also like to recognize Alan Mulholland and Ewen Stewart. Ewen's a fellow Caledonian Club member with myself.

Also, a big announcement in our family – this week we had a new filly on Saturday evening. We don't have a name yet, but she looks strong and she's got nice, long legs. We figure we have big days ahead with her.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be back again in the Legislature this week and I'll send greetings out as well to my constituents of Tyne Valley-Linkletter and welcome, all our nurses that are in the gallery – and Eddie Lund, back again with us. Kudos to all of the nurses and health care staff right across Prince Edward Island.

On Saturday I had the great pleasure to host a great event in the Tyne Valley area at the Tyne Valley Tea and Company Celebration of Women in Business. There were approximately 20 women entrepreneurs gathered from the area. We had representatives from Skills PEI with us and from the CBDC in West Prince, as well as Hannah Bell from the PEI Business Women's Association.

It was a great afternoon of sharing information and getting to know each other and the remarks were very positive about what great things they felt were happening in the West Prince area. It was just an overall around positive gathering of strong women and the contribution that they're making to the area and to our province. I want to congratulate all of those women that joined us and those that were not – and those women right across Prince Edward Island that do make contributions to our economy and to their community through their business and their entrepreneurship.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise, as well, in the Legislature today and especially to send out greetings to the integral nursing staff that have attended here today and wish them all the best during National Nursing Week.

In particular – I don't want to miss anyone or signal anyone out – but Mona O'Shea used to be one of my constituents and is the current president of the PEI Nurses' Union, and a very good friend of mine, Audrey Fraser, who is in charge of the Association of Registered Nurses of Prince Edward Island.

I had the pleasure, as I often do, on, not a daily basis, but as frequently as I can get out there, to Beach Grove Home to visit my mother early this morning. While I was there, I made sure that I made a point of saying hello to all the nurses and wishing them all the best for a great Nursing Week and thanking them, as always, for their hard work and dedication to providing excellent health care on PEI.

I would be remiss if I didn't send out a special greeting to one of my favourite nurses here on PEI, Darrell Chaisson.

Also, I'd like to just mention a very important person that I feel has served this province and the people of PEI extremely

well over quite a few years. There was an announcement came out, I think Friday – or over the weekend – with regards to the retirement of the Deputy Minister of Family and Human Services, Teresa Henneberry. Teresa is a very good friend of mine – again, one of my constituents and I was a little surprised to see her retirement, but I know she probably deserves a good rest because she is, probably, one of the hardest working individuals within that level of government. So, I do wish Teresa all the best with her future endeavors.

With that, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, want to welcome back all my colleague to the House today. It's great to be here. I want to welcome all my constituents who may be watching from District 18, Rustico-Emerald and everybody here in the gallery.

Of course, I want to wish all of the nurses here a happy National Nursing Week. It's so important the work that nurses do. I especially wanted to recognize Karalee McAskill who not only is a nurse, but also a great advocate for watershed groups and heads the North River Watershed Citizens Group. But also, is a fantastic face painter. My daughter was taken under her wing and helped her out at the event at the school of sustainability –engineering – so that was great and it's great to see you here.

I wanted to mention a couple of other nurses from my district; Sherrie Langley, who is a neighbour and a good friend, and Kim Reid, whose husband I play music with, and also Kathy Walsh who's my wife's aunt, and a new nurse who just graduated is one of my constituents, Jiselle Baker. I wanted to wish them a recognition here on National Nursing Week.

I also wanted to recognize Alan Mulholland, who is here in the gallery. It's good to see you.

Finally, I wanted to comment that we had a great gathering last night. We had a meeting about high-speed Internet access in the Stanley Bridge area, and there were over 80 people that came out and we had a bunch of Internet service providers that came out. I wanted to thank them for their participation, and I wanted to thank government as well. There were a couple of directors; one from economic development and one from IT support services that came out and were able to help lend some information to the meeting. High-speed Internet continues to be an issue of major importance, and I look forward to seeing what this government is going to do to help address it.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everyone back for a start of a new week, and especially those that are watching from District 1, Souris-Elmira at home and to everyone in the gallery, especially the press who are with us again today, and to the nurses. Not only the nurses that are in the gallery with us today, but nurses right across PEI.

I use nurses a lot. In my hockey days, I was a rough –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – old player and these nurses looked after me well. As I'm getting older, these wounds are coming back on me and I had a couple of hospital stays and these nurses really take care of you. I can't say enough about the nurses in PEI.

There were a couple of individuals in my district that I want to give a big shout-out to, and one of them is Bobby Rafuse. Bobby Rafuse won an award for outstanding volunteer in the festivals and events. That award is only given out to one person in Kings County, and Bobby got it this year; Bobby Rafuse from Souris, for the special events he does with the town of Souris. That's quite an honour to get when you're the only one in Kings County.

The second one is a nurse, Wendy Poole, and most of you would know Wendy. She did receive an outstanding achievement award. The purpose of this award is to recognize RNs and NPs who have made an outstanding contribution to the health and well-being of the public and the enhancement of the nursing profession. I know Wendy well and I know her husband well, so to Wendy Poole and Bobby Rafuse; I congratulate them both.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Before I call for Member's Statements, I want to recognize everybody, or at least welcome everybody, to the gallery today.

But in particular, we have a young lad there by the name of Christian Hansen. Christian is in the gallery today, and he is the new Legislative Assembly's student intern and visitor's guide for the summer months. Christian will be located on the first floor of the Coles building once the House closes, so if you want to go on a good tour, he's the man to see.

Also while I'm at it, I might as well carry on and welcome Eddie Lund, a faithful constituent of mine and also Ewen Stewart, a great neighbour of mine; and Alan Mulholland, nice to see you here and also the nurses.

Now, if anybody here today didn't feel very good when they came in here, you should be feeling an awful lot better now with all of those nurses. I know I feel an awful lot better to be surrounded with such great professionals who provide (Indistinct) –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Speaker: – and –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) need my blood pressure checked sometime (Indistinct)

Speaker: – I noticed my cousin, Karalee – Karalee McAskill, a cousin of mine here; good to see you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

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

Gary MacDougall former editor *The Guardian*

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

I am pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate former Guardian editor Gary MacDougall.

Last weekend in St. John's Newfoundland, he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Atlantic Journalism Awards. The award is presented to an individual who has demonstrated a lifetime of dedication to journalistic excellence in Atlantic Canada.

Gary began his newspaper career as a paperboy in Tyne Valley and he went on to work in journalism for 47 years, including 20 years as the managing editor of *The Guardian*.

Through his work, Gary developed a strong interest in the history of the newspaper industry and the important place *The Guardian* held in this province.

He was a key contributor to *The Guardian's* book marking the 125th anniversary. But he says his proudest day was September 29th, 2003, so was it for me. Not only were Islanders facing a devastation from Hurricane Juan, but they had to go to the polls to vote in the provincial election. With the power out for most of the day, *The Guardian* was still able to produce 12 pages of stories on the hurricane and the election results.

Over the years Islanders have relied on *The Guardian* to keep them informed of important events around the world and here on Prince Edward Island.

I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in wishing Gary all the best in his retirement. Also, to thank him for making *The Guardian* live up to its tagline, which is Covers Prince Edward Island Like The Dew.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot.

Bluenose Crew

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm standing in the House today to congratulate two young men from my district who are realizing their dreams. Patrick Martin will be working as a deckhand aboard the *Bluenose II* for the next six months. He will be joining another fellow sailor from Summerside, Alex Lapp, who is already onboard.

This is definitely a once in a lifetime opportunity for these two sailors, both recent graduates of the Holland College Marine Training Centre in Summerside. They will be taking part in some good old fashioned ship work, which is very challenging, but both men welcome the opportunity to learn many new things aboard this legendary vessel.

They will be putting their practical sailing skills to use onboard this travelling ship as it is equipped with minimal modern technology. The ship is currently docked in Lunenburg. The *Bluenose II* will be making many excursions in celebration of Canada 150. Scheduled appearances include Quebec and Boston.

It is estimated that the boat will receive upwards of 80,000 visitors, so Patrick and Alex will be putting their people skills to good use. I have no doubt they will be demonstrating that famous hospitality that Islanders are known for.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish Patrick and Alex smooth sailing as they embark on this six-month excursion of a lifetime.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

National Nursing Week

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to rise today and recognize National Nursing Week. The Canadian Nurses Association theme this year is #YESThisIsNursing.

Often we have a narrow mind when thinking of the role of a nurse. Part of this year's theme is to raise awareness on the unexpected places and the real impact nurses have on them. Examples of these range from homecare to health policy and even the military.

The role of nursing is changing at a fast pace. Levels of care provided and the advancements in technology and digital technologies have dramatically changed the way care is delivered to a patient.

Nurses work at every point across the continuum of care in public health: acute care, long-term care, homecare, palliative care, just to name a few.

Nurses are one of our top health care providers. They often go above and beyond to ensure a patient is always cared for and receive the best treatment possible, as witnessed by the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

I am happy to take this opportunity to thank all nurses across Prince Edward Island for the contributions to the Island health care system.

I think it is important this week for each of us to take the time and if we see a nurse, or if we know someone who is in the nursing field, to thank them for what they do, and educate ourselves on the important role that they play in our health care system.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, last week we established that it was the finance minister and not the justice department fielding

phone calls from the RCMP. The minister finally admitted he referred the RCMP to the secretary of Treasury Board en route to speaking to a staff at ITSS.

RCMP and government staff re: e-gaming

Minister: Who were the particular staff members, within government, which the RCMP ended up speaking to?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I stated last week, I did receive a phone call. I had no conversation. I simply passed the officer onto Dan Campbell. Where it went from there, Mr. Speaker, I did not inquire.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the finance minister knew it was inappropriate, but he still took the call. He directed the RCMP around to who he thought was the best to talk to.

Will the finance minister explain why he has chosen to deflect and downplay his involvement in the scandal surrounding e-gaming?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think there was anything untoward about taking a phone call, referring the phone call onto one of my staff members. That individual was the correct person to refer the phone call to because that person oversees, and all of ITSS report to him. It was the appropriate manner in which to use that. I certainly did not ask about the inquiry in any way. I simply referred the phone call

because the officer wanted to speak to somebody from IT services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Finance minister and Public Accounts

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the very first response in the minister's testimony to the Public Accounts Committee was that he has never been briefed on e-gaming and the first time he became aware of the schemes was early 2013.

I have here today an email from deputy Melissa MacEachern to her minister, the now finance minister, dated August 7th, 2012.

It reads, by the way of email: An update on Simplex, global transaction platform for PEI.

Minister: Why does the truth not match up to your testimony at Public Accounts?

Mr. Myers: Great question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, have the exact same email with me here today. In that email is exactly what I responded to when I was asked the question. That was, in fact, exactly what I responded to when I was asked the question is what is contained in that email.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Withholding of information re: e-gaming

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this email from Melissa MacEachern went to the current Minister of Finance and Wes Sheridan on

August 7th, 2012. This minister has claimed he only found out about the scandals after the fact.

In this email briefing, point one reads: Innovation PEI executed a confidential MOU with Trinity Bay, TBT North American Simplex several weeks ago in order to enter into discussions on the nature of the relationship between IPEI and TBT.

Minister: Why have you been withholding information of your involvement in these schemes from this House?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that if the hon. member wants to check Hansard he'll find that I answered that question directly. I did say I was aware that there was an MOU in place, and I was advised by my deputy minister –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) headline in *The Guardian*.

Mr. Roach: – at the time that that was the case.

Mr. Myers: March 1st.

Mr. Roach: – and it's in Hansard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Never been briefed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Starting to choke?

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I quote from the minister, "I think the first time I heard anything in detail about that MOU, I think was there was an article written in a Toronto newspaper." 2015.

Mr. Trivers: That's what you said.

Deletion of records and emails

Mr. MacKay: Minister, this is another example of why all the records and the emails of your deputy, Melissa MacEachern, were all destroyed, and not given to the Auditor General?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I clearly answered that question. I clearly stated that I was aware of that MOU –

Mr. Myers: No, you didn't.

Mr. Roach: – a long time ago in this House –

Mr. Myers: No, you didn't.

Mr. Roach: – and on Hansard.

At that time, all I was aware of was that there was a meeting taking place –

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Trivers: Oh!

Mr. Roach: – between a couple of companies –

Mr. Myers: Keep your stories straight, or tell the truth.

Mr. Roach: – I was not –

Speaker: Hon. member –

Ms. Biggar: Keep track of that.

Speaker: – let the hon. Minister of Finance answer the question.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) correction on that.

Mr. Myers: You you'll get a retraction.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Carry on.

Mr. Roach: Again, in this Legislature. I clearly identified, you can find it in Hansard if anyone wants to take the time to look for

it, that I was aware that there was an MOU between companies.

I had no idea what that meeting was about, other than there was a meeting to talk about a financial platform and that there was an MOU in place and that was the end of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, when the Auditor General testified at Public Accounts she stated: The minister advised her that he was not aware of the details of the MOU.

This email from his deputy in August, 2012 updated the minister on the MOU and exactly what was going on.

Withholding of information re: e-gaming (further)

Minister, why did you withhold your knowledge of these schemes from the Auditor General?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Simply, what I was updated on was the fact that there was going to be a meeting, that there was an MOU in place, and that these were just conversations that were being held, and that if anything should come out of the meetings that there would be a business plan coming forward, at which time I would probably have a look at it, but nothing ever came out of those meetings, Mr. Speaker, that I was aware of.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Deputy briefing on Simplex and financial services

Mr. MacKay: Minister, why was your deputy briefing Wes Sheridan on the facts around Simplex and financial services, something that was running out of your department?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing that was being run out of my department at the time. That was an MOU that was in place to talk about a financial platform; that's all I was made aware of. And, certainly, within that email, should anything further come of it, I would be advised, and there was never a business plan or any kind of an offer to anyone that ever came out of it that I was aware of, and that was the last I had to do with it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Secret MOU and former colleague

Mr. MacKay: Minister, can you explain why your former colleague, Wes Sheridan, wanted to know about the secret MOU and why you and your deputy kept him informed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I've explained a number of times my involvement with it in this file, and I can't explain what any other minister may think or what action they took; that wasn't my role where I was at that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Confidence in Minister of Finance

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Finance has not been forthcoming with Islanders. He has not been forthcoming with the Auditor and he's not been forthcoming with this House.

Question to the Premier: Given today's explosive revelations, will you be asking for his resignation, or does the finance minister continue to have your confidence?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I think the finance minister's doing a great job, and he has my confidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister's reputation isn't shattered, and it appears like he's acting like he has a weak association with the truth.

Question to the Premier: Why is misconduct not enough for his resignation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we're in the sixth week of this House. At the end of the first week, the finance minister presented a balanced Budget for the first time in more than 10 years; enables our government to serve Islanders and identify priorities and address them.

And, on Friday of this past week, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council released a report looking at all four provinces and I'll quote: Prince Edward Island holds the strongest fiscal position among the Atlantic Provinces, reporting a balanced budget and balanced out – the provincial debt per capita sits at the median for non-Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Myers: That's weak – that's the weakest answer (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The finance minister has my confidence, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad there are some nurses in the gallery today, because it looks like your blood pressure's going right through the roof. You may need to be checked on before this Question Period is over if you're going to continue to cover for your finance minister.

This minister's in deep, and he's fielding calls from the RCMP, and he's misrepresenting his involvement in these schemes. He's misrepresenting his whole involvement in these schemes.

This explains the Premier's protection and the Premier's poor judgment.

Finance minister and e-gaming scandal

Question to the Premier: Is this minister's deep involvement in these schemes why you handpicked him to lead the cover up in your e-gaming scandal and deleted emails disgrace?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me give the opposition a couple of other numbers to think about.

The growth in Prince Edward Island's GDP –

Mr. Myers: End of your government right here today bud.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in 2016: 2.4%, third in the country, tied with Manitoba.

And I'll give the member opposite something else to think about: My blood

pressure's 110 over 70. They tell me it's that of a teenager.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to see that running from the truth is a joke to this Premier; this Premier who said he was going to be better than Robert Ghiz; this Premier that said that it was going to be different under his watch.

This Premier makes a joke out of honesty in this House.

Mr. Speaker, this email from Melissa MacEachern to her minister is a detailed brief of Simplex's transaction platform. In fact, the deputy states Trinity Bay is TBT North American Simplex.

Simplex/CMT connection to Trinity Bay

Premier, why then does your filed defense in the \$50 million e-gaming lawsuit claim government had no idea Simplex or CMT were connected to Trinity Bay?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters talks about running from the facts; we keep reminding of the facts: Balanced Budget –

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Premier MacLauchlan: Record economic growth; best fiscal position in the region –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'll give you another fact: The lawsuit that they're now going through the entrails of for the second time was thrown out because there's of no significance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I'll be glad as the day continues to prove your insignificant comment wrong, Mr. Premier.

But I'm going to ask you to answer the question. You haven't answered a single question in this Question Period. You got up and you read from some document and then you talked about facts that aren't even the facts of what I've –

I want an answer to this question: Why does your filed defense of this \$50 million e-gaming lawsuit claim that government had no idea Simplex and CMT were connected to Trinity Bay? Can you answer that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Myers: Oh, no more quotes.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: – nothing to read –

Mr. Roach: I think it's quite clear that this matter is back again before the courts, and it certainly would be inappropriate for anyone in here –

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Roach: – to speak to the merit or lack of merit –

Mr. Trivers: I thought it was thrown out.

Mr. Roach: – on this particular thing that's – issue that's before the courts.

Mr. Myers: The Premier was talking about it.

Mr. Roach: And it was dismissed once, and it's the same old gang back again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take a lecture from this minister on what goes on in this House and what's before the courts. His own boss just talked about the same lawsuit. It's this minister who won't give us the straight facts, and that's why I'm asking his boss to straighten it out, but he's too scared to stand for the truth. He's too scared to –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) your boss.

Mr. Myers: He's too scared to go against the Robert Ghiz government. He's too scared of Robert Ghiz.

Government's lawsuit defense says Simplex and CMT had nothing to do with Trinity Bay. This email proves that that's false, and this government knows it.

This email also reveals that Billy Dow met at least twice with Trinity Bay's lawyer months before Dow acknowledged his conflict of interest and double-dealing.

Insider trading and conflict of interest re: Billy Dow

Question to the Premier: Why does there continue to be no consequences for insider trading and conflict of interest when it comes to Billy Dow?

An Hon. Member: There we go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance of course is correct to remind the House that this matter is before the courts. What I was reminding the House is it was before the court once before and was thrown out on a summary judgment as being in effect vexatious and of no substance, and that's where the matter stands. The parties are back, and that's what the government is defending, and it's defending the taxpayers of this province –

Mr. MacKay: You're just costing the taxpayers (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – the taxpayers of this province who are being –

Mr. MacKay: This is going to cost the taxpayers by the time you're done.

Premier MacLauchlan: – who are being faced with parties from outside the province who are coming back to take a second kick at it, and they're obviously being abetted by the opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've never seen such a disgrace for a Premier in my life as I've seen today. This is disgraceful. Your Question Period's disgraceful. The fact that you won't let the truth come out is disgraceful. The fact that you are willing to defend the sins of those who came before you is disgraceful.

I have here, it says: Our lawyer, Bill Dow, myself, and Cheryl Paynter met with TBT subsequent to signing the MOU to discuss next steps.

I also have: Bill Dow and I will meet later this week with TBT to review the work plan.

The same lawyer met with Billy Dow to discuss the MOU multiple times, and it was even the same lawyer who signed the MOU for Trinity Bay.

Question to the Premier: How can you continue to defend the illegal actions of Billy Dow?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I will defend the taxpayers of this province from a lawsuit that has come back the second time and that the opposition is trying to drag onto the floor of this Legislature, because that is

our job as government is to stick up for the interest of taxpayers, and certainly, when a group comes back for the second time after having been thrown out once, to make sure that that's exactly what we do, is stick up for our reputation and for the taxpayer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What, in effect, this government has done is expose Island taxpayers to a \$50 million lawsuit. It wasn't my work. It wasn't something that we did over here, though I guess we exposed your secret scheme at one point. You had an opportunity to clear this up. As a matter of fact, on CBC, before the election two years ago, you said that you would.

Question again to the Premier: Why do you continue to defend the illegal actions of Billy Dow?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, what I said on CBC is that we would defer this to the Auditor General, which we did. She gave it a thorough investigation. She reported to this House. She appeared before committee and I hear the member opposite referring to illegal actions and from everything I can tell from what the Auditor General reported, she did not report that there were illegal actions. So I'll call on the opposition to tame their language and speak to the facts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Referring case of Billy Dow to RCMP

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I feel bad for the Auditor General because what the Premier here is doing today is bringing shame to her role. Her job isn't to say whether or not there should be legal actions against anyone and you know it. You're the one that's twisting the facts here today and you should be embarrassed for putting the Auditor General in the situation you did. But let's go back to Billy Dow. Billy Dow is the top bag man for your Liberal Party, which likely explains why you're so willing to protect him.

Premier: Will your government act specifically on the Billy Dow file and what the auditor has observed and refer this case to the RCMP today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has a job to do. She serves the people of this province. She serves this Legislature. What she was asked to do was entirely within her mandate and she did a good job, and I'm not taking anything away from here on that. It certainly was clear that she said she didn't think there was any criminal activity and I take her word for that.

I understand that other parties have undertaken to send something to the RCMP, but there's nothing before me that suggests that that would be an appropriate action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question again to the Premier: Why do you continue this cover-up and why won't you ensure that somebody pays the price? Why won't you ensure that there is some consequences for the people that are involved in this?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the actions that the opposition continue to go back to were behind us by mid or by early 2012.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: The Auditor General looked into this. She brought a full report, she appeared before committee, she made recommendations – 15 of them. We've acted on all 15. I'll be tabling legislation later today to act further on those.

I'm proud of how we've responded to that, what we're learning from it, and of the good government that we continue to give to the people of this province and of the benefits that the people of this province continue to see in the economic growth, in the jobs. I didn't mention that; 2,500 new jobs in the past 12 months reported last Friday; tied with British Columbia, or in there with British Columbia for number one and two for jobs growth in this country, but that's what the opposition doesn't want to talk about because they know things are going so well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I do know is that you trail your own party by 20 points and your popularity is as low as it can possibly be in Prince Edward Island.

Premier MacLauchlan: I do what I've got to do.

Finance minister first learning of e-gaming scheme

Mr. Myers: It's as low as it can possibly be in Prince Edward Island and I know you think it's a joke, but when you finally take the knives out of your back, before Old Home Week, you'll find yourself out of a job and everybody in here knows it.

I'm going to go back to the Minister of Finance. You've had some time to think

about this. You've had some time to reflect on what you once told us – is that: I think the first time I heard anything in detail about the MOU; I think there was an article written in the Toronto newspaper.

Will you confirm to this House today whether that is the case – that in 2015 was the first time you ever heard about it – when Robyn Doolittle wrote about it – or, back in 2012 when the member up front here has the email where you were brought up to speed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I know I clearly stated in this House and we'll search answer and we'll find it, but I did say clearly that I was aware of the MOU that took place in 2012. I was aware of it because the deputy minister came in and told me that we were going to be signing an MOU with a group to look at a financial platform and, clearly, the first time I heard anything about e-gaming per se, as quote-unquote e-gaming –

Some Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Roach: – not relative was when I read about it in the paper because, Mr. Speaker, I know the timeline of this and I know exactly where I was and what I said. I do stick by what I say here today and I do stick by what I said before in this House –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – that I was aware of what had taken place and when the MOU was being considered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

CLE dept. actions to be open, transparent and accountable

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

The mandate letter for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment states that this government's commitment to openness, transparency, and accountability.

Question to the minister: What is your department doing to be more open, transparent and accountable?

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

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

Certainly since I took over the role of Minister of Communities, Land and Environment I've worked closely with staff to provide open and transparent information when it comes to putting it online – all aspects of work that we do within the department, not only the department of environment, but the department of municipalities and planning and, as well, the department of fish and forest and wildlife. All departments have been indicated that we expect all information that all Islanders want to see is available for them to have a look at, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Appearance of witness to committee re: fish kills

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

In January, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries requested for the second time a witness from your department to appear to explain the delay in reporting of the fish kills – better called river kills – which occurred last season. The department has yet to allow the witness to appear before the committee.

A question to the minister: Why is your department delaying the appearance of a witness to discuss this issue?

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

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

I believe there was a letter recently sent back that said that when time permits there will be a member from my department that will attend to the committee for open discussions on those such items that were asked for.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Department collaboration on water act re: aquatic systems

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

When the new water act comes into force, we'll likely see stronger management enforcement of water contamination and I'm grateful for that. However, the new regulations will have little impact unless we address the roots of the problem. In the case of river kills, that root is very often agricultural practices.

Minister: What measure are you and the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries exploring that would work with the future water act to reduce the impact of agriculture on our aquatic systems?

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

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

Over the last year, with the development of our new agriculture officers within our department, I've been very pleased to say the relationship with our agriculture industry has moved in leaps and bounds. This is a group of individuals that go out and help those in the agriculture sector get into compliance, educate them on where they need to be today and it's been very effective. Reporting back has been quite optimistic of how that's going.

As far as the new water act is concerned, there's a complete section on there about the management areas around our watersheds and how we will protect those when it comes to such items as nitrates and pesticides. The agricultural community is looking very forward thinking to working with us and I'm looking forward to some great outcomes there as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Brighton.

Nursing strategy and changes to the profession

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

As was mentioned earlier here today, this is National Nursing Week which provides an opportunity to acknowledge and thank our nurses for the vital role they play in keeping people healthy. Nurses Transforming Healthcare is the three-year strategy that was recently released to set a direction for the nursing profession, given the changing nature of healthcare.

My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness: Can the minister inform the House of the focus of this strategy and the changes the profession is undergoing that led to the need for this strategy?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great question to have with all our nurses here in the gallery. I'm very proud to be the minister that's responsible for developing a nursing strategy. I emphasized that this strategy was created by nurses, for nurses and we did that in many –

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great question to have with all our nurses here in the gallery. I'm very proud to be the minister that's responsible for developing a nursing strategy. But, I emphasize that this strategy was created by nurses for nurses and we did that in many different forms of consultation with some of the unions, some of the frontline workers and we do have a number of strategic priorities. One is building and strengthening recruitment and retention within our nursing profession, creating and sustaining an empowered workforce and environment for our nurses, and fostering excellence in

clinical practice and optimizing the patient experience, and lead through innovation in the optimal care for our many patients that we serve.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Nursing strategy to improve recruitment and retention

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, minister.

Minister, how will this strategy help to address the problem of recruitment and retention of nurses in this province?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

As you are well aware, we have mentioned it a million times in the House here that nurses actually provide the largest profession within our workforce, that deliver healthcare services to Islanders. Part of this strategy is really about trying to make sure that these 1,900 nurses are as effective and productive and feel valued in the work that they do, and some of those goals will be about increasing the number of full-time positions.

We're looking at converting some part-time positions into full-time positions; recruiting new nurse graduates; launching a new graduate guarantee program, which I think will be very helpful for many nurses, and once again, continue to work with our associations and unions in making sure that we have a real good work environment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Minister, how will this strategy improve healthcare for Islanders and will it benefit nurses as well?

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

We really hope that it will benefit our nursing profession, as well as making sure that we're able to recruit and retain the nurses to this profession. As I said before, we have 1,900 nurses and some of those break down into LPNs, RNs, nurse practitioners and I think the big goal in our department is really making sure we have a good, collaborative approach to the delivery of care in this province and I think that's one of the big advantages, is that as we collaborate we can provide the best level of service for an individual that requires patient care in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

French immersion in Charlottetown schools

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Casey: Minister, there are many advantages to those who are able to communicate in Canada's two official languages. Our family recognized this when it was time to send our boys to school and I am pleased to say that they were educated in French from grades one through 12, and to this day can speak French. As a matter of fact, their dad became bilingual when he was elected back in 2011 and I can even say that I'm studying French at Collège de l'Île currently.

Minister: What schools in Charlottetown will be offering French immersion starting in grade one?

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

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

We continue to take great pride in the increase in the number of early and late immersion programs, and the number of students that continue to take French language education here in the province. We will be implementing, as a result of the changes – we will be providing an early immersion program as West Kent Elementary to provide early immersion to children in that zone that traditionally had to attend outside of their zone.

We are very pleased, and we are going to continue to work with the Public Schools Branch to continue to grow French language education and training in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hiring of French specialists

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, because of my experience with the French immersion program with my children, I know it's important that students in the French immersion program received education from teachers who have a specialty in French language.

Minister: Can you let us know if there will be French specialists hired to teach the new French immersion program and how many French language specialists will we require?

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

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

Currently, this graduating class at the University of Prince Edward Island – we have 14 students that are eligible and will be graduating to teach French language education. In the next year we have approximately 20 students that will be trained to teach French language education. Before they actually teach in Island classrooms in immersion and late programs, they are required to take a provincial

proficiency test which they have to reach a particular proficiency level in order to qualify to be eligible to teach French language education.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

French resources at West Kent Elementary School

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, it has taken many years to build a French library at Spring Park Elementary School. What assurances can you give parents, the new French teachers and the students that the same level of resources will be available for the French immersion program at West Kent as there is at Spring Park?

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

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

With the growth and the increase, we've got over 5,000 students participating in early and late immersion programs in our province. The standards and the expectations on training for French language educators are high and we continue to pay very close attention to balance and parity of all French programs and we are committed to making sure that all schools and all children have an equitable access to appropriate resources, teachers and programs.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Finance minister's involvement in e-gaming scheme

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We also have an email exchange during this time period between Wes Sheridan and Chris LeClair concerning this scheme, and it mentions the now finance minister several times.

Minister: We have the proof; will you now finally come clean and tell this House your involvement in this scheme?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have relayed to this House a number of times what my involvement was. I think one of the emails there certainly supports that when I said that I was made aware of a meeting that was going to take place, and there was an MOU signed. As I recall, I think it was actually during the standing committee when the Auditor General was responding to questions from those at the committee – I believe it was the Member from Rustico-Emerald who asked the direct question of the Auditor General. I'd have to refer back and get the wording for sure, but I believe that member asked the Auditor General about my involvement in this and I believe the Auditor General's response was, I was not involved in it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Inside information to Chris LeClair

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's quite possible because the Minister of Finance told her he wasn't involved.

Chris LeClair left the Premier's office and he and Sheridan were working on their own financial scheme. They were competing against the Simplex and they were stacking the deck in their own favour.

Will the minister of finance explain why he was funneling inside information to Chris LeClair during this scheme?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have no knowledge of the conjecture that the member is –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – putting forward to this Legislature; at all.

I would remind everyone here that this matter is now currently before the courts and I have no intentions –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) hiding behind you. You can run, but you can't hide.

Mr. Roach: – of getting into deep debate or discussion on that because it's inappropriate, totally, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chris LeClair wanted the inside track on this deal and Wes Sheridan wrote him stating: The holdup on this file is that innovation has a pending agreement with another firm working in this space that we must honour. Al Roach will get me the associated timeline of this agreement tomorrow from Cheryl or Melissa, and I will pass the info to you.

Will the minister of finance explain why he fed confidential, inside information to Chris LeClair about an MOU that he claims that he knew nothing about?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think once did I say that I was not aware of an MOU. What I was aware of, and

am aware of today, is a lot of the times when these – in almost each instance – when an MOU is in place, the MOU states that you must finish the work with inside that MOU before you can move onto another MOU if it involves whatever is taking place and that's – it was simply myself reading that and that's the end of it. I didn't filter any information to anyone at anytime.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Redacted gaming payments company

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan could not figure out how innovation had set up what we know now as the exclusive MOU.

Chris wrote: Wes, the only one I know, Melissa is speaking to is Philip Walsh in the Simplex post. Then, it says: Redacted: Letter to you with seeking a provincial opinion on whether the business activity was fulfilling gaming payments would be permitted on PEI. We were not asking for anything else. As a result, I don't understand what Melissa and Cheryl's discussion with another company have to do with redacted proposition.

Minister: Will you come clean and tell Islanders who the redacted gaming payments company is that Chris LeClair had partnered with?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was my information at the time, I was aware that there was an MOU. As long as one MOU is in place you cannot speak to another party respecting something of a similar nature. That's written right into the MOU.

Mr. Speaker, it's as simple as that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Missing letter from Chris LeClair to Cheryl Paynter, Wes Sheridan and Al Roach

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wes Sheridan wrote back and he said: Sure thing, Chris. Remember, you copy the same letter to Cheryl and Al Roach when you sent it to me. Al approached me the next day to say they couldn't discuss the option with redacted until the timeline expired with the other company, who I expect to be Simplex.

Will the Minister of Finance explain why this letter he and Cheryl Paynter and Wes Sheridan all received from Chris LeClair has never ever come to light?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Hon. Minister of Finance, before you answer the question, I would just like to remind the hon. member you shouldn't use –

Mr. Myers: Oh, sorry, I was just trying to quote him.

Speaker: – an hon. member's name.

Okay?

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I have always stated that I was aware of the MOU. Within that MOU it says you cannot discuss another file while that MOU was intact, or is in place. Once that MOU expires then you can talk to another party. That was my involvement in that.

That's the end of it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Confidential information re: MOU approved by Department of Finance

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wes Sheridan's answer in this email continued: I have set up two meetings with Melissa to get the details explained to me as to how they shut out other companies while negotiating with another in the same space. Both had been cancelled. The current Minister of Finance has promised to get me the answers tomorrow.

I didn't use his name (Indistinct) anyways.

Will the Minister of Finance tell all Islanders what answers he shared with Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan violating the exclusive and confidential MOU that his own department approved?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had no direct conversation with Wes Sheridan or LeClair on that file. I certainly said to the staff: While that MOU is in place you cannot speak to another party because that's part of the agreement.

It's as simple as that. If I am doing business with one person about a particular business type and I have an MOU, within that MOU it states that I cannot start to have a conversation with another business.

It was that simple. My answer to the deputy was: You can't have a conversation with somebody else while that MOU is in place. That's the way it's written.

It's as simple as that, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Collusion between finance minister, Wes Sheridan and Chris LeClair

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the emails, and I will table them here later today, clearly outline is that this Minister of Finance was funnelling that information to Chris LeClair who was setting up a company that was exactly the same as CMT, which is the basis of the CMT lawsuit.

Question to the minister: Will the Minister of Finance explain his apparent collusion with Wes Sheridan and Chris LeClair?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is nothing to explain because there was no collusion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's very clear by these emails that Chris LeClair left government to start a company that was doing the same thing as a company that this minister had an MOU with. Once they got out there, they started asking for information from this minister and Wes Sheridan was going to this minister and getting the information; funnelled out to Chris so they could cost the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island \$50 million in a lawsuit. That's effectively what you guys did back in the day.

You effectively put us at a risk of losing \$50 million on a lawsuit because you were colluding against a company and trying to help one of your friends.

Question to the minister: What was your reward for conspiring with Chris LeClair and Wes Sheridan on their financial services scheme?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct) balanced budget.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, the hon. member is going into a current case that's before the courts, and it certainly is inappropriate to speak about the merits or lack of merits of that court and that case in this Legislature, and we continue as a government to move forward. We did achieve a balanced budget with a small surplus. We had some of the best growth numbers in terms of GDP across the country. We had some of the best wage growth for Islanders across the country, and that is good work. It's good business for Island businesses and it's good news for every Islander that's out there in PEI.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Statements by Ministers

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the New England states and Eastern Canadian provinces have long shared many social, economic, and family ties.

We have a long history of cross-border travel, trade, and migration between our regions; one relationship that predated European settlement, and in fact, continued despite wars, embargos, and political efforts to reorient economic activity to within national boundaries.

That collaboration between New England and Eastern Canada was formalized in the summer of 1973, when Prince Edward Island hosted the first meeting of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers at the Brudenell resort. That conference brought together the leaders from the six New England states and five Eastern Canadian provinces. As a group, they recognized that by working together toward common goals, they could achieve mutual success.

Since that first meeting, the conference has rotated between Canadian and United States member jurisdictions.

Prince Edward Island last hosted the meeting in 2007, and I'm very pleased to say we will host it again this August from the 27th to the 29th.

I'm very much looking forward to co-chairing the 2017 conference with Governor Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak to three of the New England Governors about the upcoming conference and will speak to the other three in the coming days. In those calls, we emphasized the importance of our historic relationships.

For five of the six New England states, Canada is their number one international market.

In 2016, the New England region represented, at \$282 million, over 21% of Prince Edward Island's international exports; more than a fifth of our total exports to New England.

We also spoke in the conversations yesterday with the governors about new elements to the conference program designed to recognize and reinforce this important trading relationship, and I might say that they are all pro-trade when it comes to their relationship with Canada.

The 2017 conference will, for the first time, include a business-to-business program. The B2B program will give business delegates an invaluable opportunity to connect with other businesses from across the region and on both sides of the border to generate sales, explore cluster development, and discuss partnership opportunities; all that will assist in growing our Prince Edward Island economy.

We will host an energy forum, bringing together leading energy experts from across the region to explore collaborative opportunities to stimulate economic growth and create clean jobs on both sides of the border while transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

We will also be discussing the emergency measures in climate change, areas where we have had extensive cross-border collaboration and cooperation.

Our mighty Island has developed a clear framework for growth with a core objective to economically perform and grow at a rate that exceeds the average for the rest of Canada.

Such balanced and consistent growth requires us to build and foster notional and international partnerships. That is the motivation behind our ongoing efforts to promote trade and relationships with partners in New England and in other key markets.

We welcome the opportunity to explore new connections with our most significant trading partners in the United States. We look forward to many productive discussions with colleagues when they join us on beautiful Prince Edward Island later this summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think regional cooperation is very important and I believe that the New England States and the provinces and the Maritimes should be talking on a more annual basis than what they are, possibly twice a year might be a fitting thing. I think we must be very cognizant about how the New England States and the provinces can work together, especially in times of what we're seeing in climate change.

I'll give current praise to the power crews that we see from Maritime Electric, NB Power, and also New England power when we have catastrophic events: power outages across the region. Where we see our Maritime Electric crews not only go into other provinces, but also down into the New England seaboard.

I can remember one case up in New Brunswick where, basically, a whole section of the Woodstock area was taken care of by New England power. To see them come into our province and give a fitting hand is something we need to keep that relationship going.

I think the economic impact that the provinces and states have on each other is an area that we need to work on and improve and make sure the goods flow across the border in a timely manner and a freer manner. I think with what the possible changes are in the United States with NAFTA and softwood lumber, that we must be very aware of what that could mean for our provinces.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

The Premier prefaced his remarks by talking about the historical connections that have existed between Prince Edward Island and what, of course, is known as the Boston states a long time ago. And the fact that economic trading was largely a north-south venture here prior to confederation. It wasn't an east-national thing. It was between ourselves and what has become the Boston states or the New England States.

I think it's very appropriate that the six leaders from the states and the five premiers from the Atlantic Provinces, or the eastern provinces, I should say, get together regularly.

Two years ago, the focus of the meeting was on the environment; actually, the only time that Prince Edward Island is committed to greenhouse gas reduction commitments. Where in 2015, they committed to, I think, it was a 35% reduction from 1990 levels by 2020. I may be slightly off on that. There were longer term commitments made at that meeting for 85% reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. That remains to this day, the only solid written commitment Prince Edward Island has in that regard.

Last year, the focus of the meeting was on energy and this year it's going to be trade. I look forward to the discussions. I think it's important that we recognize that, although we have these six eastern states and the five eastern provinces, very much the borders associated with them are artificially created. Fish, birds, pollution do not respect these artificial boundaries and that's why it's critical that we have regional discussions and regional cooperation when it comes to dealing with the matters, the crises that we face.

The one thing that I would like to say is, the Premier talked about economic growth. Of course, we need a solid – we need a healthy economy here on Prince Edward Island, but we have to look at the incompatibility of growth everlasting with the ecological capacity of our planet to withstand that.

We are just beginning to understand that we cannot continue to grow forever economically because it's having a detrimental impact on our environment.

I hope in the trade talks and the pursuit of growth, there is an acknowledgement that we cannot forget about the ecological costs of future growth.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to recognize a constituent of mine, Paul Alan, who has joined us here in the Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Nursing Strategy

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As minister, I frequently hear about great things happening in our health care system. In a large part this is thanks to our dedicated nurses.

Within our health care system we have approximately 1,900 nurses including: 18 nurse practitioners, 1,353 registered nurses, one included, my daughter Chantel, and 528 licensed practical nurses.

I want to express my appreciation for each of these nurses and the tireless efforts, compassion and teamwork they display on a regular basis. Our nurses make a tremendous difference in the lives of patients, families and communities across the province. It takes a special person to fulfill a nurse's role.

I especially want to thank all of the nurses, and their unions and associations for their tremendous leadership, support and guidance in helping to develop our province's first ever nursing strategy, which I tabled in the Legislature in early April.

The strategy sets direction for nursing within the province's publicly funded health care system and it was created after consultation with frontline nurses, educational institutions, nursing associations, unions and other health care providers.

I'm confident this strategy will allow us to support the work of these professionals even more effectively so Islanders can continue to receive the highest quality health care when and where they need it.

In the balanced Budget that this government recently tabled in 2017-2018, we are investing an additional \$35 million for the delivery of health care services in this province. Most of which is delivered by the support of our nurses.

I want to thank the nurses who are in the gallery with us today: Becky Gosbee, Audrey Fraser, Vicki Foley and Darrell Chaisson from the Association of Registered Nurses of Prince Edward Island, UPEI nursing student Karalee McAskill, and Mona O'Shea, registered nurse and president of the Prince Edward Island Nurses Union.

Although, health care is ever changing with evolving new technologies and treatments, high quality patient care remains our priority and this is exactly what our nurses provide.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock.

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

I, too, applaud the tremendous work that these individuals do on a daily basis within our health care system here on PEI. I would say the nursing practitioners here on PEI within our health system are actually the heart and soul and the pulse of the health care system.

With the nursing strategy that – there has been a tremendous amount of work has gone into. I think it's a great piece of work. I look forward to holding the government accountable to keeping their feet to the fire to ensure that these strategies are actually carried out and that the nurses get the support that they deserve and require within our health care system.

Quite, too often, when I'm encountering a nurse in their practice, they'll openly tell me that they're overworked, they're overstressed and they need help. If these strategies are going to help address these situations and assist our overall health care system, I applaud that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to add my voice of gratitude and admiration for all that you do. Nurses, of course, as the hon. member just stated, are sometimes called the heart of the health care system and like the heart it works hard, but it's also known as the centre of compassion and love and care. I know, I'm married to a nurse. Nurses go way back in my family. I'm acutely aware of the

dedication and the hard work and the compassion and the love that's required to do the job properly.

Of course, here on Prince Edward Island we have a long history, a very storied history in nursing. I'm thinking of Katherine Dewar's book, which was released, I think, a couple of years ago: *Those Splendid Girls*, a beautiful thing.

She recently started, I believe, on another book about a nurse called Beatrice MacDonald from Bedeque. Who was, although she was Canadian, of course, she was from here, she goes down as the first American casualty in the Great War. She did not die, but she lost an eye to shrapnel. The story of her heroism around the time of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, which we, of course, celebrated, or remembered rather, a few days ago, is quite extraordinary. It's lovely to know that those traditions of valour and care and love and dedication are being carried on in your good selves. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By Command of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the 2015 annual report of the Prince Edward Island Housing Corporation for the period ending March 31st, 2015 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, in response to the MLA from Stratford-Kinlock, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a lab analysis

report by environmental professional with results of testing on the unit at Hunt Court seniors housing which shows no significant mould growth in the unit. I also table the current photograph of the hallway which shows it is in good condition. Damages that had occurred while contractors were working on the roof drains were repaired as part of that project last year.

An Hon. Member: Good job.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table emails between Melissa MacEachern, the current finance minister, and the former finance minister, discussing the email file dated August 7th, 2012 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.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the email chain that I referred to between Wes Sheridan and Chris LeClair and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. members, I wish to advise that pursuant to section 18(1) of the *Electoral Boundaries Act*, I have now received the report of the 2017 Electoral Boundaries Commission and I move that the report of the commission be received and do lie on the table.

Members, before putting the question, I would like to sincerely thank the Hon. Gerard Mitchell, the chair of commission, also commissioners Libby Shaw of

Bloomfield, Kerri Carpenter of Stratford, Lynn Murray of Charlottetown, and Elmer MacDonald of Augustine Cove – along with the staff of Elections PEI which including, of course, Paul Alan who has joined us today for the contentious and thorough manner in which it has conducted its work and for this report. It is much appreciated.

Shall it carry? Carried.

An Hon. Member: Suspense.

Ms. Biggar: Where do we find it?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct). At least we didn't draw it up this time.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah. And we won't be changing it.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Order, order!

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *An Act to Amend the Provincial Court Act*, Bill No. 77, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, would you mind giving us a brief explanation of what this bill is about?

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, these amendments will help strengthen independent court procedures provided for under the Criminal Code of Canada and other statutes by providing for the appointment of judicial justices of the peace.

These amendments will clarify the scope of practice permitted by the different types of justices of the peace. Judicial justices of the peace will have quasi-judicial authority and

responsibility, separate from those justices of the peace currently appointed or employed by the province. These amendments will also provide for an independent means of establishing qualifications, appointment, and discipline for judicial justices of the peace.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection 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: *Public Interest Disclosure and Whistleblower Protection Act*, Bill No. 76, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Premier, could you give us an explanation of what this bill is about?

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This legislation is aimed at strengthening government's approach to public interest disclosure and to protect against reprisals for individuals making disclosures of serious wrongdoing.

It will be presented today for first reading and will be left on the order paper to provide opportunity for consultation over the summer months. The legislation provides for the appointment of a public interest disclosure commissioner. It empowers the commissioner to investigate complaints and sets out the duties and requirements of departments and public entities. The office of the public interest disclosure commissioner will be an independent office of the Legislative Assembly.

The act sets out to whom disclosures can be made, investigative powers, and reporting requirements. It includes measures to protect confidentiality of employees who make a complaint. It prohibits any person from taking or directing a reprisal against an employee for disclosure. It also includes penalties for reprisals, including a fine of up to \$10,000 and the possibility of disciplinary action up to, and including, termination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

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

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

Hon. members, we are on page 138, under the estimates for the Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning. We have read the labour and industrial relations section and that's where the discussion was.

Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll let him get set up before we start into our questions.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Chair.

I am just submitting a few documents from my estimates. One is the breakdown of Supports for Children grants that the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock had asked for, and the other would be the details of debt for housing services division that the hon. Leader of the Third Party had asked for.

Chair: Great, thank you, minister.

Good afternoon, welcome to the table. Could you please introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Brad Colwill Director: Brad Colwill, Director of Finance and Postsecondary Education, Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Chair: Thank you, welcome.

Hon. members, would you like me to continue reading the section, or would you like me to continue with the title and the total?

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, were you able to bring back any of the things that we requested?

Mr. Gallant: Yes, we were hon. member.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

Question from the Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Just to check, Chair, we're in the Labour and Industrial Relations section?

Chair: That's correct.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, great.

I think I asked just as time ran out last time, what service does the Workers Advisory Program provide.

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, the Office of the Worker Advisor is independent of the Workers Compensation Board and assists injured workers and their families to receive the benefits they are entitled to under the

Workers Compensation Act and, in particular, to navigate the appeals process.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can you explain the process for someone who wants to appeal an impairment assistance evaluation? What's the process for that?

Mr. Gallant: Want to answer that, Brad?

Brad Colwill Director: Yeah, sure.

If it's an individual and we have this worker advisory group that is there to assist. Conversely, there is the employer advisory group for businesses where they would make the initial application to the Workers Compensation Board, and should they feel that's unsatisfactory or should they need additional help in navigating, it's this group here that they would help, too, to navigate through that and how they fit within the legislation and regulations.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I sense that the office does not have the resources that it perhaps requires to carry out all the appeals that come before it, so do you know how much this office spends on impairment assessments?

Mr. Gallant: We may have to bring that back, hon. member, if that's okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: And a second question; I suspect you'll have to bring this back, too, but how much have we needed to meet the needs of everybody who requires these assessments?

Mr. Gallant: We'll have to come back with that, too.

Brad Colwill Director: We can bring that back.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Labour and Industrial Relations:
977,400.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

The top of page 139.

SkillsPEI

Would you like me just to read the title and the total?

Some Hon. Members: Sure, yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacEwen: Actually, I think – Chair? Line by line for this section, if you could.

Chair: Line by line for this section?

SkillsPEI

“Appropriations provided for the administration and delivery of programs targeted at improving the Prince Edward Island labour market.” Administration: 552,400; Equipment: 6,000; Materials, Supplies and Services: 37,900; Professional Services: 132,300; Salaries: 2,706,600; Travel and Training: 55,000; Canada Job Fund: 1,833,000; Labour Market Development Agreement: 18,674,000; Targeted Initiative for Older Workers: 240,000; Career Preparation Program: 559,000; Provincial Programs: 1,346,200.

Total SkillsPEI: 26,142,400.

Total SkillsPEI: 26,142,400.

A question from the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the professional services was budgeted for 132,300 last year and again this year, yet the forecast was up. Can you explain where the extra money came from or was spent?

Mr. Gallant: There was extra funding needed for the EAS review.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, minister, what was that?

Mr. Gallant: There was extra funding needed for the EAS review.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Could you explain what that was?

Mr. Gallant: There was a – would you like to –

Mr. MacEwen: The EAS review?

Mr. Gallant: Just what it is, the acronym, what that means? Or –

Mr. MacEwen: Just – or yeah, a description of what the whole project –

Brad Colwill Director: Sure, it would be the Employment Assistance Services, and it would be those providers who work with individuals to take the initial intake or perhaps deal with individuals and different groups that help them attach to employment, as well.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you. It's probably in one of the former handouts, but –

So, who did that work, and what was the total cost for it?

Mr. Gallant: There was a group called (Indistinct) –

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, minister –

Mr. Gallant: There was a group called (Indistinct) and they –

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, I remember – yeah.

Mr. Gallant: They had experience in that field and they were hired to do it.

Mr. MacEwen: I do remember seeing that.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Minister, is that a public document that you could table, or is that confidential?

Mr. Gallant: It would be confidential at this point because the RFP is still ongoing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

So they're still doing the work?

Mr. Gallant: The recommendations were complete, but there hasn't been a final decision followed through on it yet.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: So their report is done, and you guys are following through on their recommendations? Is that fair to say?

Brad Colwill Director: Yes, their report would help (Indistinct) form that development of the RFP.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Can you speak to the recommendations and what the department's doing to improve it based on what the report said?

Mr. Gallant: It's before Treasury Board now, so it's still going through the process.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: That's good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total SkillsPEI

Shall the total carry?

Sorry, Member from Morell-Mermaid?

Mr. MacEwen: I did have one more question on the Career Preparation Program.

There was a significant spend last year over the estimate, and then now the estimate is reduced again for this year.

Can you explain what the differences were?

Mr. Gallant: We haven't got the final budget from the federal government at this point, so that's where that – at least (Indistinct)

Brad Colwill Director: That's right, this was the amount we were scheduled to receive. With the recent budget, we expect there will be more funding; but until we know exactly what that is we felt it was prudent to include the amount we're scheduled to receive.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: The extra money that was spent last year, is that all covered by federal money?

Brad Colwill Director: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: So, basically you just got more than you had expected to get.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the total carry?

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Post-Secondary and Continuing Education

General

Mr. Aylward: Chair, sorry, maybe we should ask everybody to put their maps away so that everyone can focus on (Indistinct) seems like a lot of distraction.

Chair: Hon. members, if we could have your attention, we can't hear what's going on.

Would you like me to still continue to read line-by-line?

Mr. MacEwen: Please, Chair.

Chair: Post-Secondary and Continuing Education

General

“Appropriations provided for post-secondary coordination, the regulation of private training businesses and the administration of the Division.”
Administration: 15,600; Equipment: 900; Materials, Supplies and Services: 4,000; Professional Services: 41,600; Salaries: 737,800; Travel and Training: 9,700.

Total General: 809,600.

Question from the Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the salaries are expected to be less. Are you losing a position or two to another department?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, the staffing decreased with one vacant position not being filled and the budget for another vacant position being allocated to labour market research.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

What position – have you decided not to fill?

Mr. Gallant: There is an administrative assistant position that was a retirement. It just hasn't been filled yet.

Mr. MacEwen: Nobody has taken that job?

Mr. Gallant: Not at this point.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: That's good.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Actually, that was my question.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Apprenticeship and Training

“Appropriations provided for the administration of apprenticeship training and certification of tradespersons.”

Administration: 1,900. Equipment: 7,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 1,800. Professional Services: 80,000. Salaries: 362,100. Travel and Training: 15,900. Grants: 3,500.

Total Apprenticeship and Training: 472,200.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

The professional services; was there a major report done last year in this area?

Mr. Gallant: There was a large increase in the professional fees to pay the provincial portion of the new IT system that was put in place with the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, the Atlantic what?

Mr. Gallant: Harmonization project.

Mr. MacEwen: The Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Can you explain to me what is that – like you said, there's an increase – sorry, Chair. I can't hear what's going on. Everybody is reading the maps over there.

Chair: Hon. members, the member cannot hear the question or the response.

Mr. MacEwen: I'd be worried too, if I were them.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, you have the floor.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Is that in Hansard?

Minister, you say you had increased IT fees last year for – can you explain to me exactly what that means? Is it a one-time thing and what the Atlantic –

Mr. Gallant: Harmonization?

Mr. MacEwen: – harmonization fund is?

Mr. Gallant: The department was able to make a significant payment on the apprenticeship marketing system in 2016-2017. This is a \$10 million IT build where the Province of PEI will need to pay approximately \$300,000.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: I don't know if that explained it to me enough, minister.

So you have to pay \$300,000 over so many years? Or is that with just last year?

Brad Colwill Director: The build itself was in total the \$10 million, and this is in relation to the – it's called the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project which is effectively harmonizing all of the steps and processes to being Red Seal in any apprenticeship program; to unify that. So with that comes an IT system that's being built and PEI's portion is \$300,000, which is one-time.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, is that split evenly among the Atlantic Provinces or is that based on per-capita, or perhaps based on the number of Red Seals we're putting through?

Mr. Gallant: It's based on proportion of the costs based on each province, like New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and (Indistinct), it's based on each province.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Who is doing that work?

Brad Colwill Director: I'll have to take – Nova Scotia is the lead who – it was tendered through the Atlantic Procurement Agreement, but I don't know the vendor off hand.

Mr. MacEwen: We can get that, though?

Thank you. I'm good, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Apprenticeship and Training

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Top of page 140.

Post-Secondary Grants

“Appropriations provided for post-secondary education institutions, student assistance, adult basic education, literacy training and the community service bursary program.”

Collège Acadie Î.-P.-É.

Core Operating Grant: 286,000. Student Tuition Subsidy: 69,200. Restricted Funding: 705,000. Total: 1,060,200.

Holland College

Core Operating Grant: 18,262,400. Student Tuition Subsidy: 6,155,800. Restricted Funding: 8,474,100. Total: 32,892,300.

University of Prince Edward Island

Core Operating Grant: 31,399,600. Restricted Funding: 9,359,800. Total: 40,759,400.

Atlantic Veterinary College: 8,847,600.

Student Aid: 7,230,000.

Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission: 6,242,100.

Lifelong Learning Grants: 343,100.

Total Post-Secondary Grants: 97,374,700.

Total Post-Secondary and Continuing Education: 98,656,500.

Total Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning: 128,231,500.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd just like to go back to the Holland College grants, the restricted funding there. I see that has gone up considerably, both last year between the estimate and the forecast and then again to this year's estimate, and I'm wondering what special projects that represents.

Mr. Gallant: The infrastructure funding, the strategic investment funding that was given to Holland College.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's for building bricks and mortar then?

Mr. Gallant: That's correct (Indistinct) for renovations.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to move onto the UPEI then, the restricted funding there which has gone up just over 5%. I'm assuming – is that also for – is that new engineering school, for example? Is that where that's gone?

Brad Colwill Director: The engineering school wouldn't be part of that envelope, but rather, the recently announced Dalton Hall, for example, that renovation is part of the strategic investment funding.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

If we put aside the restricted funding, the core operating grant for UPEI only goes up by 1%. Now, typically the core expenses at the university have gone up 5 or 6% every year, so basically, that means that the university will be in a short-fall of 4 or 5%. I'm wondering what's going on there.

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, it was pretty consistent with the region in total. Some regions in the Maritimes did 1%, some went

a little lower; some went a little higher, but we were consistent with the Atlantic Provinces.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Do you know how much UPEI's core expenses are anticipated to increase this year, with things like negotiated salary increases, which just happened? Do you have a sense?

Brad Colwill Director: They have yet to approve their budget, but the – you're correct there. The cost increases through their collective bargaining, and the extent of any mitigation or anything within that amount, not quite sure offhand. We won't know that until they finalize their budget.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Is government working with UPEI to help control these costs so they don't have to lay off staff members at the university? Do you have any active role in that, in controlling cost?

Brad Colwill Director: Yes.

Mr. Gallant: Go ahead, Brad.

Brad Colwill Director: We'd be in constant conversation with them, while also recognizing that they are an independent institution.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

As we have talked about a little a minute ago, part of the restricted funding there is for the new engineering school. It's a large capital outlay, and if I have this correct, the idea was that given it's a private-public partnership that ultimately it would become self-supporting and that this restricted funding payment would not be required anymore.

Do you have any senses as to how long it will take before it will be self-supporting?

Mr. Gallant: You want it in years, hon. member, how long it would take?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, I'm just wondering how much longer we're going to have to be subsidizing the engineering school because I know the plan was that it would be self-sufficient.

Mr. Gallant: We have capital funding that goes towards it. In terms of operation it would be – we have another two years.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Two more years.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I have a couple of questions about post-secondary grants, too, but I also have another question and I wasn't sure where it would fall under. Are you okay if it fell under a previous section, if I ask the question? Minister?

Mr. Gallant: I'm fine with it, yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay.

Thank you, minister. I think it's a previous section. I'm just not sure where it falls under.

Do you have a staff member that's a worker's advisor for WCB appeals?

Mr. Gallant: Sorry? A worker –

Mr. MacEwen: Do you have a staff member that's a worker's advisor for someone that deals with WCB appeals?

Chair: Are you back in another section?

Mr. MacEwen: Yes, the minister agreed to it.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, I asked him if it was okay, first.

Mr. Gallant: Yes, we do. She's currently on maternity leave and we'll backfill it, but we're filling it.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Is this person only working one day a week, the person that is backfilling the maternity leave?

Mr. Gallant: The intent is to get a fulltime person there to do it. But yeah, they're not working fulltime at it right now.

Chair: Hon. members, I don't mind if you take your conversations outside of the room. We're having a real tough time hearing the question and the response.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, if someone is trying to access that worker, and they can't get in touch or meet with them on that one day a week that they're scheduled and their appeal is affected by it, because sometimes they only have 30 days to appeal, do they have any recourse with WCB or with your department to make sure that works?

You could think of examples where someone might be away or if they get that ruling down and they only have 30 days to appeal and they can't make it work with the one day a week schedule with the person filling in temporarily right now, is there any way that your department can work with WCB to say: Hold on, this person needs an extension?

Mr. Gallant: As you have indicated, there is a significant wait list and we're trying to work at that. We're trying to work at that through hiring an outside law firm to keep us up-to-date on some of the files.

The Workers Compensation Board is also working on a change in the process in the way some of the appeal tribunals, the simple ones, maybe could be acted on quicker. There are some actions in place to try and alleviate some of this backlog on a wait list.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

If someone has an appeal period with WCB and they can't get with your worker does that – is there any kind of an extension? Does your department work with WCB to say: This person needs an extension because we only have someone here one day a week and there is such a backlog?

Mr. Gallant: Do you want to answer that Brad?

Brad Colwill Director: Yeah sure.

This is a division that is new to our department so we're not as familiar with what has happened in the past. Certainly, there is that strong relationship with the Workers Comp to communicate what the situation is and how it can be dealt with.

I'll have to get back to you on what the exact process is.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, if I have a constituent that would fall, in this case, where they couldn't make a meeting work in that period, can I have – can you provide me with somebody that that person could talk to in your department to look at trying to figure out – you get what I'm trying to say. There is only a 30-day appeal and you can't make it work in that time, there is such a backlog and that person can hardly answer the phone because there is so much to do. That window is gone and they don't have a chance to appeal that decision.

Is it safe to say that these people will get a fair shot at an appeal? They should at least get to meet with your worker's advisor before that appeal window goes. I wonder if we could – is there some way we could say: The 30 days starts after they get to meet with the worker's advisor, or something like that?

Mr. Gallant: It's important that there is – the timeline there is crucial. Maybe we could check into it. A Brad said, this is new

to our department, so we can check into it and see if (Indistinct) person.

Mr. MacEwen: All right. I'll pass that individual case on to you.

Mr. Gallant: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: I also would encourage you, too, because if you say there is a backlog and that's only a 30-day appeal and they're only working one day a week at it. I know it's a maternity leave, it's temporary, but things will backup even more over the next year, kind of thing.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, on the post-secondary, your recent announcement on EI benefits for those in university, is that cost – is there a cost to the province in that?

Mr. Gallant: The way I understood it, hon. member, is they have to have a break of 12 months between high school and the time they go to university. The first year they'd just be eligible for their George Coles and all the other bursaries. The next year, when they went to university in year two, they could draw EI.

Mr. MacEwen: That's just an agreement with the federal government. There is no actual cost to the province with this new –

Mr. Gallant: I believe you're correct. Yeah, it has been going on in the other provinces.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

You mentioned it's going on in the other provinces, if there's an Island student going to a university in another province, can they access the program here on PEI and still be eligible for that?

Mr. Gallant: My understanding they can still draw their EI if they're going through another province.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

The Leader of the Third Party brought up the engineering building, minister. I had talked about this with the former minister last year. How are we getting along?

We have a number of pretty spectacular companies that UPEI is partnering with at their new facility. How are you and your department doing in trying to, not necessarily recruit, but make the connections with these companies?

Once they get their foot in the door at UPEI, whether it's through equipment or whether it's through some sort of a program or a student working with them, what are we doing to get them interested in PEI, whether it's just a starting relationship to develop something into a long-term relationship where they might say: Look, UPEI is starting to graduate people, exactly what we need. Maybe we should set-up shop there.

What are we doing – and I know you're new to the role – but what is the department doing that way?

Mr. Gallant: I appreciate that. I'll let Brad allude to the second part of your question.

From being out there, any contact I had with UPEI, there are companies that have been repeat; as you know, there'll be the first class graduating this year –

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Mr. Gallant: – of engineers. As far as keeping them on I guess, it's just the interest and the intrigue and the excitement on what's happening out there.

As far as our role, I'll have to let Brad answer that, as far as the uptake in what we do as a department.

Brad Colwill Director: Yes, as the question was earlier, too, we have provided some of that seed funding for some of their operations to help facilitate, foster some of those relationships. ACOA has contributed to that, as well.

Once they make the contact with it. Many are Island companies or not-for-profits in the first place, but for anyone that's not, I know working with other departments, Innovation PEI, to ensure that they're contacted to know that the different supports that are there, everything else that could be beneficial to staying here.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

There are a lot of good local projects going on, too. I'm thinking about, and going into the future, some of the equipment that we're recruiting to put into the labs are being partly donated or in-kind from some of the companies. I can think of (Indistinct) and those types of places. I think it's a real opportunity for the province to be trying to partner with those – when they're coming into UPEI, we should be right there trying to partner with them to say: Your equipment is here, or you're partnering with UPEI. What can we do to get you here long-term because we're going to be graduating the people that you need in the future?

I would encourage you to keep going with that because I think there is a lot of potential. Especially, in the whole initial set-up when there were so many companies contacted in the first place to make sure we go back a second and third time to see if they're interested, now that they see the success that's going on there, too.

That concludes my questions.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Post-Secondary and Continuing Education.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Total Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Thank you, minister.

Hon. members, we will now continue on with the Department of Finance estimates. I'd invite the minister to come to the table.

We are on page 76.

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

Some Hon. Members: Granted, yes.

Chair: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Chair, what page are we on?

Chair: Oh, 76.

Welcome. Could you please indicate your name and your title for the record?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: Vicki Hamilton, Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Finance.

Chair: Welcome, Vicki. And minister, do you have handouts that you would like to table?

Mr. Roach: Yes, we do.

Chair: Great, thank you. I'll take them here.

Thank you.

Members, would – do you wish me to read all of the sections, or do you want me to just do the total and the title?

Mr. Perry: Total and the title.

Chair: Total and the title, great.

Top of page 76.

Administration

General

Total General: 473,300.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Debt and Investment Management

Total Debt and Investment Management: 521,800.

A question from the Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering how much of the expenses in the Debt and Investment Management section there is a result of the provincial – managing the provincial debt?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Yeah, this is more the managing of the province's day-to-day banking, short mid to long-term cash management, management of the province's sinking fund, and also this section acts as the manager of external managers who invest in the pension fund assets.

This section is also responsible for the administration of the province's loan portfolio.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I take it from that answer that actually very little of it goes in managing the provincial debt itself.

Mr. Roach: No, that doesn't manage the debt.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Well, that's what it says in the description.

Mr. Roach: Well –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's the first item, actually. I guess, sorry –

Mr. Roach: What's your question again?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: My question is – I'm getting to the point where you know, if we're going to start paying down the debt, could we expect that that item line will also decrease?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Yeah, this is really just the salaries for that department and the people who do that work and manage it.

Vicki Hamilton CFO: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Yeah, the actual interest charges on debt and the debt itself is a different section.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, sure, I understand that, and I just wondered –

Mr. Roach: So the –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – how much of the – how much work does it take to manage the provincial debt? How much of that section's salary line, for example, is on managing the debt.

Mr. Roach: What's the total salary? Three hundred and seventy – \$373,800.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The whole lot?

Mr. Roach: That's the salary of the people that are in that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right, but they do other things, other than manage the provincial debt, right?

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Chair: Leader of the –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm fine, thank you, Chair.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering if the minister could explain the professional services and the expenses that are incurred there.

Mr. Roach: I can't hear.

Chair: Hon. members, the member cannot hear the question.

Ms. Compton: I'm just wondering if the minister could explain the professional services and the expenses that are incurred there.

Mr. Roach: Those are the bond rating services. We work with them annually and when you work with the bond rating services, they charge for that.

Ms. Compton: So, 110,000 –

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

Ms. Compton: So, \$110,000?

Okay, thank you.

Chair: Good?

Shall the section carry?

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: Sorry, the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you. I know I put in last minute.

Before we go any further, I just wondered if we could consider the revenue section. It's on page 14. I would assume that would be part of the Department of Finance.

Mr. Roach: That's page 14?

Chair: There's one on page 75.

Mr. Trivers: On page 14 – yeah, one-four, if that's okay with you, Chair. Just before we get too far ahead –

Mr. Roach: There's no vote on revenue. Is that correct?

Vicki Hamilton CFO: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Are we allowed to ask questions on it, though?

Chair: Are you talking about the revenue page on page 75?

Mr. Trivers: No, I'm talking about the revenue on page 14. There are various parts of the revenue, but as you know, since we have the Minister of Finance on the floor, and really the Department of Finance is where the final accounting is done, I wanted

to just check out these different sources of revenue and ask a few questions on that.

Mr. Roach: Yeah, go ahead.

Mr. Trivers: All right, thanks.

I don't know, Chair. How do you want to do this? Do you want to walk through the section or just have me ask questions?

Chair: You can ask questions.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, all right.

Mr. Roach: Why don't we start –

Chair: Sorry?

Mr. Roach: Why don't we start at the top and (Indistinct)

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Roach: I don't want to bounce all over the place.

Chair: Sure, let's start at the – if you have questions, let's start at the top and work your way through instead of bouncing around from section – maybe you could identify the section that you're asking the question on?

Mr. Trivers: The first thing that, of course, we notice – and I know the minister's aware of this and, of course, there's no carbon tax in this section at all, and the carbon tax will be coming in, in January of 2018.

I'm just wondering if that's something you've thought about yet and where the revenues would actually be placed for that.

Mr. Roach: We certainly have thought about it, and we're working closely with the minister of energy and the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. There's a lot of factors to consider with those agencies and how we have to work together to ensure that when the carbon pricing finally does come in and the federal government makes it happen that we're doing it correctly, that we're completely prepared.

For us to start entering into that now, we'd probably be one of the first provinces –

certainly would be the first province in Eastern Canada – to do it.

We feel that there's a lot more work and a lot more collaboration before we can get to that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, which section are you on asking the question?

Mr. Trivers: I'm just at the Taxes section, the very first one.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Given that you know you're going to have to put some carbon pricing in, how much of an impact do you think it's going to have on your tax revenue in that taxes section?

I'm assuming there will be a line item at some point that reads 'carbon pricing', and I mean, it's just like: How have you accounted for that in your revenue lines?

Mr. Roach: We haven't accounted for any carbon pricing in the revenue lines, and certainly as we continue to work on carbon pricing, as I had stated earlier, at some point we'll make up – we'll make a forecast when we know what it is, that exact.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Do you think – I mean, which way do you think it's going to move the revenue numbers? Will they increase, do you feel?

I mean, we've heard terms like 'fiscally neutral' that the Premier mentioned. Does that mean you feel that carbon pricing you bring in is going to have a net balance of zero? That's why you're comfortable with this Budget the way it is?

Mr. Roach: That's – as of what we believe, that's what we're going to attempt to do, is to take any –

Mr. Trivers: – will they increase, do you feel? I mean, we've heard terms like fiscally neutral that the Premier mentioned. Does that mean you feel that the carbon pricing

you bring in is going to have a net balance of zero – that's why you're comfortable with this Budget the way it is?

Mr. Roach: As of what we believe, that's what we're going to attempt to do is to take any money that comes from carbon pricing and put it directly back in to the various programs. That's what our thinking is, but we certainly have to – there's a tremendous amount of work to do before we can land solidly on those numbers, and to forecast numbers now wouldn't be appropriate at all. It'd just be a wild guess.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: When it comes to this idea of fiscally neutral, it's something that I know I've talked about a lot and I'm sure you've read the article I wrote on bradtrivers.com as well, minister.

One thing that I believe is that to make sure that things are revenue-neutral, it would be better to look at putting tax rebates or tax credits in place that automatically happen, as opposed to programs you have to apply for and some get them and some don't.

For example, raising the basic personal tax amount, for example, or eliminating the HST on various items like home heating sources and then you could balance that off with the amount you expect to take in in carbon revenue.

I was wondering if you could comment on that.

Mr. Roach: I certainly think the points that you made are things that we would take into consideration and we'll be looking at every possible avenue to try and work on that, so I do thank you for your comments.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Looking at these line items specifically, I mean we do see an increase, first of all, in the personal income tax revenue. That's fairly substantial.

Mr. Roach: Yeah and it is. It's a strong indication that wage growth has gone up and people are making more money.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Is that wage growth from increased exports then?

Mr. Roach: Well I think you'd put that in parallel. As companies grow and as our workforce evolves, we had the highest wage growth rate in the country, so I think this is clearly showing that our economy's doing well and that people are making more money in the jobs that they're in. There are good, high-paying jobs out there now.

I look down and, for example, down at MacDougall Steel, down in the Borden area and I think a couple of years ago, they were around 80 employees and I think they far exceed that – I think they're around 180 now. So, those are really well-paying jobs and that's what drives that income tax.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So is this –

Mr. Roach: – and that's just one example.

Mr. Trivers: One example. How much of that do you think will be due to new people moving to Prince Edward Island, as opposed to existing people getting wage increases so they're paying more tax? Is that –

Mr. Roach: I would have no way of knowing that.

Mr. Trivers: I mean, how do you come up with that estimate? Do you just base it on the GDP then?

Mr. Roach: We have a statistician who works in government and has for a long time. He would look at many different areas of statistics and one of the ones I mentioned was the wage growth. He would also be looking at the things that I said earlier about the number of new companies or the number of companies that grow and – whether it's bioscience or the new marine sector – some of these jobs pay very, very well and as they grow, those projections would all be brought into his calculation.

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Roach: He'd have an opportunity to see what taxes are coming in. That's all the information that would be funneled out of Ottawa; we'd have a look at that.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Is the increase in sales tax of \$37 million due primarily to the increase in HST? Is this also because you're expecting people to spend more money on PEI and so the consumption taxes will be more?

Mr. Roach: That would be a combination of the HST – and an increase in the HST. It would also be – we've seen for example that housing is really taking off on PEI. We're seeing car sales at the highest levels ever – new car sales in the province of PEI, so there's a number of factors that came into play there.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I know you have some great information in front of you and, possibly, it's information that's available publically already, but do you have a handout that you could give us that breaks down the increase in sales tax into the different areas it's coming from?

Mr. Roach: No. It's just one line item. I have no breakdown.

Mr. Trivers: You have no breakdown. I see a nice pie chart on there.

Mr. Roach: That's just our revenues.

Mr. Trivers: Oh, that's just the revenues.

Mr. Roach: A picture of our revenues.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Is that something that you could bring back? I'm assuming that someone in your department has that breakdown.

Mr. Roach: You want that pie chart?

Mr. Trivers: No, I would like to see the sales tax – the extra \$37 million in sales tax.

Mr. Roach: That's the increase in HST.

Mr. Trivers: Part of it's the increase in HST you said.

Mr. Roach: That's all of HST on that particular line.

Mr. Trivers: That's all HST.

Mr. Roach: Sales tax is HST.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. Roach: And that's our forecast.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: I've just got a question for you there, minister.

A minute ago you made a comment about putting more money in people's pockets and the good-paying jobs at MacDougall steel – which is a true statement. But, I have to question when you say that about the HST, because I know for a fact, that low-income families that never had the HST before and then they got saddled with a 1% are finding it hard. So, I don't understand how we can say that these people are more money in their pocket when they don't have more money in their pocket because of an HST increase – there's no way they can recover any of that money. They're paying it and then they're possible forced with a carbon tax coming in.

Can you please explain to me how somebody – a low-income family member – and I'll take it to my wife's parents, who find it hard with the extra tax that they are now paying, living in an apartment building, when they have no way of getting any of that HST back. And on the remittance of an HST is not even coming up to what they had in their pocket before, so how can you say that?

Mr. Roach: Well certainly the 1% increase we did come in, but we did come in with another – a number of offsets for low-income Islanders as well, to help offset that increase of 1% for low-income Islanders.

Leader of the Opposition: But there's none of them offset, minister, that help somebody on the extra gas that they're now paying. There's nothing. When you total up them offsets and then look at what they're entitled to claim and then you factor in the gas and you factor in electricity, there's no way that they'll put more money in their pocket.

Mr. Roach: When I was talking about where we saw the growth in personal income tax, I was talking about the jobs that – as you mentioned in MacDougall steel, but there are many other places – that's where we saw the big, I guess, increase in personal income tax. I know we've talked about the 1% increase here for the last couple of years and when we brought that in, over a two year period, we put a number of offsets in there for low-income Islanders to help offset the 1% increase in HST.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Minister, that might be fair to say that, but at the end of the day, I know seniors and low-income families that, if you factor in what they spend on gas and what they buy in electricity, them offsets are not helping them families.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A generic question, minister, one question: The property tax assessments go up next week; I'm just wondering by how much?

Chair: Do you want to answer that or do you want to save it for the –

Mr. Roach: I'll bring that –

Mr. MacKay: Just one question.

Mr. Roach: – bring that back to you.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

Mr. Roach: I know we don't – there is a rate increase that's attached to an increase that comes right across the country into PEI.

We don't raise it. It's based on that, so whatever that is, is the increase.

I'll get that and bring that back to you.

Chair: On this section?

Mr. MacKay: Just one more, back to his question there, or his answer.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

When you take that back, minister can you give a breakdown of how much more revenue that will take in with the increase?

Mr. Roach: We can forecast.

From budget to budget we're showing an estimate increase of just around \$4 million.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Chair.

It was more around the rebates that were put in place for people.

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Also, the extra deductions on your income tax –

Mr. Roach: That's correct.

Ms. Biggar: – return that I was – and I think you kind of answered it, but –

Mr. Roach: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – I know when initially there were comparisons of how much extra was it two hundred and some dollars a year or something, the average low-income Island would pay –

Mr. Roach: That's correct.

Ms. Biggar: – and then just balancing that off on what the average rebate for HST is on a quarterly basis, I guess –

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: – or overall plus that extra low-income deduction. I just was trying to get the balance there if it essentially, it's – whether it's net zero or in around that balance per person.

Mr. Roach: The intention of those offsets was certainly to look after, as much as possible, the low-income Islander.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: Certainly, as the Leader of the Opposition suggests, if someone does do an enormous amount of travel and burns an enormous amount of fuel, certainly that offset would be less.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm looking at the sales tax line, still on page 14. It's \$37 million more in sales tax. Does that include just the provincial portion of the HST? Or, I'm assuming that would be correct? Is that right?

Mr. Roach: Yes, that's correct. That's our portion.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, so –

Mr. Roach: The provincial government portion.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: If you work that back, I'm using the number of 35,000 households on PEI. That's about an extra \$1,057 per household. If you think that that tax, that sales tax is coming from purchases and really it's only 10%, that's an extra \$10,570 of purchases per household on PEI.

Minister: Do you think that's realistic that every household is, on average, going to increase their expenditures by almost

\$11,000 next year? Unless, I have done some calculations wrong.

Mr. Roach: I don't think you can say an average, but that has to do with building construction. It has to do with so many areas that the analysts would look at to estimate that. It would be based on some previous spending across PEI.

It would certainly be based on a lot of the – we've seen a tremendous increase, for example, in housing, in both commercial and residential construction, right across the Island.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: It seems to me, no matter how you allocate it, I mean, that's still \$10,570 per household. I want to know –

Mr. Roach: I don't know (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – do you believe that number is one that you can hit; that Islanders will actually spend an extra 37– sorry, not \$37 million, an extra \$10,570 per household, which results in \$1,057 worth of extra sales tax per household, which will give you \$37 million worth of extra sales tax?

I mean that's –

Mr. Roach: That \$30 million was actually what we had to pay in HST back to the federal government. The actual increase from year to year will be about \$6 million, \$6.2 million.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Forgive me –

Mr. Roach: The \$30 million was a decrease. Remember when we discussed that, I think, here? Or at least it was in the media that there was an adjustment to HST for PEI. We had to pay the federal government \$30 million? That's where you find that, in there.

Our actual increase for next year, we're forecasting an increase in sales tax. Next year, the increase we're forecasting is \$6,218,000.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I just want to be clear on this point. When you just look at the budget, face value, it looks like there is an increase of \$37 million in sales tax. You're saying, that \$30 million of that is just an accounting entry to account for the \$30 million you're paying back to the federal government.

Mr. Roach: If we had to pay the \$30 million to the federal government, if you take that out of the equation, our increase next year will be just over \$6 million that we're going to – from 269 to 275. So 269 in 2016-2017 to 275 in 2017-2018.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Does this mean that the estimated revenues are \$30 million too high, then?

Mr. Roach: No. When you talk about the \$30 million, the \$30 million referred to was when the federal government went right out across Canada and they said: look, there was an error and we need to collect some HST dollars. You were overpaid.

PEI was just a little over \$30 million.

Mr. Trivers: Right.

Mr. Roach: I think New Brunswick is 100-plus-million. Newfoundland, I think, was \$142 million. Nova Scotia was around \$100 million. Each one of the provinces had to pay that back. If you take that out of – and we paid it, so if you take that out of the equation, the difference between sales tax we collected in 2016-2017 and what we're forecasting for 2017-2018, we're forecasting an increase in sales tax of just over \$6 million.

Mr. Trivers: Maybe, I'll ask this another way.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Where is the \$30 million payment to the federal government in this budget?

Mr. Roach: That's where you get a decrease in 2016-2017 from the budget estimate to 2016-2017 budget forecast.

We went from 269 down to 238. That's where the \$30,000 went, or \$30 million. I wish it was \$30,000.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm going ask one more question on this, Chair.

I still don't understand how putting an extra \$30 million in the 2017-2018 Budget just to account for the \$30 million you had to pay to the federal government –

Mr. Roach: No.

Mr. Trivers: – is, I mean, it looks like you're going to have \$30 million extra in revenue.

Mr. Roach: Sure. Could you tell me where you see the \$30 million difference?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, between the 2016-2017 forecast –

Mr. Roach: That's right.

Mr. Trivers: – and the 2017-2018 budget estimate.

Mr. Roach: Okay, so go back, if you would, please, to the budget estimate for 2016-2017 and that's 269.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. Roach: Then, go to the budget estimate for 2017-2018, that's the \$6 million.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you. Thank you, minister.

I understand it now. My apologies, I do get it.

Chair: Total Debt and Investment Management: 521,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: Where are we now?

Chair: We're on page 76, pensions and benefits.

Pensions and Benefits

Total Pensions and Benefits: 1,350,900.

The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

I'm just looking at salaries. Did we have a new hire here? Or, are we expecting a new hire?

Mr. Roach: We had an employee that returned to work.

Ms. Compton: Returned to work?

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Ms. Compton: So you were minus an employee for a period of time?

Mr. Roach: Yeah, I think – yeah. That's what we're forecast, yeah. So one person was off work for whatever reason, and that person has come back.

Ms. Compton: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Municipal Grants

Total Municipal Grants: 23,606,300.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering how the reform of those municipal funding grants is coming along.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

It's coming along, actually, extremely well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Good.

Mr. Roach: The working relationship between the department and the major cities

and towns that were involved in that, plus the representation for the smaller municipalities by the Federation of Municipalities. They have worked a phenomenal amount of time and hours and effort. I will say that they worked well together and they seemed to be of great understanding of everybody's fiscal challenges.

In fact, I think what was presented initially was a formula that government looked at and that group worked on it and changed a lot of the formula and they collaborated together. It was a tremendously good working group and they have had great success with it.

We're at the point now where we only have a couple of very minor, little issues that they are dealing with and I expect that they're working through that well, and I expect that by summer's end that it will be finalized. So, great work with the municipalities and with my department. I was extremely pleased the way that went.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, minister.

Thank you, Chair.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I'm looking at the handout, municipal funding report, and I'm just wondering why Belfast is not listed under communities.

Mr. Roach: Are they incorporated?

Ms. Compton: Largest incorporated municipality on PEI; just saying.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Your community is doing so well that you're beyond the average and –

Ms. Compton: Of course we are.

Mr. Roach: – so equalization only comes in if you are below the average. So congratulations to Belfast.

Ms. Compton: Punishing success?

Chair: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, do you have another question?

Ms. Compton: No. I just wondered why we weren't listed on.

Mr. Roach: Good news for Belfast.

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: You're doing very well.

Ms. Compton: Performing above average.

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Ms. Compton: As always.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Administration: 25,952,300.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (III)

Speaker: Hon. members, before we move on to the top of page 77, I'd like to welcome Julia O'Hanley back to the gallery. Julia is no stranger to this Legislature. She was a Page and a youth parliamentarian, and Julia is a brand new graduate of St. Francis Xavier University as of Sunday and she is employed in Ottawa with the Department of Treasury.

Welcome back, Julia; nice to see you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Congratulations, I hope that X ring is not too heavy.

Thanks, perfect.

Top of page 77.

Economics, Statistics & Federal Fiscal Relations

Economics, Statistics & Federal Fiscal Relations

Total Statistics & Federal Fiscal Relations: 8,717,000.

Total Statistics & Federal Fiscal Relations: 8,717,000.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm just wondering if this division does any primary research of its own.

Mr. Roach: In regards to?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm wondering how difficult and/or expensive it would be for the department to do an annual household survey to gather data for well-being measures, for example.

Mr. Roach: We would be provided that information from Ottawa, data survey.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: There's no capacity within that department to do that independently?

Mr. Roach: The federal government does it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Mr. Roach: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Office of the Comptroller

Comptroller/Accounting

Total Comptroller/Accounting: 1,189,500.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Procurement

Total Procurement: 295,100.

Office of the Comptroller: 1,484,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Taxation and Property Records

Administration

Total Administration: 3,995,400.

Total Taxation and Property Records:
3,995,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total of that section carry?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I'm looking at the grants in lieu of property taxes. I'm not sure what section that falls under.

Mr. Roach: General government. We'll get to that one a little later.

Mr. Trivers: Which section, sorry?

Mr. Roach: It's not in this section, but we will get to it.

Mr. Trivers: Which section does it fall under, just so I know?

Mr. Roach: General government.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Taxation and Property Records

Shall that carry? Carried.

Treasury Board Secretariat

Administration

Total Administration: 433,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Fiscal Management

Total Fiscal Management: 387,700.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Corporate Finance

Total Corporate Finance: 4,998,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Information Technology Shared Services

Total Information Technology Shared
Services: 28,016,100.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering, in ITSS, if there are plans to drop Corel Office Suite? I still occasionally get emails with Corel and they often won't open.

Mr. Roach: Windows Microsoft is our standard.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, we still have –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

We still certainly have some people associated with GroupWise who use Corel, so –

Mr. Roach: Yeah, there are some pockets in there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, and you're going to allow that to continue?

Mr. Roach: Well, until we can move over to another.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, all right.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Document Publishing Centre

Total Document Publishing Centre:
1,501,500.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm sorry. Can I beg your indulgence and go back to the previous section just for one quick question and it was about whether the department has any plans to move to a cloud-computing – you

know, Google Docs and all of these newer facilities that are available that make it so much easier to keep track of documents?

Mr. Roach: It's certainly something that we have looked at and will continue to look at. But, as of yet we haven't made that move.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Thank you, Chair, for that.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Treasury Board Secretariat:
35,337,500.

Shall that total carry? Carried.

Total Department of Finance: 75,486,800.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Council of Atlantic Premiers

General

Total General: 188,400.

Total Council of Atlantic Premiers: 188,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total of that section carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Page 82.

Employee Benefits

Total Employee Benefits: 62,414,900.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm just wondering: Are we back on track there? We were in a deficit situation for a while and had to (Indistinct) –

Mr. Roach: For our pension and things like that?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: Yeah, it's tracking quite well. Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, did you have your hand up?

Leader of the Opposition: A quick question on that.

Right now on the pensions, are we just paying a principal payment in interest, or are we actually catching up on the shortfall on the pensions that's been recorded.

To my understanding, there are two shortfalls; one on each pension. Are we making up on them, or are we just paying the interest in a principal payment?

Mr. Roach: We have – within a pension fund now we, because after we had the pension a number of years ago when we went through a pension reform, we're required to put in X amount of dollars.

Leader of the Opposition: Per year?

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Right, so –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Is that making up – gaining ground on the shortfall, or is that just a principal payment plus interest?

Mr. Roach: I'm just trying to figure out what you're saying when you talk about principal plus interest.

Leader of the Opposition: To my understanding, the pension fund is continuing to grow – the shortfall is continuing to grow each year and we're just paying a principal on a pre-negotiated amount plus interest, but that shortfall is still growing.

Mr. Roach: I think – and just as long as you know I'm really taking a stab at it here – but I think when we went through pension reform, there was a kind of equation that they came up with, and there's enough money in the pension fund now that if there's a shortfall then – but right now there isn't a shortfall. It's in good shape.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, for now.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

General Government

Miscellaneous General

Total Miscellaneous General: 250,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Grants

Total Grants: 1,999,300.

Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I noticed in the grant breakdown you do have other non-profit organizations along with the libraries, Royal Canadian Legions, et cetera.

I know that there was a change made to this back a number of years ago, and it used to include all Lions Clubs as well, for example, but now it only includes some Lions Clubs, the ones that were grandfathered in or that were already getting grant in lieu of property taxes.

So I've got a situation in my district where I have some Lions Clubs who are getting the grant in lieu of property taxes and I have one that's not, and I was just wondering if you would consider including – in districts or on the Island, if you're given the grant in lieu of property taxes to some?

Mr. Roach: Yeah, and you know this situation does arrive from time to time, and it has to do with their nonprofit status and – yes, it does. It has to do with their nonprofit status.

I just had a situation recently where a not-for-profit was competing with a profit company (Indistinct) making more money, so at that point they lose their nonprofit status.

But if you have a particular situation where you have two Lions Clubs, I'd be more than willing to sit down with you and the Lions Clubs to try and sort it out, because there's a lot of factors in there that you're going to have to look at.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Minister, I did some research on this before, and I did happen to get some correspondence from your department, and the reason given was it was just a grandfathered in.

Before the change was made, one set of Lions Clubs were receiving it, the other one wasn't. I'll contact you afterwards.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Government Insurance Program

Total Government Insurance Program: 1,844,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Contingency Fund and Salary Negotiations

Total Contingency Fund and Salary Negotiations: 4,206,700.

Shall the section carry?

A question from the Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm just wondering why the expenses are down so much. It's over 30% from the last year's budget.

Mr. Roach: This is a contingency fund that we would have, for example, if you had a – I think I've mentioned this before – if you had some sort of a catastrophe, you know if we had a hurricane hit us and there was additional expenses, or if bridges got knocked out, that sort of thing. It's for those things that we hope don't happen, but a lot of times do.

An Hon. Member: Carried.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm wondering why that fund is down 30%. Are you anticipating fewer problems like that?

Mr. Roach: Can you give me the numbers you're looking at just so I can –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, last year the budget estimate was over 6 million and this year it's just over 4 million.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: I guess it's just the forecast that they would put in. It's a forecast, and they may be looking at a number of different – this year, for example, we never had any major events over the winter that would have caused any major problems, so there would be a reduction there.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's my point exactly. This year, where we had no problems, we spent 5.5 million, and I can't see how, when we had a year where there were no problems, we should budget that we'll spend less this year.

Mr. Roach: Some of the things that were included in that budget, as you recall, last year we knew that we were going to give municipalities additional funding because of the big storms we had, so we had forecast that and we did give them that.

We're not forecasting that at this time.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Are there any big staff or union negotiations upcoming?

Mr. Roach: Right now?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: None.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No? Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total General Government: 8,300,000.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Page 84.

Interest Charges on Debt

Interest

Total Interest: 106,269,900.

Shall the section carry?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Question.

Chair: A question from the Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, I'm just wondering how we managed to reduce the loans and treasury notes by more than a half last year. We're back up again this year.

Mr. Roach: The short-term interest borrowing rates did not increase as expected, so that's the reason for that. That's why the forecast is lower.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, so this year's estimate, I see, we're back up again. So you're not expecting that trend to continue, presumably.

Mr. Roach: That's correct.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Promissory Notes for Pension Funds

Total Promissory Notes for Pension Funds: 19,755,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Interest Charges on Debt:
126,025,500.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Chair: Hon. members, we'll now move onto the PEI Public Service Commission. It's on page 154.

Permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We'll just wait for her to get set-up.

Good afternoon, welcome. Could you please introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Elaine Hardy Director: Elaine Hardy, Director of Administration, Corporate HRMS and payroll.

Chair: Welcome.

Hon. members, page 154.

Management

Total Management: 278,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall Total Management carry? Carried.

HR Management and Labour Relations

Total HR management and Labour Relations: 3,417,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Occupational Health and Safety

Total Occupational Health and Safety:
230,300.

Shall the section carry? Carried.
Total HR Management and Labour Relations: 3,647,700.

Shall that total carry? Carried.

Staffing, Classification and Organizational Development

Staffing Classification and HR Planning

Total Staffing, Classification and HR Planning: 1,938,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Employee Assistance Program
Total Employee Assistance Program:
346,400.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Language Training Centre

Total Language Training Centre: 190,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Staffing, Classification and Organizational Development: 2,474,900.

Shall the total carry?

A question from the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

With the fiasco that's going on with the Phoenix payroll system federally, does that have any impact whatsoever on the systems that we use here in the province?

Mr. Roach: None.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's all I wanted to know.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall that total carry? Carried.

Administration, Corporate HRMS and Payroll

Total Administration, Corporate HRMS and Payroll: 1,083,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Total Administration, Corporate HRMS and Payroll: 1,083,600.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Total P.E.I. Public Service Commission:
7,484,700.

Shall the total carry?

Sorry, did I read that wrong?

Total P.E.I. Public Service Commission:
7,484,300.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Thank you. Thank you, minister.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Hon. members, that concludes the estimates and we will now come out of committee and we will come back onto the floor for the Appropriation Act.

Mr. Roach: Madam Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair, and that the Chair make report to Mr. Speaker.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, I wish to report that the committee has gone into supply to be granted to Her Majesty and has come to certain resolutions, which I am pleased to report to the House whenever it should be pleased to receive same.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Family and Human Services, that the report of the Committee be now received.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Chair: Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee be now adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance, that the 10th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 10, *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2017*, Bill No. 68, ordered for second reading.

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

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2017*, Bill No. 68, read a second time.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Chair (Casey): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2017*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

An Hon. Member: No.

Leader of the Opposition: Overview.

Chair: Overview, minister?

Mr. Roach: I guess the overview is, we have been going through these finances with each one of the departments over the last number of weeks. This bill simply authorizes or approves those expenditures for the coming year.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Carried.

Chair: Carry the bill? Thank you.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Shall the schedule carry? Carried.

Mr. Roach: I move the title.

Chair: *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2017.*

Mr. Roach: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Chair: May it please Your Honour: We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal servants, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island, towards appropriating the several supplies raised for the exigencies of Her Majesty's Government and for the other purposes hereinafter mentioned, do humbly beseech that it be enacted:

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

Shall it carry? Carried

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *Appropriation Act (Current Expenditures) 2017*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same without amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

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. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: You'll have to give me a minute to find it, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Just take your time.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Leader of the Opposition: Hey, if I could have a hand there from the hon. Clerk –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to call Order No. 20.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 20, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*, Bill No. 104, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will call on the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale to come and Chair this bill one more time.

An Hon. Member: One more time, Mr. Speaker.

Leader of the Opposition: It's going to be quick.

Chair (Dumville): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Ms. Biggar: No.

Chair: Okay.

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Leader of the Opposition: So, Chair, I have a statement to read.

The purpose of Bill 104, obviously, is to enhance the safety of our police officers, the men and women who day in and day out put themselves in harm's way to protect the people of this great province, the Province of Prince Edward Island.

I did not and do not want it to depend on the officers' requests for this to be mandatory. This was after consultation with senior management of all police departments within the Province of Prince Edward Island. That is why Bill No. 104 does not include any amendment to subsection 253 (1) of the *Highway Traffic Act*.

As a former police officer, I know that "on request" can give rise to confrontation. It must be mandatory. I do believe that statements made by Deputy Chief Brad MacConnell on the floor of the Legislative Assembly last week reinforces this. I do appreciate – we should all appreciate – Deputy Chief MacConnell taking time out of his busy schedule to sit with me in support of this bill on behalf of all Island law enforcement agencies.

Bill No. 104, its purpose and requirements are straightforward. I stand by them and ask this bill immediately proceed to a vote.

An Hon. Member: A vote?

Chair: The –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) Chair.

Premier MacLauchlan: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, I appreciate what the Leader has said, and in light of the discussion that we had the last day, my amendment (Indistinct) proposed and we can't (Indistinct) – it would be on my motion, seconded by the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, and it would insert in:

213 (4.1) the words "on request" after the word "shall," and it would include in subsection;

253 (1) the power for a police officer to make that request.

I can distribute copies of this motion for members. Mr. Chair, I might add that we're not bringing this up to add to the time that the House would require. We feel that what was to be said about that was essentially said when this matter was on the floor the last time, and we're not at odds with the purpose of the mover, the Leader of the Opposition, or what this would mean for police forces.

The point of this amendment is that this will enable police officers to use this as a tool when it enters into force, and that the police officers would not, as some of the discussion suggested last day, devote a significant amount of time to either –

Leader of the Opposition: Chair?

Premier MacLauchlan: – to either public education or to issues arising around the discretion of the officer.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair?

Premier MacLauchlan: That's our reason for making the amendment.

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

Leader of the Opposition: Chair? I would ask that the motion be ruled out of order, pursuant to the following:

In an email from Legislative Counsel to the Deputy Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Deputy Attorney General dated April 25th, 2017, Legislative Counsel states:

Because Bill No. 104 is worded to make it mandatory for riders to remove the helmet, the drafter put it in section 213 as a new (4.1).

If a member had asked, the requirement to comply with an officer's request, the drafter would also have added the power to subsection 253 (1) as a new clause (e). That section deals with the powers of the police

officer to request specific things when stopping a motor vehicle. The drafter did not do this because the member did not want it to depend on an officer's request.

The email goes on to state:

We can't use a motion to amend subsection 253 (1) of the act because that was not part of Bill No. 104.

I would also note that on the same date, the deputy forwarded this email to the Premier, so I would ask that the motion be ruled out of order.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Chair.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I had further discussion with Legislative Counsel on this very question earlier today and pursuant to our debate in committee of last week, and indeed the motion that is here, was prepared by Legislative Counsel.

The point is that we, with the change to 213 (4.1), it creates an offence clause, and by adding the wording that is in 253 the suggestion here being that it would be out of order to make that change, it's actually giving to the police officer the power to make the request. It's the police power together with the offence section.

Chair: Do you want to consult? I can consult.

Clerk: Mr. Chair, do you want to take a brief recess, consider the arguments put forward and come back in a couple of minutes with the (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay, I can do that.

I have the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy wanting to say something next.

Ms. Biggar: I'm not sure if we're continuing to proceed?

Chair: I'm going to take a brief recess –

Ms. Biggar: Okay –

Chair: – after I hear your –

Ms. Biggar: – what I initially had wanted to comment is that I did have a one on one conversation, as well following the discussion from the floor the other day with our deputy chief that was on the floor and had told him that certainly we are in support of the overall intent.

However, through my department advice, as minister, the concern was raised about the 253.1. I had asked if and had indicated that if it were to come back with changes to 253.1 that I would be prepared, certainly, to support it in that regard so that what the initial intent would be is for them to have the power to ask individuals when they approach them to remove the helmet, as opposed to officer– you know, the travelling public being initially expected to automatically remove it. I indicated one on one to our deputy that we would support with an amendment to 253, certainly, support it in its – that form, and the intent of the original submission.

I just wanted to state that for the record, that, in no way are we not supporting the officers.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to make a suggestion. Is it possible that we can have somebody from Legislative Counsel clarify, is there any way we can bring somebody in or make a call before we proceed?

Chair: I'll take that under –

Clerk: Chair, I think the Legislative Counsel has already been consulted, but it would be interesting to hear the response from the (Indistinct) with respect to the comments (Indistinct)

Chair: Hon. member, would you – you heard what the Clerk has said? You may respond.

Leader of the Opposition: I think we'll move into recess for a minute.

Chair: I'll now declare a recess to consult with the Clerk.

Thank you.

[Recess]

Chair: Hon. members, I'm prepared to rule on this, but I understand that won't be necessary because the House has come to an agreement.

Mr. Trivers: Working together.

Chair: Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I'm waiting for copies. There will be a motion – I'll be bringing forth a motion – an amendment to the bill as soon as it comes back through the door. So, do you want to wait two minutes or what?

Leader of the Opposition: The hon. member is withdrawing his amendment.

Chair: Do we have unanimous consent to withdraw the original amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Chair: Great. Okay.

We'll await the new amendment.

Leader of the Opposition: I would like to bring an amendment to the proposed Bill No. 104, *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*, House amendment.

The amendment is being moved by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and is seconded by the Honourable Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Chair: Shall it carry as amended?

An Hon. Member: No.

An Hon. Member: We don't even know what –

Chair: (Indistinct) to read the amendment?

Okay. All right.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Chair: Moved –

Order, order!

Moved that section 1 of Bill No. 104 is amended in the proposed new subsection 213(4.1):

(a) by the addition of the words “, on request,” after the word “shall”; and

(b) by the deletion of the words “immediately on” and the substitution of the word “after”.

2. The Bill is amended by the addition of the following after section 1:

1.1 Subsection 253(1) of the Act is amended

(a) in clause (c), by the deletion of the word “and” after the semicolon;

(b) in clause (d), by the deletion of the period and the substitution of the word “and”; and

(c) by the addition of the following after clause (d):

(e) may require the operator of a motor vehicle and any passenger on the motor vehicle, on request, to remove the crash helmet and any face covering he or she is wearing after coming to a safe stop when signalled or requested to stop.

3. Section 2 of the Bill is amended in the wording of the entry for the proposed new subsection 213(4.1) in the Schedule of the Act by the deletion of the words “immediately on” and the substitution of the words “on request after”.

Shall it carry as amended?

Ms. Biggar: Question.

Ms. Casey: Question.

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, in number 2, section 1.1 (e), when it was being read, it says: may require the operator of a motorcycle and any passenger on the motorcycle. When you were reading it, you said motor vehicle.

Did you mean to say motorcycle? I just want clarification.

Chair: I'm sorry, hon. Member; I did mean to say motorcycle.

Ms. Casey: So in both instances you meant to say motorcycle versus motor vehicle?

Chair: That's correct, hon. Member.

Ms. Casey: Thank you.

I just wanted to be clear.

Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill. Carry the motion.

An Hon. Member: Carry the motion.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Ms. Biggar: Carry the bill.

An Hon. Member: Carry the bill.

Chair: The bill is carried.

Shall the bill carry? Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: I move the title. An Act –

Chair: Okay. *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4).*

Shall it carry? Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: I move the enacting clause.

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

Shall it carry? Carried.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chair, I move the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report the bill agreed to with amendment.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Great work.

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act (No. 4)*, I beg leave to report that the committee has gone through the said bill and has agreed to same with amendment. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motions Other Than Government

The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would now like to call Motion No. 31 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 31.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the following motion:

WHEREAS several organizations have identified a need for improved legal aid services for Prince Edward Islanders;

AND WHEREAS the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women has indicated in their 2015 Equality Report Card that most people earn too much money to qualify for legal aid, but too little to afford the legal services necessary to meaningfully address legal problems;

AND WHEREAS 56% of PEI's total legal aid expenditures in 2013–2014 were for family law legal aid, and 73% of family legal aid recipients were women;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly urge the government of Prince Edward Island to review the current income eligibility criteria to ensure that a greater percentage of Prince Edward Islanders who need to utilize legal

services, are able to access legal aid programs.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It is a privilege to rise today to move this motion which aims to allow more Islanders access to legal aid options in our province.

According to the government website, Legal Aid is an access to a justice program, providing legal representation and assistance to low income individuals who have serious legal needs in the areas of criminal law, youth criminal justice, or family and civil law. Through this program, lawyers are provided to represent eligible adults or young persons who would otherwise be unable to afford Legal Counsel to deal with serious criminal charges and/or investigations.

The overall purpose of criminal legal aid is to ensure that every individual can have a fair trial and that no one is wrongfully convicted or unfairly sentenced. Family legal aid provides direct legal representation and assistance by lawyers to individuals who cannot afford to hire a private law firm lawyer when faced with a serious family or related civil legal problem. These serious legal issues can include domestic violence or threats to the personal security of the applicant or children in a family situation. These are given the highest priority for assistance.

It was interesting to read that financial eligibility rules may be waived or relaxed to enable access to Legal Counsel in emergency situations where there is a risk to personal security. In less urgent family situations, priority is focused on the legal needs of dependent children. Prioritized needs in this category include custody, access, financial support, and housing.

Other civil legal aid services covered by PEI legal aid include; child protection law, involuntary hospitalization under the mental health laws, guardianship, and adult protection. Limited assistance may be offered in other civil law areas depending on the availability of resources.

As you can see, there is a wide range of services that this program addresses, however its strict eligibility criteria keeps many from obtaining that help.

For many Islanders in need, legal aid is difficult to access due to income limitations.

Legal services are expensive, and everyday Islanders are not able to afford them on their own. Families who are involved in a divorce or separation can find it very difficult. If there is a conflict in terms of settlement, they require a lawyer; and they don't come cheap.

Often, one party or another will not be able to afford to get legal help. They have no idea of their legal rights, and they may not be able to afford to get divorced.

They may not be able to access spousal supports that they are entitled, because, frankly, they may not know they are entitled to them.

If there is a matter involving custody of children, again, parents can find themselves in legal disputes. Suddenly, as a single person, they no longer have the eligibility to fight their case in courts. They may end up accepting a situation that is not fair and not in the best interest of the child.

Our motion calls on government to review the current income eligibility criteria to ensure that a greater percentage of Prince Edward Islanders who need to utilize legal services are able to access legal aid programs. I believe the province is going short of ensuring that Islanders who need legal aid have access to it.

It is not realistic to believe that people who are barely getting by are able to afford legal services – which can often cost between \$250 to \$300 an hour, when they are making less than \$500 a week.

For a single person to qualify for legal aid, they have to make less than \$300 a week, or \$15,578. For an individual in a family of four to qualify, they cannot earn more than \$29,680 a year. Most people are unable to live on that, let alone pay the fees for legal services.

Legal fees are expensive but often necessary in both criminal and civil matters. Most civil cases today are family law cases which can become complex and take longer in court, which amounts to more legal fees.

Our caucus believes that the maximum threshold of income to receive legal aid must be reviewed. Minimum wage has gone up, but at the same time people are paying more in taxes. Islanders are paying more for heat. The cost of food is rising. Rent has increased. And, the overall Islanders have less money in their pockets.

In 2013-2014, 56% of legal aid expenditures were for family law cases, and of that, 73% of the people who are suing aid were women.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, in their 2015 equality report card, stated that most people are in too much money to qualify for legal aid but too little to afford legal services necessary to meaningfully address legal problems.

Everyone deserves a right to have legal services. By reviewing the current income eligibility criteria to ensure that a greater percentage of Prince Edward Islanders who need legal services are able to access programs, we will be allowing disadvantaged Islanders to be properly represented in the justice system.

Mr. Speaker, I urge members of this Legislative Assembly to support our motion and urge the government of the Province of Prince Edward Island to review the current income eligibility criteria.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Now speaking to the motion will be the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, the seconder of the motion.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my honour to rise in the House and second the motion from the member from Borden-Carleton.

Legal aid is an essential program for many Islanders that cannot afford high-priced lawyers to administer their legal work.

Legal aid is a great program that is set up to meet the needs of low-income Islanders who may find themselves in a wide array of legal disputes. However, as stated by the mover of this motion, under the current regulations, this cannot be accessed as much as needed.

The threshold for \$300 a week appears to be somewhat ridiculous in the world of \$400 an hour for lawyers.

Any person who works for 37.5 hours a week at minimum wage under the current rules would not be eligible to receive the legal aid. It's unfortunate, but this restriction is leaving some of the most vulnerable Islanders out in the cold when it comes to the access of legal services.

There is no way that someone who makes just barely above this threshold a week can afford to pay \$250-300 an hour for legal services. The current threshold needs to rise to reflect the current circumstances of Islanders who are earning minimum wage.

Our caucus is asking this government to finally put the concerns of most vulnerable Islanders first. There is need for the income eligibility criteria to be reviewed and increased to ensure that low-income earners can access their right to legal counsel in the event that they need it.

If someone requires legal aid, then there must be proper resources in place to ensure that their needs are met and they are receiving fair and adequate legal counsel of their case.

Plain and simple, if someone needs to ask to seek legal counsel and sadly they cannot afford it, we need to ensure that they receive legal aid.

Everyone in Canada has a right to fair and adequate representation in the courts, and just because someone cannot afford their own legal counsel does not mean that they should be neglecting their rights.

In 2014-2015, 15% of all applications for legal aid on PEI were rejected although all may not be due to financial ineligibility;

however, a significant portion of those are due to financial ineligibility.

We need to open this program up to ensure that those who need it the most can receive the help they so desperately require.

Seventy-three per cent of all family oriented legal aid cases are accessed by women. The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women has addressed that they expect the provincial government to place a high priority on ensuring women and families have access to justice, particularly for family law, and to provide and support programs and services that assist people to receive legal help for legal problems. They have also expressed concern and want to see the number of legal aid lawyers increased and more resources made available. Our caucus feels the same way on this issue.

As the Member from Borden-Kinkora pointed out, family legal aid expenditures for 2013-2014 increased by 6.5% over the year previous. But again, the frontline employees that help these people with access to legal aid have seen no improvements.

The legal aid system needs an overhaul, and this motion is a good starting point. Islanders work hard to support their families, and they pay their fair share. When situations require legal aid arise, we need to make sure that this program is available and working for Islanders who need it the most.

It has been an honour to further the discussion on the expansion of the legal aid system of PEI. This program is essential to Islanders, and we, as elected officials, need to ensure that their best interests are always a primary concern.

I want to strongly encourage this government to review and expand the legal aid program so that the most vulnerable Islanders can be properly represented in our justice system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to rise and speak to this motion and indicate that I would be prepared to support it, but let me set that in its context.

The motion draws attention to the restricted eligibility of Islanders to the support of legal aid.

The first point around context is that it is now more than 10 years – in fact, it goes back to 2004 – since there has been any substantial change in the transfer from the federal government to support legal aid, and if you go back further in the history of legal aid programs, this was something that was largely initiated by the federal government. This goes back as far as the 1970s.

It's in that context of a restricted envelope – or one that is certainly tight – that the people who provide legal aid, in both the family civil and in criminal contexts, do their best to serve the needs on a priority basis of the clients who come forward.

Indeed, the work to review the income eligibility to access Legal aid is something, the legal aid eligibility guidelines; to review those guidelines is work that has been underway by the legal aid team over a period of time. It's a need that is well recognized by that team and by government.

There are currently nine employees, including the program director, who offer the legal aid program. Five of those, out of the eight lawyer positions would be in the family civil side of the provision of that. Indeed, it is the case that there have been strains on that service to address the needs.

I think it's very important that all of us in the House see this in that larger context. One that we were discussing here on Thursday night of last week, that is to say, this is not strictly a matter of finding the resources to provide more lawyers to enable more people to access the adversarial system, but rather it is to put in place a greater array of tools and a more robust platform, notably with the ability of families seeking to resolve their issues to have those issues resolved through and alternative dispute resolution process.

I think that's very fundamental in how we

view what might be the result or what might be envisaged as the result of this motion is that all of us might hope to see, indeed, the number of Prince Edward Islanders who are in need of legal services, in the strict sense of having a lawyer to help them with the adversarial system, for Prince Edward Islanders to see the availability of, notably, the parenting coordinator that we spoke about last week, as a way of accessing, together with other services that are available, an alternative dispute resolution process that will enable those families to deal with their discord in a more constructive manner; to build some of the skills that are necessary to address those issues on a continuing basis. When there are children involved, in particular, and you have access and custody issues, these are not one time events, there is a continuing relationship.

Notably, a relationship that, ideally, is approached in a way that has, as its first consideration, the best interest of the child. Indeed, for the children to not become either pawns or perhaps guilty, or parties that feel guilty in the context of family discord.

The motion, which envisages a review of the legal aid eligibility guidelines is one that we support. The underlying spirit of the motion, which is that, Prince Edward Islanders who are seeking to access the courts or other ways to resolve their discord would have the professional help that will enable them to have the best possible outcome, and to, in effect, get on with their lives.

With the recognition that we have these other bills, two of which remain for further consideration in committee, we support this motion and envisage that the outcome, or the result, may not necessarily be the hiring of more legal aid lawyers, but the resolving of more disputes in a manner that causes less anxiety where there are fewer transaction costs and where, in particular, on the family side of things, which is a very big part of the portfolio, families, even where they are separating, are able to address their situation in a more positive and constructive manner.

I'm pleased, on behalf of government, to indicate that we do have a challenge. It is one that is being addressed and can be further addressed through a review of the

legal aid eligibility guidelines. We support this motion with the understanding that there are other measures that must come forward, in concert with, the ability of parties to address the, you might say, the conventional court system, and that those measures include alternative dispute resolution, a publicly funded parenting coordination program, a publicly funded children's lawyer, and the improvements that have been adopted by this House, last week, to the Maintenance Enforcement Program.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to support the motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to rise in support of this motion. I think when you look at our society today, for example, we have universal health care. To think, in a society where we have universal health care there are large numbers of people that don't have access to legal aid, I think that's not good. I think it's almost as basic a service because it has an impact on people in their, sometimes, in their time of most dire need. It really is an impact that can carry on to affect their whole life depending on the case.

I'm really someone who believes in this equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome or condition. I think allowing legal aid is about opportunity. If people with more money have the opportunity to get legal services, and people without money don't, then you don't have an equality of opportunity. I think that it's simply unfair.

We spend a lot of money on government on legal services. We just finished going through the Budget Estimates today. Legal services and legal opinions are very important. In our society, they're the things that really, in many ways, are the basis of our society. We are here in the Legislature. We make laws. We make bills. For people to be able to have the legal aid so that they can move forward and do what's best for them is extremely important.

Again, I support this because I believe in equal opportunity and I think, in order to have equal opportunity we need to have more people who are able to access legal services regardless of their level of income.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Thank you to the Member from Borden-Kinkora for bringing this motion forward.

Legal aid is a fundamental access to justice program. For the justice system to function properly we must ensure, as the hon. member preceding me just said that: All citizens, regardless of their age or their race or their gender or their religion, or their economic status, have equal access to justice.

My understanding of the legal aid system, program rather, is that it provides services in both the criminal and civil matters. For those facing criminal charges, access to counsel is a fundamental protection, which is offered under our civil charter rights.

In civil cases, the legal division often provides assistances for the most urgent family situations. Legal needs, of course, may involve cases where domestic violence has occurred, or where personal safety of partners or children may in danger, as well as situations around custody and access and financial assistance and housing.

For those, who turn to legal aid, the services that they seek can be, quite literally, a matter of life and death. It's absolutely essential that the program be funded adequately.

So, I was pleased when the Minister of Justice and Public Safety indicated during the discussion of his department's estimates and, again, reiterating it tonight, that the federal government has indeed increased its share of legal aid funding for the first time since 2004, and I personally hope this is the beginning of a new and ongoing trend.

And I would also urge the provincial government to continue its work to ensure that this program is adequately funded to meet the needs of Islanders. However, I do have concerns that the demand for services will continue to outstrip the resources that are available, so it's equally important for government to consider new and innovative ways to address citizens' challenges when it comes to access to justice.

For that reason, I was very encouraged by the Premier's mandate letter to the Department of Justice and Public Safety where he directed the minister to, and I quote: "Review legal aid and education programs to ensure these are effective and efficient in meeting the needs of the communities they are intended to serve, are modern and innovative in design and delivery, and are sustainable to meet future, anticipated needs..."

I hope this review is well underway and that the minister will be able to report shortly on the results.

I also feel it would be remiss of me if I did not compliment government on its new initiatives within the Family Law Centre. Although the Premier and I may well not agree on the necessity of an independent child advocate, I do fully support his work to improve access to alternative dispute resolution through the parenting coordinator program, the new arbitration program, and the children's lawyer.

As Michael Zimmerman, who was here last week told us during our briefing, the adversarial court system does not work well in family situations, while ADR is a much better method of deescalating conflict.

I believe these new approaches brought forward by government to provide earlier interventions will help reduce demand for family legal aid services.

I am also hoping that the Department of Justice and Public Safety is considering other innovative approaches to improve access to justice, such as providing better supports to self-representing litigants or sponsoring new programs or services through the Community Legal Information Association.

In conclusion, I agree that legal aid services are essential. I strongly support increased funding through all sources; federal, provincial, and law foundation. But I also call on members of this House to be open to, and supportive, of other nontraditional approaches to improve all citizens' access to justice.

I wish to thank, again, the member for bringing this motion forward, and I will be supporting it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are there any other members –

Ms. Biggar: Question. Call the question.

Speaker: I'm just asking if any other members would like to speak to the motion.

Mr. R. Brown: You're going to get it again, LOL.

Mr. LaVie: Oh.

Ms. Biggar: I was ready to vote and support it, that's all. I'm just anxious to support it.

Mr. Aylward: Let's let the mover finish his motion.

Speaker: If there are no other members who would like to speak to the motion, then I will call on the mover of the motion to close debate on the motion.

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

Thank you, hon. members, for supporting this – hoping you're supporting it – and your kind words.

I can tell you that, as somebody who's been in police work for a lot of number of years, I can tell you it's quite troubling when you actually deal with people's situations when they don't have access to legal aid. One thing I always struggled with as a policeman, when you were dealing with a family situation and they would ask you the question: Do I need a lawyer, or should I call a lawyer.

Well, police officers are not allowed, and it's frowned upon, that we actually say: Yes, you should. Or we recommend one. That's a decision they have to make, so you try to give them the best possible advice to hope that they will seek legal advice and that they will be able to afford it. It's hard to try to point people in directions when their money is limited to get legal advice.

I will thank a lot of lawyers on PEI that would provide legal service for free. I've been contacted by many lawyers over a number of years, and they said, you know, my name; if you need somebody at an hour of the night to talk to a lawyer, please have them call me. I really appreciate the legal community for that activity in the past and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Are you ready for the question?

An Hon. Member: Standing vote.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Speaker: Okay, a recorded division has been requested.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please ring the bell.

[The bells were rung]

Mr. MacEwen: Mr. Speaker, now that we have the (Indistinct) we are ready for the vote.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. R. Brown: We're ready, Mr. Speaker, for the vote.

Speaker: Okay, thank you.

All those not supporting the motion, please stand.

All those supporting the motion, please stand.

Clerk Assistant: The hon. Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of

Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, the hon. Premier, 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 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 Morell-Mermaid, the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River and the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Speaker: The motion is carried, and it is unanimous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Two for two.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Opposition would now like to call Motion No. 66 to the floor.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 66.

The hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, the following motion:

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island currently has a shortage of foster care homes where there are just 60 foster homes for roughly 225 children in care;

AND WHEREAS due to this shortage cribs have been put in five provincial group homes to house infants in need of emergency foster care;

AND WHEREAS the shortage of families is putting additional pressure on existing

foster parents who feel obligated to take additional children in need of a place to stay;

AND WHEREAS there is concern that the current financial assistance is not enough to cover all the costs associated with foster care and may be proving to be a disincentive to Islanders who would like to provide foster care but feel they may not be able to afford to do so under the existing formula;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly encourage government to examine various models of foster care programming in other jurisdictions to determine how best to finance and serve the need for emergency foster care for Prince Edward Island children.

Speaker: I'll now call on the mover of the motion the hon. Member from Stratford-Kinlock to speak to the motion.

Mr. Aylward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just wait for a moment for the podium.

I'm pleased to rise today in support of our motion calling for additional supports for Island foster families.

I have the greatest respect for those Islanders who take on the role of a foster parent for children in need in our province. I have spoken with many of these families and all have told me that it is extremely rewarding. Some have been foster parents for many years. Foster families give their time, their compassion, their hearts and their love to the children and youth who need it most. They provide a safe family setting to children of all ages during a time of crisis. Some may be infants, some toddlers and all are under the age of 18.

Foster care not only supports our children in crisis, but it can provide the time necessary that enables parents, to perhaps, address issues and overcome obstacles that are hurting them and the well-being of their children.

Foster parenting is a kind of vocation. For many, it's actually a calling. It requires unselfishness and giving. Mr. Speaker, as you know the number of foster families has been steadily declining in recent years.

There were more than 100 foster parents on Prince Edward Island in 2008. There were 60 families in 2016.

In 2016, PEI had roughly 225 children in care, down from more than 300 in 2006. Certainly, the declining numbers of children in foster care is positive, but unfortunately we cannot take it for granted that the decline will continue.

I'm sure that some of the decline can be attributed to the hard work and diligence of our staff in Child Protection Services and social services. I commend them for all of the difficult work that they must do in an effort to protect our children.

However, the fact is that we need more Island families to become foster families. I know government did increase funding available to our foster families. I'm not sure exactly which bullet it is here that was passed out to us. I'm sure if I took time to read it, I'd find it there.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Continue to invest.

Mr. Aylward: But, I believe the reluctance of Island families to take on responsibilities of a child in need of protection is not just about the money. But in today's world, raising a family is a costly business.

Today, often both foster parents may be working. They may be supporting two vehicles. They may have children of their own. They likely have a mortgage payment, cell phones, and perhaps even landlines, some kind of television programming and perhaps childcare, and, quite possibly, Internet, as well, if they are lucky enough to live in a community that they can access Internet here on PEI, especially high-speed Internet.

They have to pay for food, transportation, heat, lighting, clothes and the list is long. If we are going to attract new foster parents we need to ensure that these families do not incur additional costs because, frankly, many families are living on tight budgets; living from pay cheque to pay cheque. They need to know that if they become foster parents that they will not be faced with an additional financial burden.

If we can do that, that will be a great first move. But, children, who find themselves in a situation where they are taken out of their homes for their own safety, have often suffered their own kind of emotional trauma. They may be fearful, angry, hurting. They are likely going to miss their parents, their family members and their friends. Life will not be the same for them or their new family.

Most of us today are living in a highly-paced world, with possibly more stress than we need. A potential foster family needs to know that there are emotional supports and the counselling supports that will help with the often difficult transition. It is vital that potential parents feel that they will be able to cope; that their own children will be safe; that their family life will not be impacted negatively.

The fact that our government has found itself in a situation where they need to house infants in one of our five adolescent group homes tell us how desperate of a situation we are in. The fact that the province has, or plans to, hire temporary staff or reassign staff specifically to care for infants, shows that something needs to be done.

I don't have the answers, but it is heartbreaking to think that a new infant could find itself in a situation where it has no one to bond with because staff keeps changing. I believe they would receive good care, but not the kind of consistent care that a loving foster family could provide.

Our motion tonight is about exploring ways of meeting the needs of foster care children. I believe we can find wonderful alternatives, but I also believe that if the traditional model of foster parenting receives the supports necessary then we can succeed in attracting more families.

With this, Mr. Speaker, I ask for support of this House on our motion.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: I will now call on the seconder of the motion, the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and second our motion urging greater supports for foster families and encouraging Islanders to give consideration to becoming foster parents.

Our province is not the only one experiencing a decline in the number of foster families. It is a nationwide problem and I believe we need to reach out to our sister provinces in our struggle to find a solution.

The Canadian Foster Families Association has acknowledged that a foster parent shortage has reached a crisis point nationally with several jurisdictions routinely forced to house older children in hotels.

These children and youth may need foster care for just a few days a week, several months, or possibly even years. Our populations are aging and many of those who may have been foster parents for years feel they no longer they have the energy or the health to carry on in that role. Unfortunately, our aging population will be impacting many areas of public service in the future.

I believe there are many people in our province who have a genuine desire to contribute to the well-being of children and youth in their community. There are many, no doubt, who are giving it some thought right now. I think it is important to stress that they will all not be alone and they will be working with professionals in our social service network to develop and support a plan of care for each child and youth.

The main objective is to reunite the child with their family. However, this is not always possible. Plans may have to include options such as adoption, legal custody by a family member or foster parent, or an independent living situation.

Our objective, with our motion, is to ensure that all of the supports are there to recruit foster families. There have been suggestions that foster parents could be hired as professionals and paid wages for taking in children. Currently, foster parents do not pensions or sick leave or vacation time and those kinds of benefits may have to be explored in the future.

I do believe we need to, not only, support individuals, but we must also acknowledge their generosity in providing stability and a caring home for these children. These parents must be made to feel a part of the team, and they need to have their opinions respected.

While the legal responsibility for the child or youth remains with child protection, foster parents play an important role in the growth and development of these children and youth.

I would ask for your support for this motion and to help, perhaps, ensure that our children in need of care have a caring home to go to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next on the list speaking to this motion the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in support of this motion. This was an issue that's been in the House here since I was elected about foster families. They have been asking for support now for over five years; they have been asking for support, these families.

They're not getting the support that they need; that they should have. Foster families provide vulnerable children with security, safety, comfort and love. That's what these foster families do.

I do want to thank the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, he supports our motion. He definitely supports our motion. He gave me these notes to read, so I'll read these notes for him, on behalf of the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park, who's kind of shy to get up and speak about this motion so I will do it for him.

These foster families also, they provide a nurturing home where the children feel valued and accepted. There are approximately 130 children in the care each month who live, in either a foster home or a group home. We have five group homes.

On a monthly basis, there are approximately 70 foster homes available on PEI.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) good.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Mr. Currie: Demand remains high, though.

Mr. R. Brown: Never (Indistinct) –

Mr. LaVie: The demand for foster parents remains high.

An Hon. Member: Government values them.

Mr. LaVie: And they've been asking for support now for five years since I've been in this House and they're not getting the support.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LaVie: Government claims foster parents planning and supporting our children, our families and our communities. Why doesn't government listen to these foster families? If they value the crucial role foster parents play, support them. They're asking for help. Through the government's support and love, you are contributing to a richer society for all Islanders.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, right. You're right.

Mr. LaVie: If I'm right, why are you not listening to the foster families if I'm right?

Ms. Biggar: They're great people.

Mr. LaVie: Yes, they are great people. I know people that are foster families.

Ms. Biggar: My (Indistinct) –

Mr. LaVie: I know them and they're great people. Busy people, asking for help, asking for more foster families – they're not getting it. They've been asking for five years now. This issue was in the House when I was here my first year, and it's still in the House.

Government claims it continues to invest in programs that support children and families.

An Hon. Member: Yes, we do. We do (Indistinct) –

Mr. LaVie: You do?

An Hon. Member: – a great job.

Mr. LaVie: You do? You do a great job? Well, why are they asking for more help? Why are they asking for help?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: For five years now they've been asking for help.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Mr. Speaker, Triple P: Positive Parenting Program –

Ms. Biggar: Great program.

Ms. Casey: Tell us about that. (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – use simple tips to help Island parents and caregivers face the challenges of raising children and teens.

Mr. Currie: Great program.

Ms. Casey: Tell us about it

Ms. Biggar: Great program.

Mr. LaVie: It is.

Ms. Casey: Talk about that program.

Mr. LaVie: It is a good program.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: But Mr. Speaker, these foster families are asking for help and they're not getting the help.

Mr. R. Brown: He's going (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: He is.

Mr. LaVie: Triple P is a flexible, practical way to develop skills, strategies and confidence to handle any parenting situation, and is backed by years of research. So there's research done on it.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: Yes, lots.

Mr. LaVie: And it's a great program. It works.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: And we're all (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: It's a great program.

Mr. LaVie: It is, and it works, but you're not supporting your foster families. They're asking for more help.

Ms. Biggar: That's for them to use.

Mr. LaVie: That's a tool for them to use.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: It is.

Mr. LaVie: It's a tool.

Ms. Biggar: You're right.

Mr. LaVie: You reach in the toolbox and you grab the tool and you use it.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) have different tools they use.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) that one.

Mr. MacEwen: I hear you.

Mr. LaVie: Another vulnerable program –

Mr. R. Brown: We're with you. We're tired too.

Mr. LaVie: The strongest families –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: This free program is for families with children aged 3-17.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: Another great program.

Ms. Biggar: It is.

Mr. LaVie: It is.

Ms. Biggar: It is, thank you.

Mr. LaVie: And it's free.

Ms. Biggar: It is.

Mr. LaVie: But Mr. Speaker –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Oh, yeah. We've been hearing now for five years that foster families need help, and they do. They're great families. They take in vulnerable kids. They give them comfort. They give them love. They give all they can give. They pour their hearts –

Ms. Biggar: Give from the heart.

Mr. LaVie: – right into these kids.

Ms. Biggar: From the heart.

Mr. LaVie: That's what it's all about on Prince Edward Island is our children, and everybody inside this rail will admit that. It's all about the children.

The program is offered online, by telephone, and provides help with behaviour, anxiety issues or major difficulties at home or in school. So the help is there. That's the tool. Take the tool – and they use that tool. The families tell me they use that.

Health PEI has a website. The Strongest Families Program can be found on that website.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) if you have good high-speed Internet.

Mr. LaVie: If you have high-speed Internet, that's correct; there's a lot of families across PEI with no high-speed Internet.

That's another problem that these foster families are facing. They bring in these children and they probably use the high-speed Internet. If you come to Eastern Kings especially on the north side with no Internet, none whatsoever –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: There are foster families up there, too, and there's no internet for these kids.

Mr. R. Brown: Have to get your Internet through Canada Post.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Pages delivered.

Mr. LaVie: I do support this motion. I do support foster families for what these families do for these kids that are most vulnerable and the most vulnerable time in their life. The love that they show – I have foster families in my district, and these kids are just like their own kids. They bring them up just like their own.

I'll say one more point before I pass it along, pass the motion up.

I had one lady come to me. She went to social services with three children and got no help, and this lady had to make a hard decision.

What she did, she put her kids in foster families. That way her children would be looked after because social services was not looking after them, or was not going to look after them, so she put her kids with foster families. She knew the kids would be looked after. So that says a lot about the foster families here on PEI.

I'm going to close. I do support this motion.

Mr. R. Brown: Appreciate the notes?

Mr. LaVie: The next time the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Victoria Park writes notes, make them a little longer please.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Adjourn the debate.

Mr. LaVie: I'll adjourn the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Adjourn the debate.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Members. I am now going to call on the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I call Motion –

Speaker: Order!

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

I call Motion No. 103.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): The hon. Leader of the Third Party moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, the following motion:

WHEREAS our modern consumerist lifestyle has many negative economic, social and environmental consequences; –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Hon. members!

Carry on.

Clerk Assistant: AND WHEREAS Prince Edward Island has shown leadership nationally in sustainable waste management;

AND WHEREAS the government of Sweden has proposed a tax cut on repairs to household goods to encourage the recycling and reuse of goods;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge government to explore the creation of a tax break on repairs to household goods.

Speaker: I'll now call on the mover of the motion the hon. Leader of the Third Party to speak to the motion.

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

It's a pleasure to rise this evening and talk to what I believe is a very important and innovative motion containing a very important and innovative idea.

Since the onset of the Industrial Revolution we have seen a massive increase in the

amount of stuff that we buy, the rise of mass production, mass consumption and what we call consumerism.

While this is coincided with a definite and certain increase in the quality of life, it has also come with some substantial costs. We are increasingly living beyond the means of our environment to provide that standard of life. Indeed, we have exceeded the carrying capacity of this planet.

What have those material gains brought us? The positive effects of material goods on the quality of life, I believe, are significantly overstated. We can certainly buy more stuff, but the ability of these things to make us happy or more fulfilled individuals is quite limited. That is part of the reason I proposed the well-being measurement act a year and a half ago.

With this motion; however, I want to address a different aspect of consumerism: the environmental, economic and social damage that, I believe, it is causing our society. Sustainability is built on three pillars, social, economic and environmental, and the ability of a society to meet those needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to do so. Consumerism and the parallel ideology of perpetual economic growth, something I actually mentioned to a minister's statement this morning, fails on all three.

As legislators, it is our job to tackle these sorts of societal challenges and help to create a better quality of life for all Islanders. This motion is a very small step in attempting to nudge our society away from consumerism and toward a more sustainable future.

The idea comes from the government of Sweden's recent strategy for sustainable consumption. The idea is really quite simple. The sales tax on repairs to bicycles, shoes, clothing and electronic items, for example, is cut in half. In Sweden, that would be from 25% to 12%. Some people think we are highly taxed here on Prince Edward Island.

For our province, we could achieve the same thing by removing the provincial portion of the HST on all repairs. This policy is an example of what behavioural economists call 'nudging.' The tax break provides an

incentive that enables people to more easily make responsible consumer choices without government having to be heavy handed in the process.

It reduces the environmental impact of the things we consume by encouraging higher quality and longer lasting products, lowering greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing and diverting waste from landfills.

Repairs are labour intensive rather than resource intensive and primarily done by local companies. Therefore, this is a job creator, too. According to Per Bolund, who is the policy's creator, and happens to be the Green Party Minister of Financial Markets and Consumer Affairs in Sweden, it would, in effect, replace imports of new items with local labour, local jobs.

The main cost of this policy is the lost revenue, which would be easily solved by taxing something we want to discourage. We should not be taxing goods we should be taxing bads. The upcoming carbon price, for example, whether it's a tax or a cap-and-trade would seem the logical source to replace the lost revenue.

Sweden, with its long established carbon tax, currently set at €137 per tonne, decided instead to pay for this initiative with a tax on toxic chemicals on consumer goods. Again, taxing a bad, something we want to discourage.

The point is that government has various options in order to make up the shortfall in revenue. They can figure that for themselves how best it would fit with their philosophy and values and priorities.

Many Islanders were traditionally frugal, resourceful and self-sufficient. That's the way we lived here on Prince Edward Island. The throw-away culture, which has been pushed on us and adopted by us by national and international market forces, does not reflect the history and the culture and the identity of most Islanders.

This policy would help Islanders return to those roots; help reinforce the Island identity and the Island way of life. It would also be beneficial to low-income Islanders who may not be able to afford to buy new goods, but

could, certainly, more easily afford to have them repaired, especially if we reduce the taxes on those repairs.

This policy, I believe, would represent a change without upsetting the apple cart. Since the introduction of Waste Watch over 10 years ago, with Island-wide composting and recycling, we have led the country in waste management practices. This initiative is – the initiative in this motion helps build on the success of Waste Watch by further reducing the amount of waste we need to dispose of. It draws attention to the problem of overconsumption and depletion of resources while providing a tool to help combat it, and it creates employment.

I encourage all hon. members to consider this innovative policy with an open mind and I hope that you will support it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: Next speaking to the motion will be the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, I am always looking at ways to continue to protect our province's environment. As Islanders, we understand the importance of those efforts and we do our part to ensure the natural beauty and distinctive environment of Prince Edward Island so it can be enjoyed for future generations.

As Prince Edward Island's minister responsible for the environment, my outline mandate includes taking proactive action to prepare for and protect our environment. Last week, in the House, I was happy to report that when it comes to recycling and composting, residents of Prince Edward Island can now boast they are the best in Canada.

As Prince Edward Island's minister responsible for the environment, I have had the good fortune of witnessing firsthand the passion of Islanders and that they have for our environment. I always knew Prince Edward Island was a leader in the country

when it came to being environmentally friendly province, but recently this has definitely been confirmed.

In a recent report from Stats Canada, Prince Edward Island ranked number one in the country for our recycling and composting efforts. That report indicates that Prince Edward Island keeps more waste out of landfills per person than anywhere else in Canada. According to Stats Canada waste management survey, Islanders, each day, diverted an average of 429 kilograms of waste through recycling or organic processing, which is well above the Canadian average of 255 kilograms per person.

I want to, again, thank Islanders for taking time out of their daily lives to recycle and compost, which has made Prince Edward Island a leader in diverting waste from our landfills. These efforts will assist in the protection of our environment for future generations to come. This success can be attributed to many initiatives, including the Island-wide launch of the Waste Watch source separation program in 2002.

This program has helped Islanders reduce waste going into the landfills by 50%. Another contributing factor would be the introduction of our Beverage Container Program. This was launched by government in 2008 and has resulted in nearly 4.5 million pounds of used beverage containers being diverted from landfills annually.

The Electronics Recycle Program was launched two years later in 2010. We have seen an 18% increase in electronic waste recycling on Prince Edward Island since that time.

Government in cooperation and collaboration with industry stakeholders has also launched industry-led programs in recent years for recycling paint, oil, lead, acid batteries, light bulbs, expired medications, mobile phones, signal-use rechargeable batteries, and medical sharps.

This motion proposes a tax-reduction program similar to one in Sweden. This was implemented by Sweden's national government and our government is committed to working with federal partners,

especially as it relates to protection of the environment.

In closing, I want to recognize and thank all Islanders for their environmental protection efforts that have resulted in the smallest province in Canada being one of the environmental leaders. Whether you're taking on big or small initiatives, any effort being made to protect our environment is something worth celebrating.

I'd like to take a few moments to make a few other comments. I know as we drive around our neighbourhoods this time of year, there are often piles of waste that are out at the end of driveways. I often see various half ton trucks coming up the street, sifting through whatever's out at the end of somebody's driveway, throwing things in the back of their own truck – which they're going to take home, reuse, and recycle. I know, in past years, when my children were outgrowing their bikes, it was always interesting to take them out to the end of the driveway – and they didn't last very long. Just last summer, we had kind of a little baby grand piano. It was very heavy and I really had trouble figuring out what I was going to do with it, so while we were laying new floor, I took it out to the end of the driveway on a Sunday afternoon just to see what would happen because at the end of the day, we would haul it back into the house and put it back in its respectful place. Two hours later, along came a half-ton truck, two guys got out, took that big piano up, and took it away. I was very pleased with that because I really didn't have a place for it. I'm not a piano player and I was very happy that it was going to a new home.

I think Islanders are very resilient when it comes to reusing and reducing all of their waste. Quite often you'll see a barbeque top being used as a camp fire in somebody's back yard. Bikes are recycled all the time through our waste. There was one day that my wife took the wheelbarrow with a big bag of garbage and took it down three quarters of the way in my driveway so that when I got home, I could put it out. Well some friendly samaritan came along, took the bag of garbage out and took my wheelbarrow. So, Islanders do have a way of keeping an eye out if there's anything that they have a use for; they never hesitate to

pick it up and take it home and repurpose that product – whatever it is.

I'm very pleased to say, as minister, I'm happy when I hear tell of Islanders do that and I am happy that the hon. member brought this motion forward and it's something that we should take a look at – look what other jurisdictions are doing and maybe be creative. It certainly will help our environment on Prince Edward Island and it will help all the environment – good stewards of our Island lands to just do that little bit more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for this motion. I want to also recognize – I think all of us need to recognize that there is a need for us to be more responsible and aware and cautious in the use of our resources.

Islanders all share the awareness that our resources are finite. Our land is beautiful, but it's not limitless and I think that that has made many Islanders fiercely protective of our Island, its land, and its environment.

The need to be careful in the use of our resources helped lead to the development of our Waste Watch system. This great program has made us a national leader in waste separation, composting, and recycling. As we know, Prince Edward Island has been recognized recently as the Canadian leader in composting with 96% of households taking part in composting their organic waste. This program is making a tremendous difference and allowing us to protect our province and its land.

In 2014-2015, over 48,000 metric tonnes of material was diverted from landfill on Prince Edward Island by composting, recycling, and through special disposal programs. We're also using our heat resources – burning waste for heat, which is heating a lot of our – this unit and a lot of buildings across Charlottetown are benefactors of the

waste for heat program that we have right across Prince Edward Island.

We are doing much better than the national average. Nationally, waste is produced at a rate of almost 700 kilograms per person, but on PEI 364 kilograms per person/per capita is produced.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Half of what Canada is producing, so we can be very proud of the work that Islanders are doing and that Islanders do support that kind of reduction because we do value this place and want to protect it.

Another way in which we can protect this province is through responsible energy use. By reducing energy consumption and using energy efficiently, we can reduce the environmental impact of our houses and our businesses. Not only that, by using energy efficiently, we do combat climate change and we do help Island homes and businesses save money. Our government is strongly committed to helping all Islanders to conserve energy and save money on their energy bills.

That was a key objective of our new 10-year energy strategy, which is aimed at reducing energy use, increasing the production of renewable energy, and moderating future price increases.

As part of our new strategy, through efficiencyPEI, we were pleased to relaunch the Home Energy Low-Income Program referred to as HELP. The program provides a free weatherization service to low-income Islanders. That includes having a tradesperson install caulking, weatherstripping and other air sealing measures. It also offers a free programmable thermostat, a low-flow shower head, LED light bulbs, and a voucher for a furnace cleaning.

Since the inception of this program, 3,800 Island households have been assisted in reducing their energy costs. The average household can save in the area of \$250 a year, while providing more comfort and reducing environmental impacts. All those

who pay for heat and lights, including renters, are eligible for the HELP program. This program has already helped thousands of Islanders save money and reduce their environmental impact and we want to reach out to thousands more. I know there are many households that could benefit from our energy efficiency programs. I'd encourage all of us, as local MLAs, to make sure that as many Islanders as possible are aware of the energy saving programs available through efficiencyPEI.

We do have applications provided at all Access PEI sites across PEI and with our recent revamp, we have adopted measures that improve the effectiveness of the HELP program. First, the program is now open to all households with an income of less than \$50,000. Previously, only those with households of less than \$35,000 were eligible. This change in eligibility will allow approximately 9,000 more households to access the HELP program.

Secondly, we are changing the way clients access our rebate programs. Previously, clients had to pay the contractor for the full amount, and then submit a receipt to efficiencyPEI for payment. Now, efficiencyPEI will pay the rebate directly to the contractor, making it easier and simpler for Islanders in need to access the program.

At the same time, we are increasing our collaboration with the department of Family and Human Services, which offers renovation programs to low-income Islanders and low-income seniors. This will help ensure that energy efficiency measures will be incorporated into renovation projects.

I'd like to continue to highlight the work that we are doing and have done and to note that efficiency, first, the cheapest source of energy that we have is the energy we don't use, and efficiencyPEI was established to help Islanders to reduce their energy costs and become more energy efficient.

Since opening in 2008, efficiencyPEI – formally referred to as the Office of Energy Efficiency – has provided over \$7 million in grants to 8,000 residential clients, \$9.4 million in loans to 1,775 residential clients, a free weatherization service to 3,600 low-income homes, over 500 businesses with

programs and services to help reduce their energy consumption, and we have generated over \$50 million in building renovation expenditures.

Under our efficiency – energy efficiency grants, grants are down approximately 25% last year due mainly to the continued low cost of home heating oil.

To date, energy PEI has received and/or processed 671 grants at a value of \$396,465, and we are open and continuing to receive applications from Islanders.

In 2015-2016, 85% of all the grants issued were for air-source heat pumps. So far, this year heat pumps comprise approximately 80% of all grant applications at efficiencyPEI.

EfficiencyPEI does expect to deliver grants to Islanders right through to the end of the fiscal year. Based on an independent program review, efficiencyPEI has shifted its focus.

I also want to talk about some of the – we talk about our environment and what we're doing here on Prince Edward Island, and we are recognized on Prince Edward Island around the world as being second in the world for wind energy generation next to Denmark – only next to Denmark, I would add.

We do have four wind farms on Prince Edward Island. We now have –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) electricity, tax breaks.

Ms. Biggar: We now have 204 megawatts of wind capacity, and that supplies 25% –

An Hon. Member: I don't know how you're going to finance your election.

Ms. Biggar: – of our province's electricity requirements.

An Hon. Member: Higher taxes.

Ms. Biggar: The PEI Energy Corp owns and operates 73 megawatts.

All the power – and I want to be clear, because there seems to always be confusion about this – all the power from the Island-

owned wind farms that are operated by the PEI Energy Corp is being sold to PEI, Maritime Electric, for use by PEI customers only.

Mr. Trivers: To do repairs on (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: The benefits of wind power to our environment, they are: An affordable source of energy; it provides certainty in the future; it is a measure of self-sufficiency that we will build on; and it is environmental stewardship.

Together, the province's four wind farms, developed by the PEI Energy Corp, generate more than 250 million kilowatt-hours of emission-free electricity per year for Island consumers.

The province's four wind farms will generate annual revenue of approximately (Indistinct) million dollars for our province, and also we are committed to maintaining our commitment to renewable energy.

Prince Edward Island has played a leadership role in the area of renewable energy, and in particular, as I mentioned, wind energy.

As technology improves, we will increase the ability for more renewable energy, and as part of our energy strategy, we released our commitment to develop, by 2019, another 30 megawatts, and by 2020, another 40 megawatts of wind power.

But at the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council –

Mr. Trivers: Got a broken turbine (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – recent report card –

Mr. Trivers: Tax breaks for repairs.

Ms. Biggar: – titled *Declining Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Atlantic Canada*, it does show encouraging trends, says our Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

APEC's recent report points to Atlantic Canada as a leader in our country's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A recent resolution passed by the eastern premiers

and New England Governors, we committed to reducing our emissions levels by 35-45%.

Greenhouse gas emissions have dropped 26% since 2004 in the Atlantic region, and Prince Edward Island is making a major contribution to that effort.

Prince Edward Island's renewable energy efforts were noted at the recent meeting of the premiers and governors as having a positive impact on those greenhouse gas emission reductions.

We are, and will continue to, work towards maintaining our role as being a leader in wind energy and that our source of power will be continued to be used for province's electricity consumption.

The wind projects across this province – again, as I mentioned – are producing 204 megawatts.

Another major project that we are involved in, which is going to increase our capacity to put more green energy on the grid and to ensure that Islanders have stability, is the two new electricity cables that we are laying across the Northumberland Strait which we do expect to be completed by the end of May.

Those are an additional 360 megawatts of power, in addition to our 200, that will ensure long-term sustainability, long-term economic ability to import, export, and –

Mr. Aylward: Long-term debts to pay off for that (Indistinct).

Ms. Biggar: – 50% of the cost of that cable, which is the largest energy and transportation project since the Confederation Bridge was done, that is a \$142 million project. Fifty per cent of that is funded through our partnerships with the federal government, which we were able to secure a new agreement with them, and when we –

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

Ms. Biggar: When Justin Trudeau became the new Prime Minister of Canada, he made a further commitment –

Mr. Trivers: Harper's a minimalist.

Ms. Biggar: – to putting more money into our energy sources here on Prince Edward Island.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) Lawrence MacAulay (Indistinct) change it up.

Ms. Biggar: That is going to be a game changer in how we can produce green energy on Prince Edward Island to put more wind on the system, to put more biomass into our system. We, as a government through our 10-year strategy, are committed to moving forward, moving our economy forward, with green jobs, green energy –

Mr. R. Brown: That's recycling.

Ms. Biggar: – and reducing our impact on the environment.

We are, and will continue to be, very –

Ms. Compton: Tired.

Ms. Biggar: – committed, and to work closely with all Islanders to help save energy and put money back into their pockets.

The motion calls on government to work with Islanders so they can reduce their consumption and live more sustainably.

I think it's important that we continue to recognize through the Waste Watch program, through efficiencyPEI, that Islanders and the work that they have already done to reduce our consumption.

Through our energy strategy, through our climate change strategy, through working together in conjunction with our interactive departments, we will continue to help work together so that we can all live sustainable and be protectors of our Island's home.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. R. Brown: If you can't beat LOL, you may as well go home.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I just wanted to let you know, I'm actually going to speak to the motion and not about some irrelevant stuff in my notes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: But Mr. Speaker –

Ms. Biggar: Sustainable consumption.

Mr. Trivers: Let me just say, that this is a fantastic motion. I was reading through it and I thought: Man, what a great motion. This is awesome. In fact, I think I actually tried to convince my caucus to bring this motion to the floor today. It looked so good, I thought this was a Tory motion. This is such a fantastic –

An Hon. Member: Tory motion (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: This motion –

An Hon. Member: I don't understand (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Try to steal all of this (Indistinct) anyway.

Mr. Trivers: – it supports tax breaks –

Mr. R. Brown: I know your (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – it supports efficiency –

Speaker: Order! Members!

This is not *Romper Room*.

Go ahead, hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I read through this and I thought maybe it was the Member from Morell-Mermaid that was going to move this motion, or perhaps the Member from Belfast-Murray River and then I saw it was the Leader of the Third Party. I do want to give him credit for bringing this motion to the floor.

I just wanted to let you know why I think this is, very much, a Tory motion. We have nine core values in our constitution with the Progressive Conservative Party of PEI –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – we do –

Ms. Compton: He's (Indistinct) speaking to the motion.

Mr. Trivers: I'm not going to talk about all nine core values –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – I'm going to talk about the five that apply to this motion. I like to stay on topic. I like to use time wisely. I'm all about efficiency –

Mr. J. Brown: You have wasted five minutes, so far.

Mr. Trivers: First of all, this motion is very good because when we talk about sustainable consumption we're talking about accountability. It's people being accountable for what they're consuming and not consuming more than their fair share. That's the first point.

Next, it's fiscally responsible, another good Tory value.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Responsibility, if you're buying things once and you're fixing them it should cost less than getting caught up in that throw-away culture when you're buying and throwing away.

Third, another great Tory value: Respect. If you're practicing sustainable consumption, you are showing respect for the environment. You are showing respect for the makers of the goods that you are purchasing and you're repairing. In the process you are showing respect for your fellow humans.

Another great Tory value, one of the nine pillars of Progressive Conservatives here on PEI is entrepreneurship. This motion very much speaks to entrepreneurship. As the Leader of the Third Party mentioned this is

about creating jobs, in the end. Instead of having products that are created somewhere else in the world, off of PEI, and bringing them on the Island, using them and throwing them away, instead we are creating jobs here on the Island because then, people who are here will be fixing them. A tax credit is the perfect way to do that. You have heard me talk about tax credits time and time again –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: – that is what this –

Mr. R. Brown: You'll bankrupt the –

Mr. Trivers: – all about –

Mr. R. Brown: – province in (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – less taxes, more work. Less taxes, more work. That would be a good campaign slogan: less taxes, more work –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) give us the other (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) \$3 billion.

An Hon. Member: With a B.

Mr. MacEwen: With a B.

Mr. Trivers: Though, the one, the fifth value, the fifth Tory value that this speaks to is really self-reliance. When you are saying we want to take a good that's well made and we want to take it and we want to keep using it. We want to rely on our abilities to fix it and keep it, to make things happen and not have to worry about shoddy goods that are breaking down and constantly replacing. It's about self-reliance.

Just in a review for all of the hon. members here: we are talking about accountability, responsibility–

Ms. Compton: Pay attention.

Mr. Trivers: – respect, entrepreneurship and self-reliance. To me, that's why this is such a great motion; it's about sustainable consumption, but it's about taking these five core values –

Mr. J. Brown: When are we going to get to a vote?

Ms. Compton: Tory values.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, very much, Tory values. And bringing them about through tax breaks,

How could it be much better than that?

I do want to urge –

Mr. MacEwen: Why brought Waste Watch (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – the government members to support this motion. I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for bringing this forward –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) you voted against it.

Mr. Trivers: – I mean, the Leader of the Third Party –

Ms. Compton: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – there is room in our caucus if you wanted to come over. I don't know if I have the authority to offer that, but you can come –

Mr. R. Brown: You're trying to get the authority.

Mr. Trivers: There you go.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Then we wouldn't have to (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) over there.

Mr. J. Brown: You can go that way if wanted (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – please support this motion –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) you'd be going over (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – thank you.

Ms. Compton: Green values are Tory values.

Mr. MacEwen: Let's see if they're going to talk it out or vote. Let's see.

Ms. Compton: Green values are Tory values.

An Hon. Member: Let's extend the hour for the vote

Mr. MacEwen: Let's see if they're going to talk it out or vote.

Speaker: Okay, hon. members. We do have another member who would like to speak to this motion, the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I first saw the motion, I thought, oh, what's – I didn't really know what sustainable consumption meant to tell the truth. As I read it I was really intrigued and I found it very interesting because one of the things my grandmother used to always say to me is that we are a throw-away society.

We would throw things away instead of repairing them. She said that extended from the toaster that we'd throw away rather than repairing, to eventually, our relationships. It just kind of continued on and it continued on. There are some really good points in here about that throw-away society or the abandonment society.

I know that the hon. member said that: To speak to the motion that the hon. minister wasn't speaking to the motion when she was speaking about the energy efficiency programs and the renovation programs that she had. But, they are, in fact, proving that by repairing and renewing what we have we are adhering to what this motion is talking to.

In my department, as well, we have many programs that also speak to repairing homes rather than having seniors or low-income Islanders having to abandon their properties and go into long-term care facilities, or community care facilities, or having to live with somebody else.

We have made investments to have them repair their homes or to make their homes

safer so that it's not contributing to that consumption that this motion speaks to.

I do want to speak to the three programs that are in my department –

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Ms. Mundy: – that speak to this. Then, I have a few other comments that I'd like to make, as well.

We do believe, this government; that successful communities respect the environment and we have many of our policies and many of our programs that do just that. One of our programs would be our PEI Home Renovation Program that I want to speak to that helps many low-income Islanders.

It helps them to remain in their homes and maintaining their independence as long as they can, so that we, as government, do not have to build more family housing, or build more seniors' building or more community care and long-term care facilities.

The PEI home repair program provides up to a \$6,000 grant to low-income Islanders for electrical, structural, heating, plumbing and fire safety renovations, and up to an \$8,000 grant –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Mundy: – can be provided also –

Mr. R. Brown: Liberal values.

Ms. Mundy: – if those persons have a permanent disability, the improvement would be made to improve their home so that it would accommodate their disability.

In 2015-2016, we assisted 167 households, and we will assist 202 households through this program this year. All in all, since 2013, we have assisted over 900 Islanders investing \$4.7 million –

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Ms. Mundy: – into that program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: That's helping Islanders.

Ms. Mundy: Government, also –

Mr. R. Brown: Who can deny democracy (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – we met our platform commitment –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) you want to (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – I'll just keep talking and they can keep arguing, but I'll keep talking about the commitment to increase the funding to the Home Renovation Program by \$400,000 in 2016.

These 900 Islanders that we helped, they have a household income of less than \$30,000. These helped them with their major repairs so they don't have to leave their homes.

Of that group, I have to add that 67% have a primary household provider who is over the age of 60. This is a very valuable program that – and in my opinion, and I think in government's opinion – helps toward the sustainable consumption of housing out there.

Another one of our programs would be our Seniors Safe @ Home Program; and again, this is going to help seniors to remain in their home, to make modifications to their home so they can remain in their home.

Again, helping government so that we won't have to make additional investments in long term care and community care, because really I think seniors want to be in their own home, in their own communities, where they have their family and their supports around them.

Our Seniors Safe @ Home Program will help them make necessary modifications so they can do just that. The program would provide more options for seniors and it would provide a grant of up to \$5,000 –

Mr. Currie: (Indistinct) values.

Ms. Mundy: – towards eligible modifications for those seniors who are 60 years of age –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Mundy: – and older.

This program is based on income thresholds and has a sliding scale which begins at 35,000 and ends at 50,000. In 2016-2017, I'm very proud to say that we had 139 applications that were received.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

An Hon. Member: Extend the hour.

Some Hon. Members: Call the hour.

Some Hon. Members: Extend the hour.

Speaker: The hour –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Call the hour.

Mr. MacEwen: Could we extend the hour, please?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Leader of the Third Party only gets up every second week. Let's show him some respect (Indistinct) –

An Hon. Member: No.

Speaker: Members, the –

Mr. Trivers: Let's get it to a vote.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Mitchell: Bring it back on next Wednesday night or Tuesday night.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: Okay, members. Members!

The hour has been called. Do we have unanimous support to extend the hour?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Speaker: We have a dissenter.

An Hon. Member: Shutdown Brown.

Ms. Mundy: Am I closing?

Mr. Currie: Yeah.

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Summerside-Wilmot, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, May 10th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, May 10th, at 2:00 p.m.