

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone to the floor and to the gallery and those who are viewing from afar. I want to make special recognition to the presence in the gallery of Albert Roche, Director of Athletics at Holland College, and a group of the great athletes who are representing the Hurricanes in a couple of sports; soccer and volleyball. Other teams from the college have had a great year. We're proud to congratulate them on that.

Of course, too, in this Legislature, recognize the great relationship we have between our province and Holland College, and our ability to support the college in the way that we do. Notably, most recently, with provision of further tuition supports to students at the college.

While we're on sports; acknowledge the great success of the Charlottetown Islanders, who swept their quarter final series, winning – last night –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: – on home ice. At one point, earlier in the season there were some who weren't sure the Islanders were going to make the play-offs. They've now won two series, sweeping the most recent one. We all congratulate the team, the coaches, staff, players and fans. We might say this is a great example of our mighty Island; exceeding expectations.

The other piece that warrants acknowledgement today is the announcement by Clifford Lee, the 45th Mayor of Charlottetown that, after serving for three decades in municipal politics, he has decided, after four terms as Mayor, to not seek further re-election. He has been serving as Mayor since 2003. He has certainly been a great partner in relations with the provincial government, and an important contributor to the overall ability of

our province to go ahead through the benefits of municipal government.

Since it's an important occasion, if I may add one more item of recognition, that being that Islanders and certainly folks here in this House and well beyond, have displayed solidarity today with the people of Humboldt and the Broncos with Jersey Day and that movement has really caught on and a further opportunity to show solidarity and condolence with the victims and the survivors of that tragic accident.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise in this Legislative Assembly today, as well, and recognize some of the fine individuals that have joined us in the gallery; staff and athletes alike, and students, of course, from Holland College. I'm very proud to say it's my alma matter and I'm very, very proud to see the success that Albert Roche and rest of the staff at Holland College has done with the athletics department with Holland College.

I'd also like to congratulate everyone from Holland College for the tremendous work that they do to contributing to the economy of Prince Edward Island and offering the tremendous programs that are very well suited and fitted for the changing needs of our economy, especially, the support for the small business that they provide.

I'd be remiss, of course, too, if I didn't talk a little bit about the big clean sweep that we had last night here in Charlottetown with the Charlottetown Islanders. It'll be interesting to see who they're going to face in the third round. But, of course, Islanders from tip-to-tip are rallying behind the Charlottetown Islanders and it's a wonderful thing.

As a matter of fact, I understand that the Mayor of Halifax, Mike Savage, is also getting behind the Islanders and he is going to be wearing their jersey today. That's wonderful to see. Of course, that came from a bet between our own Mayor in

Charlottetown here, the hon. Clifford Lee, who, as the Premier indicated, has publicly announced today, after 30 years in municipal politics and 15 years of leading tremendous growth of Charlottetown here as the sitting Mayor.

I congratulate Clifford Lee for all of the wonderful work that he has done. I also, like many other Islanders, look forward to his announcement towards potential future work that he's going to be doing, potentially, in the political world.

I'd also like to recognize Jersey Day, which is taking place today and the solidarity that we've seen nation-wide and the emotion that has come out nation-wide in support of the Humboldt Broncos.

I know we've talked about this several times this week, but I think it's very important that we continue the conversation and continue to show our neighbours in Saskatchewan and the families from all across Canada, really, that have been impacted by this tremendous tragedy, that we, here on PEI, support them and that we're for them.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for your time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would like to welcome the athletes from Holland College. Having such great sporting programs there, whether it's in soccer or rugby or football or volleyball, basketball and on and on, it just seems they are able to produce really amazingly good teams from such a small school, so thank you for being here.

I, too, of course, want to congratulate the Charlottetown Islanders on the sweep last night, and on to round three.

Of course, I join everybody else, in thanking his worship Mayor Lee for his decades of public service, the last 15 of them spent in the leadership role here in our capital City of Charlottetown. I think I speak for all Islanders when I say; thank you to Clifford Lee for his years of service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader.

The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today, Holland College athletes and our Islanders that have done so well and everybody that's had such an outpouring for the Broncos.

Also, my relationship with Mayor Lee, it's been wonderful over the last few years. He's been very hospitable in terms of working with him. I'd also like to welcome Pastor Bill Arsenaault here today. Bill's been a great supporter of mine and also a great comfort to me in my journey through this political life, and I thank him for that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everyone in the gallery today, especially one of my constituents, Jeff Warren Reynolds from Linkletter. He's always a great conversationalist with me, and I appreciate the conversations we have. He's from a great – the rural municipality of Linkletter, I should say. I hope he enjoys the proceedings today.

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleasure to rise and welcome the folks in the public gallery; I have a constituent. It's a rare occasion that we do have somebody up from Alberton attending the public gallery, but I'd like to welcome Dave Pizio. I think he's going to be on the floor here later today. Welcome, Dave.

It's also nice to see all the students from Holland College that are here donning the jerseys today in recognition of the Broncos. We, as a caucus had ours on earlier, and we're wearing these pins here today in

support of these ribbons, in support of the Broncos. Our heart goes out to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As minister responsible for sport, I certainly would like to welcome the athletes that are in the gallery today from Holland College. I'd also like to welcome Albert Roche, who runs a fantastic athletics program at this wonderful postsecondary institution. Not only are they having great success in the athletic world, but they do so much to promote healthy living and healthy lifestyles for, not only athletes, but for Islanders and Canadians in general. So I really want to thank them for being here today, being part of Jersey Day today, and continue to do the great things you do at Holland College.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today as well, and to welcome all those in the gallery – the students from Holland College, one in particular, former District 22 resident Michael Thomas, who was a big supporter and always very active in District 22. We miss him terribly, so we hope he's coming back.

Also former colleague Albert Roche, welcome to the gallery. Albert and I worked on many a golf tournament through the Holland College and it's still one of the best golf tournaments in the province. So thank you Albert, for all you do for our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome everyone to the gallery, too, especially the people from Holland College.

There's one, in particular, a person from Holland College I'd like to introduce, Mr. Speaker. That's from the Souris area and that'd be James Mallard. Grew up in the Souris area and it's great to see James here. Hopefully James will carry this seat into the future.

I was very saddened this morning to hear that one of my friends had passed. It was Don Fitzpatrick. Anyone that's in here with grey hair would remember Don. I'm not sure if anybody with –

Mr. Myers: Mine's not that grey. I remember him.

Mr. LaVie: – with their hair won't remember him, but Don taught me a lot over the years. I grew up sharpening skates. He taught me so much about sharpening skates. Probably lots in here, lots across Prince Edward Island got those skates sharpened with Don Fitzpatrick, anybody that did play hockey or ringette, figure skating. He was a great guy and he passed on so much to me. I was glad I went to visit him last summer. He was very, very surprised that I went to visit him after all these years.

One thing I do remember, and we all should remember, is remember your friends. That's one thing we got is our friends. You can have anything in the world, but without friends, you got nothing.

I thought a lot of Don and I was very saddened this morning when I got the news of Don's passing. So when we say our prayers the next day, let's remember Don in our prayers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

As always, it's a pleasure to rise here in the gallery. As Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, I certainly want to welcome all the Holland College students as Holland College falls under my portfolio for post-secondary education.

I just want to thank Mr. Roche for his dedication, and the athletes. Whether you win or lose, you certainly serve us proud. I congratulate you on all your accomplishments and wish you all the best in the future.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, I want to welcome the Holland College staff and students, but also wanted to welcome Jeffrey Warren Reynolds to the gallery. Social media is a great place. That's how I know Jeffrey Warren Reynolds and it's great to have those discussions there and thank you for participating in them.

Also, I wanted to welcome Marie Burge. I know her mostly from her work with the Cooper Institute, and of course she's another great community leader.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, as well, would like to welcome everyone here in the gallery, and especially Albert Roche. I've known Albert since – I think we said today junior high, so we've been friends for a long time. He's doing a great job with the teams at Holland College and the work he does there, and thanks very much for the athletes for coming in. It's great to see you here, and keep up the good work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Scott Morrison

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise and recognize Scott Morrison, or "Scotty" Morrison as we call him in Morell, who has come through a very

successful first year as the assistant coach for the Boston Celtics. For such a small place like PEI, there are so many Islanders who have accomplished great things on the national, international and professional sports scene.

Morrison, as you guys know, is from Morell and he has deep roots in the basketball community. Scotty and I went to high school together and played on a couple of teams together as well. You can understand who probably had more bench time between those two.

His father's a former head coach for the UPEI men's basketball team. As Mike Connolly said: From the get-go, Scott was immersed in the culture that was UPEI basketball. Attending practice, games and road trips, Scott would often be seen with a ball in his hand shooting, and making shots at break time.

Morrison, a UPEI graduate, got his big break while studying at Dalhousie University in Halifax. Scott was a graduate student there when women's basketball coach Carolyn Savoy hired him as an assistant. She took a sabbatical the following season and trusted her team to Morrison, who was in his mid-20s at the time. The Tigers had a good season, and it led to an opportunity to become Lakehead University's men's coach in Thunder Bay.

After a decade there, he was hired as a scout and player development with the Maine Red Claws for the 2013-2014 NBA Development League season. He became head coach the next season, and held the role until the Celtics hired him as an assistant coach earlier this year.

Scotty is a shining example that Islanders can excel at the highest level of professional sports. We've had many major headline names at our Morell Sportsman's Dinner every year, but this year is going to be extra special with Scotty coming home this August to be our guest speaker.

I know there's a lot of Raptor fans out there, but you can guarantee that his parents, George and Anne, and our whole community, are going to be pulling for the Celtics in the playoffs this year, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Holland College Athletics

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and recognize the Holland College athletics and recreation department. The college has made significant investment in their athletics program over the past number of years, which has in turn, made a significant impact on the lives of their student athletes.

This year alone, their accomplishments speak for themselves. The men's soccer team was the 2017 national bronze medalist. The men's basketball team won the 2018 national bronze medal. They also have the highest number of Academic All-Canadians in the country.

Albert Roach and his team have grown the program to over 275 student athletes from over 14 countries. Albert and his team believe in each and every student athlete and focus on the impact the college community can have in their lives in the few short years they spend at the college.

The college doesn't stop at athletics and academic achievements. They also believe in making an impact in our communities. I've seen their athletes out at Halloween passing out candy to the young children. I've seen them volunteer at events like the Gold Cup Parade. I've seen them raise money for charities, and the list could go on.

What impresses me most about Holland College, isn't just producing good students and good athletes, they are producing good citizens. I am a former student union president at Holland College, and I know firsthand the foundation that the college laid for me and I'm proud to recognize them for the impact they are making on hundreds of students each and every year.

I told Albert here recently that when I was a student at Holland College I had broke my ribs playing rugby that summer, so I missed

out the last half of the rugby season, so there were no programs at Holland College. I tried to organize an athletic program by myself and a few people. It didn't work out well, so I'm proud to see that Albert has done such a great job with athletics here in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Taking Care of Women's Business

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today in the House to recognize an amazing community partnership with the PEI Women's Institute and Murphy's Pharmacies in coordinating the delivery of a month-long program called Taking Care of Women's Business, a 28-day campaign which tackles the need for feminine hygiene products for the shelves of PEI food banks.

This program, in its fourth year, successfully concluded at the end of March with donations of over \$5,000 in value. This is important because there are over 400 women just in the Charlottetown area in need of these products on a monthly basis.

I remember when Tracey Comeau began the program and partnered with organizations and businesses across the province to arrange and coordinate, and now the Women's Institute has taken on this great work. This is the second year that they've been a coordinator for this program across the province.

That partnership with Murphy's Pharmacy also means that not only are there convenient drop-off spaces, but Murphy's Pharmacy actually match donations when products were purchased in their store. These are examples of great community work that's happening at the grassroots level that's really having an impact in our community.

I really look forward to going to the Women's Institute gala dinner and auction with my colleague tomorrow evening where we'll get to celebrate and hear more of the great stories that happen in the community with this organization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken as Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Many of our post-secondary students are the leaders of tomorrow. Groups like the UPEI Student Union have done a tremendous job advocating for students on issues that matter to them.

Post-secondary institutions not covered under FOIPP

Question to the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning: Why is it that your government does not believe that Island post-secondary institutions should be covered under the freedom of information act?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's not that our government doesn't believe in the institutions being under the FOIPP. There's some consultation going on about that right now and the privacy commissioner recommends that that happens, so it is being discussed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

If this minister was serious about this issue, this very important issue, that's impacting our students here on Prince Edward Island – they've had many years to enact this legislation so that it covers our post-secondary institutions. PEI is the only province, the only province, not covering post-secondary institutions under freedom of information laws.

Legal rights of Island students

Question, again, to the same minister: Shouldn't Island post-secondary students have the same legal rights as students in every other province?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated in my previous answer, there's discussion going on about this. There was a committee. One of the standing committees had made a recommendation to this, and it is being discussed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, I go back to this government has had ample opportunity to do the right thing and to make sure that post-secondary institutions fall under the same legislation as government departments do. It's clear government is content to let these schools self-police their own freedom of information policies; policies, I might add, that fall short of basic best practices.

External oversight on freedom of information policies

Question to the same minister: Why are you fine with no independent external oversight on how these policies will be managed?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'd indicated earlier, there is some discussion on this very topic going on. But, let me just say some things, some wonderful things that we've done in our recent budget.

We've made it possible so that 1,000 students can get almost free – well, they will get free tuition. We've put in place where they can get their loan forgiven by \$3,500 a

year if they come back to PEI or they stay here in this province. We've given the institution a 2% increase.

We think we've done some wonderful things to help our students and as I indicated before, this FOIPP information for UPEI is in discussion and we'll see what the outcome is of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Once again, this minister has failed to answer the basic questions that I've been asking. This government, again, has had ample opportunities to put this legislation in place, the same as all other provinces do across this great Country of Canada. But yet, they're falling short. They're talking about some initiatives that they're bringing in to support Island students studying here on PEI and I applaud that, but what we're talking about here is freedom of information.

Under these policies, Island students seeking information will be charged up to \$25 just to apply, and then be charged another \$40 an hour for processing the request. Similar fees under the FOIPP law for government records are \$5 for the application fee and \$20 an hour for processing.

Student fees for FOIPP requests

Question to the minister: Aren't these fees excessive?

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

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The student union did a great presentation to the committee and as I had indicated, we're still studying this. I can't say enough for the student union at UPEI. I meet with them on a regular basis and we have a meeting in the coming weeks.

Anything we can do to help them with their education and to help – we gave them \$25 a student to help with mental health. We're

doing a psychiatrist course there for healthcare at UPEI. We're doing tremendous things, and I'm sure the folks from Holland College that are here in the gallery understand some of the tremendous things that are happening, because they as well, can get part of the George Coles Bursary and the new advantage bursary that we came out with which increases that to \$2,200 a year for students in post-secondary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'm sure the students that are here from Holland College today would agree that some of these initiatives that this government has finally brought forward are good initiatives. But, what we're talking about here, fundamentally, is openness and transparency. This government talks about it all the time, but they know nothing about real openness and transparency.

Total grants to Island post-secondary institutions in the 2018-2019 Budget are over \$100 million. That's taxpayers' money. None of the policies are retroactive so post-secondary students would have no way to obtain any information before 2017.

Premier's time at UPEI as president

My question, again to the same minister: You signed off on these policies extremely quickly. Was that because you wanted to keep the shroud of secrecy over the Premier's time at UPEI as president?

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

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

We are committed to the consideration and consultation of municipalities and post-secondary institutions. With this public input and a review of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* – we've done that as a government. We've made ministers put their expenses online. We're accountable, and we're doing what we can.

As I indicated to the member opposite, we are working on this. Things don't happen overnight. We're doing consultations. It's something we're working on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This past last week we've heard a lot of problems with the physical conditions of our schools. We heard the member from Kensington talking about air quality in his school. We heard the member from Morell talking about leaky roofs in his school, and bad floors in his school.

Ministers last visit to Souris Regional High School

Question to the minister of education: When was the last time you visited Souris Regional High School?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: When was the last time you crossed the Hillsborough Bridge?

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

Mr. Myers: There's not a wall there (Indistinct)

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

As we got into here, yesterday, I think I know where this question is going, so I'm going just remind the House; I've quite clearly outlined the procedure to talk about any capital issues that might be seen within schools, so I'll remind you, I can give you afterwards the telephone number for the Public Schools Branch if you want to call up and let them know that you think that you've got an issue –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: I will say that there has been a tremendous amount of investment. In fact, I think, in the last 10 years, your district has received 20% –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – of the capital investments in schools on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) great MLA (Indistinct)

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

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's just not Three Oaks, it's not just Morell; myself and the leader visited the Souris Regional School. Clearly, the roof is leaking. Surprise; the roof is leaking.

Leaky roof at Souris school

Minister: Are you aware of any roofs leaking at the Souris Regional School?

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

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) of everything.

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

In relation to the Souris Regional School, I think that's something I've just indicated, we put a tremendous investment into. Again, it's the Public Schools Branch that has the care – the charge of the care of our capital investments within this province. They have over 3.5 million –

Mr. Myers: Roof's leaking just like your support.

Mr. J. Brown: – square feet of school. We're certainly proud of the investment up there. I had heard that there may well be a little bit of water up there and we'll have the Public Schools Branch go take a look at that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll let the minister of education know, it's a renovated school. For another \$4 million you would have had a new school. You would have had a new school with good roofs.

Mr. Myers: Hopefully.

Mr. LaVie: To the minister of education: Your new schools are leaking, your old schools are leaking, your caucus is leaking –

Some Hon. Members: Laughter.

Mr. LaVie: – why are student and staff forced to go to school with leaky roofs?

Mr. Myers: Better plug that caucus leak, though.

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

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

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

If only we could get the Public Schools Branch to come deal with everything –

Some Hon. Members: Laughter.

Mr. J. Brown: – as I've said here a few different times we have a great capital improvement program ongoing. It's a program that we've set out over five years where we're going to spend \$50 million on capital improvements to –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. J. Brown: – Prince Edward Island schools. That's an unprecedented level of investment in our schools. With that being said, we do recognize that we do have aging infrastructure. We do recognize that when –

Mr. LaVie: Aging? You just built it.

Mr. J. Brown: – there's new construction and –

Mr. LaVie: You just built it.

Mr. J. Brown: – we would think that new construction would be something that we'd be happy to see. When there is new construction and there are issues with it, we will go back and take a look at what caused those issues and we'll have them remedied. We commit to doing that. It's the Public Schools Branch that has the responsibility for it.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government likes to crow about a balanced budget. That's all we hear. That's all you'll hear this session: the budgets are balanced. It's all crow.

Balancing budget on backs of students

Question to the minister of education: Why are you trying to balance your budget on the backs of our students of Prince Edward Island?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

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

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

I do find that statement to be a bit entertaining. Particularly, coming from –

Mr. LaVie: You find any statement –

Mr. J. Brown: – a member –

Mr. LaVie: – entertaining.

Mr. J. Brown: – who's going to see some students moving into a brand new school in his district just this weekend.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: It might be five years ago that they moved into a brand new school across the bridge.

An Hon. Member: All right.

Mr. J. Brown: So, 20% of a pretty big capital investment is a lot of money going into the hon. member's district. I'd say, overall, we have put more capital investment into our schools than we've seen in a long time in this province. We're proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Got him on the rope.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've been elected for seven years now. I was elected to be the voice of the people. I had to fight for an ambulance. I had to fight for our dialysis. I had to fight for a school.

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: I went to the feds for a French school.

Mr. Myers: Great MLA.

Mr. LaVie: We got to fight for everything in rural PEI –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Great MLA.

Mr. LaVie: We got to fight for everything in rural PEI and we shouldn't have it. We just want our share. We've got tax dollars up there.

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

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: We got tax dollars.

Leaky roof at Souris school (further)

Will you commit today to fix the roof at the Souris Regional School?

Mr. Myers: Good question. Great MLA. That's how it's done.

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

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

I'm glad the hon. member brought up the fight that we go through here as members on the floor –

Mr. LaVie: You don't know what it's like –

Mr. J. Brown: – of this Legislature –

Mr. LaVie: You never (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – I'm happy that in the time I've been in there, we've been able to fight and argue for and persuade in whatever way we can –

Mr. LaVie: You didn't have to fight –

Mr. J. Brown: – Cabinet and government to invest –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – in education. We are seeing, with this Budget, that we have on the table here, now, an unprecedented level of –

Mr. LaVie: You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr. J. Brown: – investment in education.

Mr. LaVie: You should be ashamed of yourself.

Mr. J. Brown: It's a level of investment we've not seen since kindergarten came in 10 years ago. It's an investment in the frontlines.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) teachers

Mr. J. Brown: This is something –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) firing teachers.

Mr. J. Brown: – I think that we can all be proud of, and it's something that, first and foremost –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – will benefit Prince Edward Island's school children –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2015, our caucus uncovered government's sales pitch brochure for financial service companies, which instructed them in Canadian tax avoidance. This Premier blamed the civil servant connected to the document and said: Management would never have sanctioned such a brochure. He said, quote: This is not how we do business.

Tax avoidance brochure for financial service companies

Question for the Premier: Do you stand by this explanation given by your own office that day?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I stand by what we said on that occasion, which is that that is not the inducement or the advertisement that we make for Prince Edward Island for people, who will grow companies here, or who will invest here.

We've got a great workforce. We've got a growing economy. We've got very successful sectors and businesses from one tip of this province to the other. The only part that somewhat concerns me is the amount of time the opposition spends running down our good businesses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, question for the Premier: Premier, can you explain why a company, you currently own a significant stake in, hired the person responsible for the tax avoidance brochure directly from his senior government position in financial services to be their new CEO?

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

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the member will have to be more precise, I'm not sure what he's referring to.

Mr. Fox: Too many businesses (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me clarify. The Premier owns a large stake in discoverygarden. This company was built and spun-off from UPEI while the Premier was in charge.

This person connected to the off-shore advice document was the government senior investment officer for financial services and gaming during e-gaming. This is a fact.

It's also a fact; the Premier's company hired him directly from this role to become their new CEO.

Premier's connection to discoverygarden

Mr. Premier: Why is it that you know so much more and have much more direct ties to this file than you're trying to let on?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, obviously, doesn't understand the operation of our conflict of interest legislation under which I would have transferred any interests that I had at the time in any companies in our province and prior to that, I'm proud to say I did invest in Island companies and sought the opportunity to do so, but those interests would have been transferred to a trustee who's responsible for a blind trust and that's where the matter lies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And thank you, Mr. Premier for confirming your investment.

This document on tax avoidance through offshore shells resurfaced earlier this week when it was discovered that the Premier has personally invested in another company sheltering offshore in Bermuda. The Premier has hidden from this issue and refuses yet, once again, to come clean. When this controversial offshore document was brought to light in the House in 2015, senior government officials engaged this person again – the same person they say breached Innovation PEI policy. They emailed out to this person ostensibly to sharpen the talking points for the Premier.

Question to the Premier: If you didn't sanction the tax advice, why turn back to the same person for your speaking points to defend it?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me clarify one point that was raised in that long preamble about the part that I played in the company that he's apparently referring to and it was raised the other day. It's very clear, elementary, look at the disclosures that we make as members here and I make as Premier, that I did not have, at any point, an ownership stake in, I suppose the company that he's referring to, and that that interest, which was preferred shares, again obtained prior to getting into politics – at a time when my interest was to invest in Island companies and I'm proud of that – I disposed of and those do not appear on any disclosures that I made post 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have the email chain here and I will be tabling it after Question Period.

Discoverygarden does archive and indexing services and their main customers are post-secondary institutions. In October, 2015, the Premier's office and the Premier invited a university president from Ontario down to tour discoverygarden and just in the last

year, government appointed the Premier's private sector CEO to a paid board position, boosting the company profile and no doubt the potential for the Premier to make even more money. Mr. Premier, you're the one that brought up conflict of interest.

Abuse of office for personal financial gain

Premier: Is this not abusing your office for the sake of your own personal financial gain?

Mr. Myers: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I said before and it's very clear and clear on the face of the disclosures that are made that the interest that the member's now speaking about – he was confusing something earlier – but the interest that he's now referring to is in the hands of a trustee who looks after –

Mr. Myers: Still, you know you own it.

Premier MacLauchlan: – the affairs that are in a blind trust, Mr. Speaker, –

Mr. Myers: You know you own it.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and that's where the matter lies.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. Myers: You're effectively funneling money into it. You know you own it.

Speaker: Hon. members, let the Premier finish his answer.

Premier MacLauchlan: And I'm sure that the promotion of the activities in our province in the information technology sector is something that Islanders would want. The Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, the Premier, and others – and I would hope members opposite – to encourage, and support, and want to grow that sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's been two years now since the Premier first initiated the debate on campaign finance reform and promised us new legislation. After backtracking on the commitment to ban corporate and union donations, this government committed in last fall's throne speech to, and I quote, "...put forward a discussion document on Campaign Finance Reform for consideration of all members and all sides of this Assembly."

Discussion document on Campaign Finance Reform

It's been over five months since that announcement. When will the Premier table this discussion document?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the preamble of that question.

I did, indeed, bring forward a document for discussion. It was a letter addressed to the leaders of the parties – at that time, the acting leader of the official opposition. Not long after that, we went through some period of shifting sands, I shall say, during which I was asked to do one thing by the interim leader and then by the end of that period of consideration, there was a different position on the part of the same – well, of the official opposition anyway and I'm not sure about the then interim leader. That's the situation we've been dealing with and that's what we're still trying to deal with, but now that things are sort of settling down – if you might call it that – I think we'll be in a position shortly to have that discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I was unaware that the Premier always followed the advice of the Leader of the Opposition.

Introduction of campaign finance legislation

Can the Premier tell us how long he expects this new process to take when this document is tabled and, in particular, how long it will be before he is ready to introduce campaign finance legislation in this House?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Not only have we been dealing with what I called 'shifting sands' in terms of positions in this across the floor, but there's been – and members will recognize this – a lot of new ways in which people across this country are taking account of campaign finance issues, whether that's indirect contributions, which I think were expressed as a concern in the public during the plebiscite, or it might be some of the concerns that have been raised very prominently most recently in work in the social media. These are the kind of things that do indeed take time and I think it's important then that we, in turn, take time here in this House to grapple with these serious issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Well the sands are indeed shifting and in the time that we have moved nowhere on this issue on Prince Edward Island, two other provinces: British Columbia and New Brunswick have changed their legislation to bring it up to what is considered to be a reasonable standard these days. The Premier spoke this week about how his government still has work to do before the next election is called.

Will the Premier commit to getting the work done on campaign finance and having new rules in place prior to the next election?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker – and I said in response to questions in this House yesterday, that it is our commitment. We have a plan. We have brought forward many measures that fulfill and implement that plan. One of them, most prominently, is a series of four great budgets for the people of

this province – most recently introduced last Friday – and we have that on the floor right now and, indeed, that is on the order paper and we look forward to following through on that.

We have a number of other bills that are on the order paper and that is exactly how we are going about our work and we look forward to doing that in a way that meets our commitments and that works together with all members of this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is nothing more sacred to our democracy than the integrity of its electoral system. After the 2016 plebiscite on democratic renewal, the Chief Electoral Officer arranged for an independent audit to be conducted to ensure the integrity of our voting process. In their report, the auditors noted that Elections PEI is understaffed and stated, I quote, "...PEI legislators should be aware that a spectacular electoral failure will inevitably occur in their province if this situation is not properly addressed."

Staffing at Elections PEI

A question to the Premier: What have you done to address this dire situation?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we – and, of course, this is ultimately the responsibility of legislative management to work with Elections PEI and to address questions of leadership and resources there. We have confidence in the team at Elections PEI and the Chief Electoral Officer, who is in place. I believe that's exactly what the role of the Premier should be, is to be responsive to that responsibility, I might say, of Elections PEI and legislative management to ensure that we do have confidence in our electoral system.

I think one element of that is to measure our language. I don't know for my own part if I think it was constructive to use such strong language in that report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps I should be clear when I say 'quote'; I am quoting the words of someone else's report. That is the purpose of a quote and an end-quote statement. So, I'd like to be really clear on that for the record.

I also have great confidence in the work of the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections PEI. They are a phenomenal organization and they have made some very clear recommendations to improve elections on PEI, in particular in the report on the general election of 2015. There were 44 recommendations made.

Implemented recommendations from Elections PEI report

Could the Premier perhaps clarify how many recommendations from that report have been implemented?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, we work – and I expect that that's the case that all members of this House work with Elections PEI and have confidence in Elections PEI and do our best to ensure that the people of Prince Edward Island have confidence in our electoral system.

That's something that's very dear to us. Democracy is a fragile plant, and I think it's very important that we continue to always do our best in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government has now ignored repeated requests to update the legislation and properly resource the administrative needs of Elections PEI based on independent auditor recommendations.

Addressing administrative resource needs of Elections PEI

Premier: Will you commit to ensuring that these issues are fully addressed before the next general election, or will we have to do government's job for you as we did with the conflict of interest?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, on the question of the conflict of interest, it's my clear sense that there were recommendations that came forward from the legislative management committee of which all parties in this House are represented, which made a report, which is now on the table in the form of legislation. I think it's regrettable that the third party believes that it's its role to do its job or do legislative management's job for the committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

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

I think my question is for the Minister of Finance and I think we all remember the story of The Humble Barber where you had given him permission to apply for a liquor license through the PEI Liquor Control Commission, where now he can sell alcohol in his shops similar, to what they do in the salons.

Liquor license in barber shops

My question to the minister is: Has this spurred on big business there? Have there been many others apply for a license in their shop similar to The Humble Barber?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, a number of liquor license holders, industry associations and citizens across the province have voiced concerns with the PEILCC act and regulations and we're making changes as we move forward. Yes,

there has been some interest in regards to the similar license of The Humble Barber

Just a further note, that I actually had the opportunity to sit with The Humble Barber at the Summerside Chamber of Commerce and he told me that his bottom line has increased and his business is growing because of the change that we made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your first supplementary.

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

Review of *Liquor Control Act*

It leads into my main question. In the last of the fall session, I believe there was talk of a full review of the *Liquor Control Act* and I'm just wondering what steps are being taken to review that and can you bring this information on that Mr. Minister?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we all know, the act – it takes time to change an act through the Legislative Assembly and so on in the course of action that you have to take, but we can change the regulations. We're moving on the regulations now, as a former minister of economic development, and trying to create and grow small businesses, and also the minister of tourism, where it's very concerning for the tourism industry to ensure that we provide the services that the tourists want.

We're moving through the act as we speak, and we hope to have something back to the House by the fall that would justify and satisfy many citizens and businesses across PEI.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, your second supplementary.

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

This is, again, information I was looking for.

I know a lot of people are quite involved in how we handle liquor on Prince Edward Island. I'm just wondering what groups you may be meeting with to deal with that in reforming the act, bringing it up to date, and whether you'll bring back information with regards to that, as to who you met, and what time we actually will have this change completed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Most appropriately, we've been meeting with all restaurants and bar owners; we've had all kinds of consultations with individual citizens that have experienced issues with the PEI act. The PEI act has not been revisited since the '70s. I think it was 1974 was the last time that it was looked at, for anything rewritten in regards to the act, so most definitely. We're meeting with as many people as possible and taking consultations. I even had the opportunity to meet with the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale as most recent as a few weeks ago in regards to this.

So, we're opening the door. We're taking all the information possible that we can and just trying to justify it for the act and regulations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the minister of education stated that he wanted more departmental questions, but there's an old axiom: You should be careful what you wish for.

My question is to the minister of transportation. *The Guardian* reported on April the 10th, 2018, that the PEI government spends \$4.5 million in unbudgeted money on bridge repairs, land purchases and road work. During the paving season in 2017, I received a call from chief of staff Robert Vessey asking if I needed extra recap pavement for my district. He stated that they had an extra \$2 million for

paving, but to keep it quiet because it was targeted for Liberal-held districts only.

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

Chief of staff offering extra recap paving to Liberal districts

Mr. Dumville: Question to the minister of transportation: why was this politically-motivated out of the chief of staff's office and not your department?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it was explained in the paper as to why we had a special warrant in regard to extra work on bridges and unexpected expenditures around that. But, our – my department, I will say, and our government has made investments since 2015 –

Mr. LaVie: Answer the question.

Ms. Biggar: – into provincial and federal investments in highways, public transit, water and wastewater, which came to \$218 million. We put \$14 million into municipalities through gas tax, and we put money into that member's district, and that member's district and all members' districts and we will continue to work right across –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – the province with the districts to invest in infrastructure.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My district is mostly urban, so you didn't put an awful lot of recap into my district and I'm just talking about fairness here.

Extra recap paving for opposition districts

So, minister: Will you provide extra recap paving to residents in opposition districts that did not get the extra paving?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members will see in this upcoming Budget that we are investing more in recap. That's under capital –

Mr. MacKay: In all districts?

Ms. Biggar: – but we will be doing – but I will tell the member what we did do in District 25 West Royalty-Springvale. We put in over 11 kilometres of pavement in there. We did a bridge replacement out on Route 248 in Milton. We did the Miltonvale water field –

Mr. LaVie: You tried to fire him.

Ms. Biggar: – we did work on the Upton Road. We did work on Route 7, Milton Station. We laid asphalt. We will continue – I've been in touch, recently, with the Warren Grove residents. I'll continue to work with members right across the Island.

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

Mr. Dumville: That's just great, minister. You did so much in my district. I'm surprised there's anything left over for the other districts.

There's a pattern of troubling behaviour emanating out of Vessey's office.

Minister: Who's in charge of the department of transportation, you or Mr. Vessey?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, when I get a call from a community, I can tell you they don't call Rob Vessey's office; they call my office –

Mr. Myers: You don't know that (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – I reply back to members –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) first call.

Ms. Biggar: – and I reply back to residents that have concerns. But we are going to be –

An Hon. Member: No, you don't.

Ms. Biggar: – investing, continue to invest in infrastructure right across Prince Edward Island. If that member doesn't want it in his district, great, but we will continue to work with the members and residents in his district. I will continue as Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and Status of Women to represent my department right across Prince Edward Island.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's quite a revelation.

Department money buying votes

Question to the Premier: Do you allow your departments to use their department money to buy votes?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, if you go across our departments and I hope that the hon. members opposite recognize and appreciate this. For example, we're coming up to season now when we're dealing with, for example, summer jobs. I believe all hon. members on all sides of this House work actively with departments to achieve that.

Our objective, as a government, and through our departments is to serve the needs of Prince Edward Islanders. I'm proud to say that we're doing a great job of it.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You're doing a terrible job. There are roads in my district you can hardly walk on let alone drive your car on. So, you're doing an absolute –

Mr. LaVie: No, that's true.

Mr. Myers: – go to the Brothers Road –

Mr. LaVie: It's true.

Mr. Myers: Go drive the Brothers Road. You've got Amish carts that can't even drive their horse and cart down. They have to go on the shoulder. That is not a word of lie.

Mr. LaVie: True.

Recap split fairly across districts

Mr. Myers: Question to the Premier: Why are you splitting up recap based on the geography of this province instead of who is Liberal and who is Conservative like it's 1950?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we look across different districts, we look at where the biggest break up is; where the most traffic is. We do traffic counts. We put together a plan in consultation with the district supervisors that are out there on the roads every day. We certainly have –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) traffic (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – consulted with the hon. members opposite on that side. They know very well that we have had consultation with them. I have had consultation with hon. members on what the needs in their districts are.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: But when we put together a plan –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – we have to take into consideration the traffic, the amount of break up on roads and go from there.

Thank you.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When this Premier came to this Legislature he told Islanders he was going to be different. He was going to do away with all that stuff that had happened in the past. He was going to – anybody who was involved with that stuff was being done away with.

Now, we find today that, money, not just money, highway's money for repaving roads is being sent to targeted Liberal districts instead of being spread right across Prince Edward Island.

I don't think the people of Georgetown-St. Peters are less important than Liberal districts. I don't think that the members from Morell-Mermaid's district are less important than Liberal districts. I don't believe that any member has a district that's any more important than anyone else's district here on Prince Edward Island.

Department money buying votes (further)

Question to the Premier: Why are you acting like it's 1950 and trying to buy votes?

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

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

The one thing I will say our government has been able to do is negotiate a new road deal with the federal government where any road that has more than 1,000 cars on it is eligible for 50/50 funding.

But, I will tell the member over there from Georgetown-St. Peters just a little reminder, there has been 17.1 kilometres of recap put in his district.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: We did a bridge on Hazelgrove –

Mr. Myers: You put it right in front of Liberal –

Ms. Biggar: – the Hazelgreen Road bridge –

Mr. Myers: – houses. I can show (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – the Lorne Valley bridge –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – the wood (Indistinct) bridge. The Baldwin Road, Dingwells Mills, Cardigan, Primrose –

Mr. Myers: Take it outside –

Ms. Biggar: – Georgetown Royalty –

Mr. Myers: Say it outside –

Ms. Biggar: – Baldwin Road roundabout –

Mr. Myers: – I had nothing to do with it –

Ms. Biggar: – Primrose and Farmington –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – we are working with all –

Mr. Myers: That's the first time I've –

Ms. Biggar: – districts across –

Mr. Myers: – heard (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Biggar: Get out more! Get out more and see what we do.

Mr. Myers: I'll have to call your boss and ask him to go recap, I guess.

Mr. LaVie: You should be ashamed.

Mr. Myers: Clearly, you have no decision-making power.

Ms. Compton: What a great minister.

Mr. Myers: Deputy minister –

Leader of the Opposition: How many times (Indistinct) call (Indistinct) time.

Speaker: Everybody okay now? We all settled –

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Speaker: – down?

Mr. LaVie: No. Shut her down.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) three, four (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) recount.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) schools.

Statements by Ministers

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

Early Years Investments

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

Today, I'm pleased to update the House on our plans to build on Prince Edward Island's excellent early years childhood programs.

A tremendous amount of work is being done by the early childhood sector since last August when we joined our federal partners to announce the PEI action plan for children. Since then, we've added funding for 195 new child care spaces including; 16 in Rollo Bay, 20 in Stratford, 11 in Tryon, 77 in Charlottetown, 30 in Long Creek, 30 in Belfast and 11 in Cornwall.

Of these spaces, 32 are infant spaces; 163 are new spaces for children aged two to four years. Four new early years centres have been designated in Rollo Bay, Roseneath, Charlottetown and Stratford, to bring of number provincial EYCs to 49.

Two additional autism specialists were hired, reducing the waitlist for early year's autism services down to 18 children from 42 one year ago. Special needs grants to early childhood centres were increased by \$100,000, and 25 more children with special needs are now being supported.

We have centres preparing to offer seasonal spaces this spring and summer in at least

four rural communities in Souris, Montague, Tryon and Kensington.

Our new Budget adds \$700,000 to the provincial child care subsidy to help families more in need with the cost of child care, as well as \$400,000 to support a 2% increase to the provincial wage grid for early childhood educators. We've provided capital improvement grants to centres and grants to 60 early childhood educators wishing to increase their certification or education levels.

We recognize that high-quality child care is very important to young families. Our new Budget builds further on our recent progress to make it more accessible and more affordable. The 2018 Budget will fund an additional 200 new spaces through a new provincial investment of \$600,000 bringing the total number of new child care spaces up to 400 this year.

In the coming weeks, we will be working with the community to add another 200 spaces, determine the locations of the new spaces in existing licenced centres and licenced family home centres across the province.

We acknowledge the tremendous efforts of our early childhood educators, who are working with us to create high-quality early childhood experience and support working parents.

I should note that through the last 10 years, this sector has worked together with government to create the number one early childhood care education program in our country. That's something that I think we all need to be proud of as Islanders and I think, in saying that, we need to recognize that we need to continue to push forward to educate —

Mr. Trivers: I'm glad (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: — our early years' students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government, obviously, has a lot more work to do on this file. I know the current minister hasn't gotten himself up to speed on it, yet. The process they have to allow people to get into, to operate early years centres and the like are — is next to impossible.

The previous minister, I had him out two different times. When your MLA has to get involved and the education minister has to get involved to make sure that somebody can open a business in their district, that they actually have 50 names of people who say they're going to go there; it's completely ridiculous.

Speaking of the Humble Barber, earlier, you didn't make him go around and get signatures and get permission to cut hair next to somebody else who was cutting hair right on Kent Street. You don't do that to other businesses? Why is it that you have to have such a tight control over the early years and daycares here on Prince Edward Island? It's not right.

This government, it's completely unfair practice that you guys are operating under. You need to act like business — when business people on Prince Edward Island are opening business that they are doing you a favour because they are. Don't act like you are lording over them and you have some sort of unique power that's going to close their doors or keep them from operating because that's what you guys do. It has to go. You have to allow free enterprise here on Prince Edward Island. It's none of your business whether or not they can survive. If they can't, they can't. The free market will decide who can survive as a business and where they can survive.

We don't need your help. We don't need your interference. Stay out of it and allow business to do the business side of it. Get rid of all the regulations that are in the way because, I know there are people, right now, that are asking questions about: how do I open a daycare in a particular area. I won't say where because I wouldn't want to taint their application because I know how political you guys are, as we heard earlier about pavement. But, they're asking: How do I do it? My answer to them is: Oh, boy oh boy, are you in for a long old road of paperwork and trying to convince people

that you actually have a business case; that you have people who want to use your service; that the fact that you're close to someone else has no impact on it.

You don't do this to any other industry on Prince Edward Island. You talk about how you want to invest in the early years and what a great job you're doing. You know what? You know who will survive in competing businesses? The best ones. The best daycares and early learning centres will survive because word gets around really fast that they'll be the best.

You don't need to interfere. You have regulations about how they have to operate. That's good enough. You shouldn't make them beg for permission to open. You shouldn't make them lay awake at night wondering if the investment they're putting forward is going anywhere because some bureaucrat is going to block the door at the last minute. Or block the door for months and months, has been my experience, until two politicians get involved. Why should politicians ever have to get involved with ensuring a business operates here on Prince Edward Island?

The only reason is because Liberals want to control everything. I think we should open the doors and let free enterprise take care of itself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As somebody who has struggled with finding child care, I am grateful that I was able to find an excellent child care space for my daughter and that I could afford the over \$9,000 a year it costs me to have her in child care until she started school.

The 200 spaces that are currently funded with 100 flexible spaces are from federal government funding over a three-year period of \$10.5 million. One of the biggest question that I've been asked is: What does that mean when we have money to spend on spaces? How do we make spaces?

I know that we've got great community partners to work with; organizations like CHANCES for example, who've just opened in Belfast and providing spaces there. Often, the question is: What does that look like?

One of the biggest things that we're hearing from the executive and staff who work in early childhood development is that the challenge is not in, necessarily, a space or a structure, it's in the availability of staff; and then the retention of those staff.

One of the key things that allows us to, sort of, retain good staff is not only in training and recruitment, but in good wages. When we, as my colleague pointed out, when we do not pay early childhood educators and workers a good living wage; when they are paid, at basically, a minimum wage that hasn't been increased for five years, a 2% increase is not a great jump to take them anywhere near what somebody at a liquor store may earn.

The turnover in that industry is one of the greatest barriers. In fact, the ED of the Early Childhood Development Association of PEI, Sonya Hooper, has said, and I quote, "We have centres that report to us that they take a lower number of children, because they can't hire qualified staff to offer..." extra spaces.

If we don't address that training challenge, which includes retention training and pay, then, we will have empty spaces that people can't access.

I really encourage this government to think about an integrated childhood, child care strategy, that looks, not only at, sort of, how do we subsidize spaces; how do we ensure spaces are available across the province, including in rural areas where people actually live, but also how do we ensure that the people that work there are paid appropriately so they we can also retain them in the industry, and meet the actual need in our communities.

We know that paying – providing child care is one of the biggest things we can do to change the economy of our Island by allowing more women to work. I really would encourage the province to take that route and I look forward to seeing, further, how this develops.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) they don't want any help.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Canadian Agricultural Partnership

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, along with Federal minister of agriculture, Lawrence MacAulay, I am pleased to formally announce to this Legislature that the PEI Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has entered into a new agreement with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, to support continued growth and development and diversification of our agricultural industry on Prince Edward Island.

This new agreement, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, will see an investment of \$37 million over the next five years. This new agreement will focus on a number of areas including; market and trade, science, research and innovation, risk management, value-added agriculture and agriculture-food processing and a new focus will be on environmental sustainability, climate change and public trust.

In addition, producers will also continue to have access to a complete and effective suite of business risk management programs.

This new agreement follows the successful implementation of the Growing Forward 2 Program, which has been in place for over the past five years. Under that federal-provincial program, government and industry make significant investments to strengthen the productivity and profitability of farms in this province.

Under this new agreement we will continue to make those strategic investments and will enable the industry to innovate, grow and prosper. Prince Edward Island's agriculture and food system is the leading producer of high-quality, safe products and is a key driver of the province's economic growth.

The province is increasingly recognized as Canada's Food Island. Farm cash receipts are close to half a billion annually and the

industry accounts for 3,500 direct jobs. The primary agriculture processing contributes 10% to the province's gross domestic product.

The industry has significant potential for continued growth, and this agreement charts the course for government and industry in the next five years.

I do want to recognize the minister, or the Member from Vernon River-Stratford, for his efforts in making this agreement to become a reality.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Anytime we talk about one of our primary industries here on Prince Edward Island, it's great; this case, it being the agriculture on Prince Edward Island.

Our farmers, I can't say enough about our farmers here on Prince Edward Island. They're great stewards of the land. The people have great respect out there for our farmers. When we have a meal, each meal we have, we should thank a farmer here on Prince Edward Island.

It's great to see the federal government and the provincial government both working together for the farmers of PEI. Not only working together, but fighting for our farmers from PEI. They've got to work with Ottawa on this.

The minister prior to the minister today, he did a lot of work on this. I'm glad he brought me in as a part of it to work with him on this. I know I was asking questions, just yesterday to the minister of agriculture when he was on the floor of the House of the Growing Forward Program. He did say there was an announcement coming. I'm glad he made the announcement. I didn't want to take his thunder for him – from him –

Mr. Henderson: First dibs on it.

Mr. LaVie: I guess I got the first dibs for putting the question forward and making sure the work got done again.

I just want to thank all parties that are involved in this, and working for our farmers on Prince Edward Island, because they're great hard workers; they're great stewards of the land. I can't say enough about the farmers. I've got them in my own community. Most of us in here do have farming in their community. They're great to support their communities, so let's support our farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

We all know the health and vigour of our Island economy, and to a large extent our rural communities, is dependent on the health and vigour of our agricultural sector.

This is a great announcement and I welcome it, minister. I thank you and you, sort of, signalled yesterday, and we had a great discussion yesterday on the status of agriculture on PEI. I appreciated many of your remarks yesterday and this is a very welcome announcement.

I was looking through the priorities that exist in this program. The first that is mentioned is environmental sustainability. Of course, we had a great discussion on that yesterday, particularly, the importance of soil and the preservation of soil, in terms, of the sustainability of our agriculture community.

I knew when we were talking yesterday; there was a quote that I had read recently that really summed it up for me. I found it last night, so I'm going read it, now. This is from a Sanskrit text of 1500 BC.

It says this: Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it and it will grow our food, our fuel and our shelter and surrounds us with beauty. Abuse it and the soil will collapse and die, taking humanity with it.

That's from 1500 BC. That, I think, describes perfectly well the importance and the criticality of looking after our soil.

There are other priorities here; confidence in the sector, diversity, of course, that's something we need to have. Confidence in the sector comes from knowing where your food comes from and who grows your food. That's where you get your confidence from. That's why I enjoy, so much, shopping at the farmers market, almost every Saturday, whether it be in Summerside or Charlottetown and supporting those farmers, whom I know. I know the practices that they are using on their farms. That's where my confidence in my food comes from.

There's a tendency here, when I stand up and have overt or covert support for one aspect of farming, whether it be organic farming or something else, that, somehow, if you're in favour, or you support one thing that you're inevitably against another and that's not the case, at all. We need it all on Prince Edward Island.

We need small farms. We need medium farms. We need large farms. We need specialized producers. We need mixed farms. We need diverse – we need it all if we are to have a truly sustainable and prosperous agriculture community here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table an email chain with the discoverygarden CEO, where the Premier's office arranged the visit of an Ontario university to its investment, and I have two other documents to table.

Secondly, I'd like to table an email thread between senior government communication officials and the CEO of discoverygarden ostensibly asking for advice on international tax shelters with respect to the government's tax avoidance brochure.

Lastly, I beg your leave to table a letter to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner asking the commissioner to look into the actions of the Premier with respect to the impact on his investment in discoverygarden.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Do you have a seconder for that?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said documents be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall they carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table pictures from the Souris Regional School leaky roof that I suggest should be fixed ASAP before there's more damage done and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to notice given I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Wildlife Conservation Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): *An Act to Amend the Wildlife Conservation Act*, Bill No. 107, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, would you mind giving us a brief explanation about this bill?

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill brings PEI into line with other provinces in allowing seven-day hunting during the prescribed hunting seasons.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Pursuant to notice given I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (No.2)* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Electric Power Act (No.2)*, Bill No. 109, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, would you mind giving us an explanation about the bill?

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill allows any Islander or company using an independent, renewable generating asset to apply to the regulatory system for a permit.

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

Mr. Myers: Pursuant to notice given I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Island Investment Development Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act Amend the Island Investment Development Act*, Bill No. 108, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, would you mind giving us an explanation of what this bill is about?

Mr. Myers: Sure.

Mr. Speaker, this bill ends the practice of only deputy ministers on the IIDI board, and instead requires government to appoint five persons who are not deputy or holding any other appointment in Cabinet.

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

Mr. Myers: Pursuant to notice given I beg leave to introduce a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Education Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the same be now received and read a first time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant: *An Act to Amend the Education Act*, Bill No. 106, read a first time.

Speaker: Hon. member, an explanation about this bill.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill reinstates a school board election for a five-person Public Schools Branch board to be held concurrently with the municipal elections. These elections will return the public oversight of education back to the communities and parents like it should be.

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

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, that the 17th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 17, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No.2)*, Bill No. 111, in committee.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Borden-Kinkora, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Compton: – (Indistinct) House resolve itself to a Committee of the Whole House?

Speaker: Yes.

Ms. Compton: – to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Yes. Shall that carry? Carried.

I'll ask the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, who was in the chair previously to return to the chair to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Fox): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled –

Where we last left off, the Member from Belfast-Murray River was actually finished.

Mr. Trivers: It'll be intituled –

Chair: We're already in play.

Mr. Trivers: All right.

Chair: During that last sitting, we did have a stranger on the floor. Is it the wish of the committee to bring that stranger back on the floor?

Mr. Trivers: Yes, please. I would like that.

Chair: I would ask that Mr. Pizio reintroduce himself to the House.

Dave Pizio: Dave Pizio. I'm the current Chief Administrative Officer of the rural municipality of Greenmount-Montrose.

Chair: Thank you.

Next on my speaking list, I have the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, who was prepared to speak or make a comment.

Mr. Henderson: I'm just trying to find my stuff here.

Chair: Okay. We can come back if you would like.

Mr. Henderson: Yes. Go to the next person there.

Chair: Next on the list is the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. R. Brown: What?

An Hon. Member: You're on the list.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, that's good.

The other day there you indicated that you'd rather have the province do all the planning – the government do all the planning for the rural areas. Do you stand by that?

Mr. Trivers: I'm not sure I said I'd rather have the province do all the planning for the rural areas. I said that for the unincorporated areas of the province, I think that the *Planning Act* clearly states a provincial responsibility and I'd like the province to step up and provide land-use planning for the unincorporated areas as part of the *Planning Act* until such a time as any municipalities would exist.

Mr. R. Brown: So, what if an area wants to do its own planning – an unincorporated area says: We want to get involved and we want to be in our planning. Are you opposed to that?

Mr. Trivers: Well, I'm not sure how this relates to the bill, but I'll go down this road –

Mr. R. Brown: Well, it's the *Municipal Government Act*. What you believe is any unincorporated areas should never be able to be turned into a municipality?

Mr. Trivers: Now you're making words up that I never said, but what I do believe –

Mr. R. Brown: So do you agree –

Mr. Trivers: No.

Mr. R. Brown: – that some areas should be allowed to form to be a municipality.

Mr. Trivers: What I agree – and, in fact, this is related to the act –

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: – because it's in section four. I believe the people who are elected to represent unincorporated areas, i.e. the MLAs of this province, should be engaged to help engage unincorporated areas in the planning process. And that the province should take the lead to do that and that I think that it's a great idea to have a land-use plan for the whole province, including the unincorporated areas.

Mr. R. Brown: So you said the province should take a lead in order to make this happen, or to encourage it. So the province did take a lead and they're doing some encouragement with the new municipalities act. Are you – one area's saying 'yes' and another area's saying 'no', or?

Mr. Trivers: I'm glad you brought this up because you say the province is taking a lead – and again, this is outside of the bill, but it was debated a lot on the floor and I think it's a great opportunity to discuss this. You say the province is taking a lead, but it's really unclear to the people I talk to in the unincorporated areas what the end goal of the province is.

If the province, indeed, does want to incorporate all areas of the province to form a smaller number of large municipalities – I believe the number that I keep hearing is between 20 and 25, although it hasn't been formally stated by the government – if that is the case, then the government should come right out and say that is the case and use the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment to say that's the case.

Yes, if you believe that's your goal and if that's what your mandate is then please, that's one thing I hear the most: Tell us what you're trying to do. Tell us why you want to do it and please take the lead in that.

Mr. R. Brown: Okay. I'll tell you what we want to do.

Mr. Trivers: That'd be good to know. Everyone wants to know what you want to do.

Mr. R. Brown: Well, you know, there were public consultations. There was the New Foundations report – Report of the

Commission on Land and Local Governance. PEI is a great Island and its communities in rural PEI are vital to the economic development of Prince Edward Island – also for people to live, work, and play in this province.

There are pressures on rural areas nowadays in order to do developments and things like that and there's a lot of people concerned out there about land ownership – a lot of people concerned about where our Island is going and we believe in allowing the opportunity, as stated in the legislation, to allow people to come together in communities and to form a municipality and to take charge of their area. What's wrong with that?

Mr. Trivers: I think that's perfectly fine and you'll notice that –

Mr. MacEwen: Hence the bill.

Mr. Trivers: – the main goal of the bill here is to make sure that –

Mr. MacEwen: Read it.

Mr. Trivers: – people in unincorporated areas have a voice in that process and are included from the very beginning. I mean the problems that we've seen with the current process – and this is a good juncture to make sure everyone received the flowchart that I sent out by email. Mr. Pizio, who's with me on the floor today, put this together. We had a little discussion and we realized that the current process might not be very easy to understand by just reading the legislation and so I believe this flowchart really does a great job in outlining. I think you Mr. Pizio.

So, it's clearly outlined in the flowchart and the current process that unincorporated areas aren't engaged from the beginning. Mr. Pizio has pointed out that the federation of municipalities, actually, in their work kit, recommends not engaging unincorporated areas until later in the process and that's what this bill is trying to address. It's great if municipalities should exist and if annexation should occur in some cases. Some unincorporated areas want it, some don't. Some people want it; some don't, but let's involve them in the process. Let's let them know what's going on. Let's let them understand

why it's being done and that's what this bill's about.

Mr. R. Brown: So, do you believe that IRAC, the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission, is an independent, non-partisan organization? Do you believe they are, or do you believe they're just a bunch of politicals?

Mr. Trivers: I'm not sure –

Mr. R. Brown: Do you have respect for IRAC?

Mr. Trivers: I'm not sure I have an opinion on that one –

Mr. R. Brown: Well, I just asked a simple question.

Mr. Trivers: I'd have to come back to the floor with that.

Mr. R. Brown: Do you have respect for IRAC, yes or no?

Mr. Trivers: Do I have respect for IRAC, the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. Of course I have respect for IRAC.

Mr. R. Brown: Okay. So now they're in the process of taking an application, doing the analysis of it, putting it out to the public, having public meetings, and making a recommendation back to Executive Council. What's wrong with that? What is the problem in that area?

Mr. Trivers: The problem is – up until this point – and this is what people have said, overwhelmingly – you were at the rally the other night, this was their main beef, is that: to this point in the process, they were not involved. The unincorporated areas did not have a voice until the proposal was already sent to IRAC.

They wanted to be involved with the proposal right from the very beginning and that's what this bill does, is it amends the *Municipal Government Act* to let unincorporated areas have a voice from the

beginning so that they've been involved long before it gets to IRAC.

You'll notice if you look at the flowchart, it starts off and restructuring a proposal is put together and the only time unincorporated areas have a voice is if they are the ones that are, indeed, requesting the creation of a new municipality or the restructuring. If it's the minister or the municipality, there is no legislative voice for the unincorporated areas. They may. I would venture to say a good minister and a good municipality would engage them, but there's nothing in legislation.

Then the commission receives the proposal and then the commission has to go out within 45 days to go and consult with five different areas, none of which are unincorporated Islanders. There's the minister, the initiator, adjoining municipalities, any municipalities or First Nation bands they feel might be impacted – that's optional, and the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities, but at that point, none of the unincorporated areas may be impacted.

Then, the only thing the commission is require to do by legislation is put in a single ad in the local newspaper, post three conspicuous places with a date of notice. So that's basically a flyer at the post office or the local general store or something of that nature, and there are lots of unincorporated areas may not have those sorts of things. The other one is other method as deemed appropriate, that's optional.

Up until the point the proposal – at that point, the unincorporated areas basically have very little legislated ways that they're engaged. Then, if anyone has an objection, which could be in the unincorporated areas or not, then they have 30 days to file their objection. At that point, they may, after they look at it, receive the objection, they may decide to hold a public hearing commission or they may not. It's only the minister that can make them hold a public hearing.

All this bill is saying, is all of that process up until that point, we think the unincorporated areas should be involved. They should be engaged. They should have input into the proposal. They should understand the proposal and that's why

we're putting forward – the minister and the municipalities have to go out and engage unincorporated areas through a petition. Then, we get into a possible plebiscite as well. We make the public hearing mandatory if there's an objection, and then finally we bring it to the floor of the Legislature for debate.

Like I said, and I said this to the former minister of communities, land and environment and the current Minister of Health and Wellness; I really think we're on the same page here. All this bill is doing is it's changing and correcting the legislation to make it stronger.

Mr. R. Brown: The people that came together to support their community; community leaders come together – I understand the community down in Three Rivers, the unincorporated area; there were six members on that committee from the unincorporated areas. There were members from Brudenell, Lower Montague, Cardigan, Montague, Lorne Valley, Valleyfield – what do you think these people think of your objections to their work in trying to better rural PEI?

What do you think that – these people that came together and worked for two years –

Mr. Trivers: Minister –

Mr. R. Brown: – can make their community better? They have an idea to make their place better. They want to make their residence better. They want parks; they want infrastructure for their area.

I live in the city and every time there's a hole dug in the city for a new apartment building, it's filled before the foundation is put in. I go and –

Mr. MacEwen: You're pre-judging IRAC.

Mr. R. Brown: Let me finish.

We're talking about rural PEI here. Do you want to talk about it or you don't want to talk about it?

Mr. MacEwen: You're pre-judging (Indistinct)

Chair: Members –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. MacEwen: You're the minister. You're saying you think they should go for it.

Chair: Members.

Mr. R. Brown: See –

Chair: Does the minister have a question?

Mr. R. Brown: If you don't want to talk about your areas and the betterment of your areas, go ahead and chirp all you want. But, this is an important issue for Prince Edward Island right now.

You talk to the people in those apartments, and a lot of them are from rural PEI and you say: Well, why move to town? No services in rural PEI.

Chair: Minister, do you have a question for the member?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, I do.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: My question to the member is; so the people that came together from the fire districts, from the unincorporated areas, that put their name and time and efforts into this, you reject them. You reject all of the work they did.

You guys are sitting there and saying: These people get everything wrong.

Chair: Is there a question, minister?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Do you believe they did everything wrong?

Mr. Trivers: Absolutely not.

I don't think you should put words in my mouth like that. What I'm criticizing is the –

Mr. R. Brown: You said the process failed.

Mr. Trivers: – act. Yeah, the process –

Mr. R. Brown: You guys are pre-judging the –

Chair: Members –

Mr. Trivers: Do you know what? I have talked to people who sat on that committee and as a Progressive Conservative caucus, we went out and we held real public consultations with Islanders pre-budget, which of course didn't happen with this government, and we had people from both sides. In fact, the entire meeting that we had in Montague was talking about the Three Rivers amalgamation that night.

We had one of the members who sat on that committee from one of the municipalities who spoke passionately about why he believed the amalgamation should take place, and he spoke in support of the process, yes. He made a couple of points, though, that were disagreed with by others in the unincorporated areas, and one of them was the people, even these reps on the committee, were brought in after the proposal was mostly in place –

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Trivers: – and he said – yes, that's exactly what he said at the meeting and he said that we had already made certain decisions, had discussions and (Indistinct) those additional people were brought in. We told them: Look, we're not going to go back and we're not going to discuss those areas anymore. We're going to move on with what we have and that was one thing that people were opposed to.

The thing is, and the point of this bill, is not to try and stir up any angst amongst these community leaders that are working hard to better their community, what you're trying to do –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. Trivers: The point –

Mr. R. Brown: This bill is trying to do that.

Mr. Trivers: No, there's a process put in place – it is in front of IRAC –

Mr. R. Brown: No –

Mr. Trivers: – now –

Chair: Members –

Mr. R. Brown: You are trying to (Indistinct) fair with a process that is open and transparent and non-partisan, and you're making it partisan.

Mr. Trivers: No, no.

Chair: Members, please bring your comments through the Chair. We have an intervention by the minister –

Mr. Trivers: I would like to respond to that.

Chair: Just one second.

We have an intervention by the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Chair.

Just the same clarity that the minister was just trying to bring there; there was representation from the unincorporated areas that came in early on once the other existing committee that was formed decided this a path we want to go. They went out. They embraced those communities.

These representatives were selected at a public meeting from their communities and were part of the committee that put the thing together with the help of a consultant who helped them develop this vision for the community. Then after that, hon. member, there were two more public meetings to put the information out. These people were very much an equal part of the process, put forward by public meetings in their areas and were at the front of the table for the other two public meetings.

It wasn't like there were no opportunities. There were ample – there were lots of opportunities for people to have their say and to be part of it.

Mr. Trivers: Can I speak to that?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: To my knowledge that process was started on under the old *Municipalities Act*. Is that correct?

Mr. Mitchell: That process has been going on for a number of years (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: So it was started under the old *Municipalities Act*.

Mr. Mitchell: What does that have to do with anything?

Mr. Trivers: – the new act was brought in. That process presumably followed the old *Municipalities Act* and –

Mr. Mitchell: That act was antiquated years old –

Mr. Trivers: My point exactly.

Do I have the floor, Chair?

Chair: Members –

Mr. Trivers: Do I have the floor, Chair?

Chair: I understand this is a passionate issue, and I understand everybody wants to speak to it. Please recognize the Chair and let's have order.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: So, that was brought in under the old act and my point is – and the whole point of this bill – is all of those consultations you talked about, whether they happened or they didn't, you can talk to people involved.

Mr. Mitchell: I was at them all and so was the member from Georgetown.

Mr. Trivers: The point is the legislation, the *Municipal Government Act*, does not require those consultations to occur at this point. You can look at the act; you can see that a minister and a municipality can put a proposal together. They can submit it to IRAC. It can go through the process without having actually talked to the unincorporated areas.

We just want to make it black and white; the unincorporated areas, if they want to restructure a municipality or if they want to start a municipality, they have to go and get a petition with 30% of the people. We're just saying so should the minister. So should the municipality. What a great way to go door to door, to talk to those people, to let them know about the proposal, why it's so good, why they should support it. Then, they

can move forward with an engaged unincorporated area; not putting up a poster on a telephone poll and hoping somebody shows up at the meeting.

Mr. Mitchell: I assure you, hon. member, (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Keeping with –

Mr. Mitchell: – the unincorporated rural areas were very engaged about it and had a very good vision of it and had a really good understanding (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Not in legislation.

Mr. Mitchell: They weren't uninformed, as you may have (Indistinct)

Chair: Members, keeping on the spirit of the questions raised by the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, we have an intervention by the Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) listening to questions. It's not an intervention.

Chair: We have an intervention from the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: I'd love to intervene on this.

Thank you, Chair.

A couple of things, and there's a lot of misinformation being thrown around here by Cabinet ministers, which is unfortunate in this process. This is no surprise. This should be no surprise to anyone that we want – we just want powers to be reduced, and we want people to have a fair input into the process.

You know what? There are people, to this day, that don't know they're part of this amalgamation in Three Rivers. When the plebiscite that was held by the unincorporated Islanders was being pulled up – what they did is, they basically tried find key people in different parts, because it's a really big, it's a gigantic area. It's not – there's not one group of volunteers from one area could organize to drag that kind of a vote out. There were 1,283 people came and voted at it.

When they were trying, they went to each, kind of, spot on the map and said: well, can we find someone in Sturgeon that can help us? Can we find – so the people down in Sturgeon were going door-to-door, and telling them they had a – they told them, you know, this was happening. That they were going to have a vote on it. They were like, no, no, let's not. (Indistinct) down here, we're not – that doesn't include us. That's lower Montague. That has nothing to do with us.

Time and time again, people down in that neck of the woods didn't think it had anything to do with them, at all. There's still people, who haven't been talked to down there, and in other parts, that wouldn't know that they're part of this.

Government really bumbled on this one, badly. You know, ministers said: are you questioning whether or not the people on the committee did good work? No one ever said they didn't do good work. Where they failed was they didn't – there is no mechanism for the unincorporated people to hear a voice.

I asked government to give them one and you wouldn't so they had their own. I'd be surprised if anybody on Prince Edward Island, besides elected people here apparently, question whether or not the people in unincorporated areas want it because they said a resounding no.

I'm going to say to this House, again: they had a vote. They had lists. You had to prove residency. People were turned away at the door. They said: no, you live in Cardigan. You already had a vote with your council. If you want, you have to talk to them. People in Montague came to them, and they were turned down. They were told: no, you can't vote in this. The vote was extremely legit. The people who did it were extremely serious about it.

I think it was Paul MacNeill said it was organized by people that didn't want it. The votes by the communities were organized by people who wanted it. How does that give that vote any less legitimacy?

Paul got himself stuck so far into this that he can't get himself out, so he started blaming you fellows. Paul's as guilty as you fellows are running this up the flagpole without

anybody ever wanting it. He was the one, Paul MacNeill was the one that was raving on in the paper saying: if government ever gives them a vote it's the end of it and it's the dumbest thing they could ever do. Then he said: you know what his problem is? Know what. Paul thinks that you guys failed on this, but you didn't ram it down our throats; is what he thinks.

Governing isn't about ramming things down people's throats. Okay, so over there you guys think you're visionaries. No one else on Prince Edward Island does. Nobody thinks you guys are visionaries, at all. This isn't a visionary thing –

Ms. Casey: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Are you chairing this meeting, Kathleen?

Ms. Casey: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

Chair: Hon. members –

Mr. Myers: Are you?

Chair: Hon. members.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I'll continue on. In this day in age somebody comes up with an idea and they think it's great. That's fine, but when it encompasses a whole bunch of people, you can't not give them some sort of a democratic voice. You know, that's the issue.

I want to clear up a couple of misconceptions then, and this will be my intervention –

Chair: (Indistinct) okay.

Mr. Myers: And I'll wrap it up and thank you for your patience.

Number one, the people in the unincorporated areas didn't know what was going on for a long, long time. A long time. The people that – when they finally decided to include people in the steering committee from the unincorporated areas, when they finally decided to do that – they were sworn to secrecy.

They had to sign a confidentiality agreement and they couldn't share any of that information with anybody. While, they may or may not have had a voice on there, who would know, because no one was allowed to know anything about it, anyways.

The third is, the vote that was held was by a group of concerned, ordinary Islanders, paid for this stuff out of their own pocket to make it happen. They had a set of rules, that they set themselves. They had lists they came up with themselves and they turned people away.

The vote is very, very legitimate; 77% of the people in the Three Rivers area said no when you include all the communities in the unincorporated areas, 77% said no. It doesn't matter. The fact that the minister is saying that he thinks that you're diminishing the work of the steering committee doesn't matter. People didn't want it and we have to move on. We have to accept their no and honour the vote and move on.

No one is trying to disparage anybody's reputation over this. Quite frankly, everyone out there is trying hard to not. To not have this be a fight. If this heavy handedness continues from Charlottetown and from the Charlottetown politicians, all their going to do is cause fighting amongst ourselves in rural Prince Edward Island. I question, if that's not what the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment wants to begin with, is having us all fighting out there and then they can have everything they want in here.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Chairman, I'll like to discuss that at premise.

If we wanted everything in Charlottetown we would have just left it all the same because people are moving in as the apartment building goes up. Anyone that drives around the City of Charlottetown can see the expansion going on. Apartment buildings are full within the month of them being built.

Do I, as a city resident, want to see the diminishment of rural PEI? Absolutely not. Rural PEI is vital –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: – vital to the City of Charlottetown. I said it a hundred times and I'll say it a hundred more times. Former mayor Jack Ready summed it up right when he sat on city council. He said: If rural PEI is not doing good; the City of Charlottetown is not doing good. I believe that 100%.

Do I want to see the diminishment of the rural area? No, we have a beautiful Island here. A beautiful Island and it's beautiful because of the little communities out there. The small communities; North Rustico, Bedeque and these areas, all across Prince Edward Island, Alberton, Tignish –

Mr. Myers: Georgetown.

Mr. R. Brown: – Souris, beautiful locations. That's why we are a tourism capital of North America. People come here to see our landscapes. Do we want no one living in the rural area? Do we want to diminish rural – why is a city politician fighting so hard? Because I know how important it is to have a vibrant, good rural PEI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: I want people living on Prince Edward Island. I want people living right across Prince Edward Island. I want a process in place where community leaders can come together and work together to build their community.

What we're doing today with this piece of legislation is saying to anyone that wants to come together now, and work for their community, you try it, and you know what? You'll have a protest out front the Legislature. Your names will be put through mud. You'll be criticized. I'm hearing that the people that are working extremely hard in these committees that wanted to improve their area are being criticized. People are talking about it because of the false information that is being put out.

We have a process in place. There was pre-consultation. Some municipalities, all they might have had to do was say; put together a plan, send it to IRAC and we'll let IRAC handle it from there on in. What they did, they tried to do some pre-consultations,

some pre-work on it, to see if they could run their communities. I want, and I know everybody in this Legislature wants and everybody on Prince Edward Island, I want vibrant communities. I wanted municipalities in the areas that can build a rink for their area, for their kids.

Without rinks, without ball diamonds, without things in rural PEI that are developed by communities and community groups and municipalities, that's how we keep people in rural PEI. If you want people to do it. If you want people to come together like the Three Rivers area to come together and work, why, all of a sudden are we saying, they did a horrible job? They are no good.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: Okay? Abandon them –

Chair: Thank you, minister.

Mr. R. Brown: – abandon them.

Chair: Based on, just one second. I want to get back on track here –

Mr. R. Brown: This thing has been going for 100 years. There's numbers. 1990, the Doug Boylan report –

Mr. MacEwen: But only you know how to change it.

Mr. R. Brown: 100 – what?

Mr. MacEwen: Only you know how to change it –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. MacEwen: Nobody else can suggest changes. Only you know how to do change.

Mr. R. Brown: No, this is a community-based –

Mr. MacEwen: Then, let us suggest changes –

Mr. R. Brown: – process –

Mr. MacEwen: – and get off your –

Mr. R. Brown: – no –

Mr. MacEwen: – soapbox.

Mr. R. Brown: – because –

Chair: Hon. members –

Mr. R. Brown: – you guys have put this bill on the floor to tell the people that worked so hard in this community that they did a bad job –

Mr. Myers: No, you –

Mr. R. Brown: – I'm saying –

Chair: Order!

Mr. Myers: – guys did a bad job!

Mr. R. Brown: – what I want to hear, Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: Terrible!

Mr. R. Brown: – what I want –

Mr. Myers: Terrible, terrible legislation –

Mr. R. Brown: – is –

Mr. Myers: You guys put in terrible legislation.

Chair: Members.

Mr. R. Brown: What's wrong with the legislation?

Chair: Members.

Mr. R. Brown: What's wrong with it?

Chair: Members, please.
Based on the question originally by the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment and the interventions that have gone on – there's one more intervention by the Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

After listening to the discussions, I've got a couple of questions myself. We keep talking about the community leaders that were put on these committees to advocate this – how were these community leaders put on there? Can somebody answer me that?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Oh no, sorry. I don't know the answer to that.

Chair: Do you have an intervention there, minister?

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct) by their fire district at a meeting of the fire district – for the rural unincorporated areas – which they felt was a good process. You've got people that were interested in the communities, some may have had no previous idea about what would be involved and they thought it was the time to come out in this particular case.

But we all know in other areas too – in unincorporated areas – and I know from the area that I grew up in, there are those families of leaders and I think everybody has opportunities. I met with many people across Prince Edward Island who had that – they just want to ask those questions, so that was this type of person that was at these meetings and that's where they stepped forward.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: So, one thing I've heard – and I've had an open mind through the whole process – I've heard people talk that they are for amalgamation, and I've heard people talk that they're against amalgamation, but the majority I've heard people say were against forced amalgamation. So, the word 'forced' comes up so many times and unfortunately it's got to the point where people have felt that it's being forced on them. Some people certainly are for it. I know even in my area, I've had some meetings and people have suggested they're for it and certain people are against it and it creates quite a bit of turmoil because a lot of people don't have the answers to some of these questions, but it keeps coming back to 'forced' and I think that's what this bill is suggesting. It has nothing to do with stopping amalgamation; it's of bringing the unincorporated areas in with a voice.

After seeing 100 people from down east come here the other day, they're feeling like they're being forced into this. I don't know

if it's too late to turn the channel and try and bring this in and engage people because there's obviously a lot of misconceptions out there on both sides of the fence and I really think we should be looking at dealing with that.

Because what's happening – and the minister, you're exactly right – you take some of these community leaders that are on these committees, well, that might not have been the greatest process to begin with, but at the same time, the information hasn't been relayed out there from these committee members on both sides of the fence.

My fear is if this is starting in the Three Rivers, but wait until all Prince Edward Island – and this is happening in the rural areas in the west: Tignish, Alberton, O'Leary. We're going to run into the same issues if some of these questions don't get sorted out before this goes too much further. I think we should get more of a dialogue opened up here right now and try and find a process that works. I really, going back to the bill – I just read it the second time – I'm a supporter for the bill more because all it's doing is giving them a voice, right? At the end of the day, maybe amalgamation will happen out of it, but at least these people will have a say, Island-wide, what their fate is. I think that's what it comes down to.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, members.

Did you have a short comment on that, minister?

Mr. Mitchell: Just a short comment.

Chair: Short comment on that, minister; then we're going to Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. Mitchell: I think to your point, some people are against amalgamation or regionalization or are against it, but in the meetings and at the meeting I had with Mr. Pizio and his group, my question has always been: What are you fearful of?

Unless you come to these public meetings, which will be, in this case, by IRAC – there was two public meetings in the Three Rivers – unless you come to say: What am I fearful of and hear what other things come with it

or at least have the opportunity to question them –

Chair: Order!

Mr. Mitchell: – then you're really not sure unless you have that opportunity, which is the opportunity that's provided by the process that exists today. So, I guess that's the point. People want to – what are you fearful of? And then, let's talk about that. You can only do that in an open way, or in a closed way, which I did with a group of your neighbors, which I did with Mr. Pizio's group, which I did with many across PEI in my almost three years tenure there. People are really – and some, they're against it, but when they hear about the information and what good virtues can come from – they tell me: I changed my mind and I want to be part of it.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Well the process exists for that already. We just demonstrated it.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Members.

Do you have a reply to that?

Mr. MacKay: Yes.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I agree 100% with what you've just said. The only thing is these people feel like that they don't have a say and we've obviously seen it with a vote, right? Now whether that's the answer or not, but what you're saying is that if they don't go to these public meetings, they don't have a say. That's basically what I'm hearing, right? If it's affecting Islanders the way it looks like it's affecting Islanders, it should go to a vote. I don't see why people in rural areas – and going back again to the word 'forced', that's what we're hearing and the minister of workforce, he just made a statement and I wrote it down.

You said – if I understood this right, basically: If the amalgamation doesn't

happen, rural PEI won't last. Is that what you've just said there? Everybody's moving into Charlottetown, so if amalgamation won't happen –

Mr. R. Brown: From my perspective, what I see in my (Indistinct) –

Mr. Gallant: Chair? I did not say that (Indistinct).

Mr. MacKay: Sorry, Communities, land and environment. My apologies.

Chair: Correction.

Mr. MacKay: Minister?

Chair: Minister?

Mr. R. Brown: That's what people are saying. (Indistinct) I'm just reflecting what people are saying.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) rural areas.

Mr. MacKay: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Final statement: So, once again, it's not for you to decide, me to decide, it's for the people of rural Prince Edward Island to decide.

Mr. R. Brown: And a group of people came together and we chastised, we criticized them, and we put them down so much I don't know anybody will ever come together again on Prince Edward Island and try and better their communities.

Chair: Okay, members.

Mr. R. Brown: – with the kind of abuse they've received.

Chair: The Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I can't believe the minister's are over there trying to turn this into a pro or against amalgamation debate. You've read the bill.

An Hon. Member: Oh, I don't know if they've read it or not.

Mr. MacEwen: We've had debates in our own caucus about – when the member tried to bring it forward and should it be stronger, should it be not stronger? He is aiding this bill. You need to read his actual bill. This isn't – all I heard last day we debated this bill was trying to peg him into being against amalgamation and he's horrible. I can't believe you guys are against progress and all this stuff. Read the bill. It's helping your process. It's identifying those people. It's bringing – the former minister talked about when he goes in and he hears about this wonderful stuff and we just need to tell the people. He is trying to let that happen. He's trying to let it happen more. He's giving a voice to those people. If this government is so passionate about amalgamation and the benefits of it –

Mr. R. Brown: We're passionate about rural PEI (Indistinct).

Mr. MacEwen: Chair, do I have the floor?

Chair: The Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Biggar: He's passionate too.

Mr. MacEwen: That's great, but what I'm trying to say: There's plenty of people – we heard the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters speak passionately against what's going on down east. You're passionate very much for what's going on, apparently, in that and that's why –

Mr. Myers: Because I lived there.

Mr. MacEwen: – I was talking about prejudging it and all that kind of thing. We need to let you talk. You talked about unbiased IRAC and letting them do their business. If you believe in amalgamation that much, go with it. I mean we've heard the stories about up west about the three amalgamated communities in Western PEI. Everybody's heard that, how it's going to form and what the potential boundaries are and stuff like that. If your government believes in that, go to the polls on it. Now, the former minister said: No, we don't want that – when you were on the floor during this bill –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Chair: The Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, for that intervention.

Ms. Biggar: You're welcome.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

So, if you're that passionate about amalgamation, go to the polls on it. It's a policy decision. Don't come in here and talk and brag about all the benefits of it and then just hope the process goes. Just hope. The former minister, we talked when you were on the floor here about – and I put it to you – and I'm paraphrasing, but basically: Are we kind of just looking for a winner here and then we'll model that off? And you were basically in agreement: Yes, we're looking for a winner with Three Rivers, we want that to work. Why are you –

Sorry, Chair. The Premier's laughing at me.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: He's talking to me, excuse me.

An Hon. Member: Ah, come on.

An Hon. Member: I was yesterday.
(Indistinct)

Chair: Members.

The Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Ms. Biggar: We're having a conversation over here.

Mr. Myers: Somebody get control of the Premier.

Chair: If you want to have a conversation, take it outside the rail.

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Chair: The Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

If you're that much for it, versus we talk about trying find a winner and trying to let it

bubble up organically, and then trying to get other communities to come in on it, or to use that process.

All I have heard so far is about how passionate everybody is on that side of the House, and maybe not everybody, anybody that's spoke so far about the benefits of it. Well go to the polls on it. Form the communities across PEI if that's what you feel.

Or, we can listen to the hon. member's bill, which actually helps the process. It actually gives a voice. I remember back in Morell, Mount Stewart and St. Peters, there was a group. It was 2006. They were talking about the rink at that time.

It was very straightforward. They were talking about adding a certain percentage to your tax bill and it would directly go towards paying for the rink. That committee talked about it in the open. That committee had a vote. There were three incorporated areas and unincorporated areas all around those three incorporated areas. They had a vote for everybody in the area. They voted it down. Is that right?

The minister over there, I know, he doesn't think, he thinks they probably should have probably formed a community, okay.

Mr. R. Brown: It's a rink for the children. It's a rink for the community.

Mr. MacEwen: Do you know what? I agree with you.

Mr. R. Brown: And you think they shouldn't have a rink? You think they (Indistinct)

Chair: Minister. Member from Morell-Mermaid, do you have a question?

Mr. MacEwen: This is what I'm talking about. They're immediately assuming that everybody in here is against amalgamation. What the member is trying to do – don't assume that. You're trying to turn this into a pro- anti amalgamation debate.

No, you didn't even read it. If you read it you wouldn't be using those comments –

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, member. Thank you.

Mr. MacEwen: I'm telling you the truth. Now, here's my question –

Mr. R. Brown: You wouldn't be able to criticize the people that worked so hard down in the Three Rivers area –

An Hon. Member: Oh my (Indistinct)

Chair: Minister.

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

Chair: Do you have a question hon. member?

Mr. MacEwen: I do have it, Chair –

Mr. Myers: You guys forced them to do it.

Mr. MacEwen: If the minister would –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) to do it (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – read the bill –

Mr. Myers: You promised them –

Mr. MacEwen: – read the bill in front of him –

Mr. Myers: – something –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) perhaps (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: You have not read this bill –

Mr. Myers: You want to know what I know? You wait –

Chair: Members.

Mr. Myers: You'll find out.

Chair: Members.

Mr. Myers: I know everything you've been up to.

Mr. LaVie: Chair?

Mr. Myers: So will everybody soon.

Chair: Morell-Mermaid, do you have a question?

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. MacEwen: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: I know you see a lot of positives in amalgamation. And I know you see some pitfalls in amalgamation. You have communities in your own district that are pro, or for against. Or you could have communities that are thinking about it that are from unincorporated areas that are very interested –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: – in amalgamating, right?

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: Does your bill help those people that are in unincorporated areas, does it help them to incorporate? Does this process help them give them a voice?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair and thank you Member from Morell-Mermaid.

I believe, yes, this will actually help the incorporation process.

I'll tell you a story. I have a municipality in my district that they said: okay, we're ambitious. We'll take the lead. The government has said they want municipalities to look at amalgamation and they're going to fund us and they want us to do a proposal. We'll take the lead. We'll do a feasibility study. They came to me, as the MLA, they said: who should we meet with in the unincorporated areas because we want to engage them, right? They were taking – it's not part of the process in the legislation. This was prior to the *Municipal Government Act* coming in. They said, that's good governance, that's how we work. We're going to engage. We want to find out from the unincorporated areas.

I gave them a list of about 10 or 15 people

from the various areas in my district. People from the Women's Institute, people from the volunteer fire departments, people from the Lion's Club, people from community corporations; across the board, farmers, fishermen. They held the meeting, and because there was no formal process in place, and really nobody really understood what was going on, they abandoned the process.

To the Member from Morell-Mermaid's point, that's what this legislation is about, is making sure there is a process in place to engage the unincorporated areas, which there isn't right now if you look at the legislation. It's not a legislated process.

The minister or the municipality or the unincorporated area is left to their own devices to try and engage people. This is just meant to help clarify; to put in legislation what the process is, to use democratic tools to support that.

I know there are places in my district, at least, that would be happy with incorporation. This will allow them to move along that path.

Listening to the debate today; it's pretty clear that we're all on the same page. We want to see the Island grow and thrive. We want to see the population of rural areas increase. We want to see additional services within rural areas. Things like rinks and community centres. That's exactly what this legislation is meant to do, is to strengthen that and make sure that the people who live there have a voice and buy in.

I would encourage you, as the Member from Morell-Mermaid says, to really take a good look at the legislation. I would love it if we could get back to the legislation and start debating it for its merits.

Chair: We have a follow-up question from the Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

To the sponsored bill, that's what I want. This is turning into – where government ministers are trying to paint this bill as anti-

amalgamation. What it does, is it helps the process. It helps the consultation process.

I'm trying to say, honestly: look at it. Read it line by line. Let's go line by line. When you say about we're championing, I can't believe I'm the only member, I'm championing rural PEI. No, it's disrespecting rural PEI to say that you're automatically assuming that everybody in rural PEI is anti amalgamation.

What this does is it gives them a voice. It lets them talk about it. It lets them hear the good things about it, if there is. But it lets them decide. If you really feel, from the minister's office, that it's the best thing for PEI and the best thing for rural PEI, put it in your policy. Show us the map, if that's what you want.

Or, let unincorporated areas have a say. That's what this member is trying to do. Chair, I would absolutely second that. Let's start reading the bill line by line.

Chair: We have a question by the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you very much, Chair.

As we all know, this is getting to be pretty passionate. We must think back as the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment stated, that rural populations are declining because the older folks want to get closer to amenities. We've seen that in the past.

Now, we're lucky we're on a shift. Our population is getting to be a little bit younger. But, if we don't do something to enhance rural PEI, it's not going to be the same.

Now, you look at the farming community. The youngest people in this Legislature today are Pages, but the rest of us have all seen how farmers had to sell their farms off or get out of the business, now they're big farms. If the big farming hadn't stepped up to the plate and took over that land and created employment and created prosperity in rural parts of the province, where would we be?

That's change. This is about change. This is about – now, hon. member that put this bill forward, you just said, you know you're leavening it to their – or their discretion. Rural communities can get together and maybe if they feel, now, I'm not saying that they're not leaders, but if they feel: gee, if we get together maybe we can enhance a business up here because you've got numbers.

Look at the stores that have closed in rural PEI. We see people travel all across this province that have decent paying jobs, that stay in a rural community and travel to Summerside –

Mr. MacEwen: Did you actually read the bill? Everything you're saying is in it.

Mr. Gallant: Do I have the floor, Mr. Chair?

Mr. MacEwen: That's exactly (Indistinct) do –

Mr. Myers: Exactly what the bill says.

Mr. MacEwen: That's exactly what he's trying to do.

Chair: Hon. members.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: It's not against what you're doing.

Chair: Members, does the minister have a question?

Mr. Gallant: My question is –

Mr. Myers: Can I read the bill?

Mr. Gallant: Hon. member, like, the minister went across the province, had public meetings, but for me to ask my question I need to do a little preamble, here.

When this first came out 3.5 years ago, I had municipalities close to me that were afraid of this. The minister came up twice. We told people: this is not being forced on anybody. It's to get people to talk, and maybe come up with some ideas –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) across the Island.

Mr. Gallant: – that's why I ask: Why is our legislation so wrong?

Hon. member, like, these are your opinions. You're allowed to have your opinions just like I am.

But my question to you is: Why is our legislation so wrong and your amendments so much better?

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, member.

Believe it or not, I think we're on the same page. Really, the question isn't why the legislation is wrong, it's why it's incomplete. It's incomplete because it doesn't give a strong enough voice to unincorporated areas.

That's all I'm trying to fix. Those very things you're talking about; people coming together and listening to each other and being engaged in the process can happen. If you look at the flow chart that Mr. Pizio did, it's very clear, at least to my reading, where the unincorporated areas are, are not engaged enough at the beginning. They're engaged later on when you get into those more formal IRAC processes.

This is meant to complete the legislation, improve upon it, give them a voice right from the very beginning. So that it helps people get together. It helps them have those discussions about why do we want to amalgamate, what are we trying to accomplish, and I think it will help people buy in and form municipalities for all the right reasons.

Chair: Follow up question by the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to be perfectly clear, I am not insinuating that people – so nobody takes this out of context in the future – I know there's wonderful people in rural PEI. We have a gentleman on the floor here who's expressed his concerns last night. I'm not saying that they can't lead things. All I'm saying is maybe we need to look at this in a different lens.

Thank you.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Minister.

And did you want to speak to (Indistinct) –

Chair: Do you want to talk on this Mr. Pizio?

Dave Pizio: If I could.

Chair: Go ahead.

Dave Pizio: Mr. Chair, hon. members, I've been listening in the last while; and one of the things the hon. minister had said: What is the fear that the people have? Well, I just want to make you think about this.

You have people who write documents for you – a letter, whatever – and you sign it. Did you read it? Normally you'll glance through it when you build a faith in the person that creates the document for you before you sign it; but if you happen to look at that, and there's an error on that document, the next time you're going to go through it a lot more closely.

When this first came about, to bring about the MGA, a lot of consultation was requested from anybody that would like to provide in. A lot of documentation went in. I received some back. Some I didn't receive back. We were privileged with a meeting with the former minister. We did receive answers back on some things, and I actually seen some things that were corrected.

However, looking at the process – and I will say right up front, the words 'amalgamation' and 'annexation' are not dirty words. They are not. There's purpose in them. There's a separate meaning of 'amalgamation', there's a separate meaning of the word 'annexation,' but they're not in here.

What I'm saying is when we go and look at the MGA, the process now – and I'm only talking the process of establishment, restructure in the form of annexation or amalgamation – when you look at that and you see something and it creates a concern, I look at that the same if I had somebody writing a document for me and I found an error on it. Before I'm going to sign it again, I want to check. So it's a concern.

Is it saying that the legislation, the process is wrong? No. But does the process lend itself to full realization of all people that are going to be impacted by it? One of the supporting documents of the MGA is the Principles, Standards and Criteria Regulations. That document is exactly what the IRAC are supposed to consider in everything when they look at the proposal. I've gone through the Principles, Standards and Criteria Regulations. There is not one aspect in there that says taking into consideration the will of the people that are being affected.

It covers, it talks about what it's going to affect in the way of the tax rate. All of those things are in there; but there is absolutely nothing in there in regards to the will of the people or taking, if there happened to be a plebiscite – which unfortunately is not a word in the MGA, in the sections in regards to restructuring.

But another interesting fact in your Principles, Standards and Criteria Regulations, the supporting document, it breaks everything down in the form of annexation and amalgamation, or combinations thereof, what your IRAC is supposed to consider, all of these things depending if it's the establishment of a city, a town or rural. It talks about amalgamation/annexation as a supporting document, yet the ruling document has removed the word annexation/amalgamation from it.

What I'm saying is when I see something like that; it creates a concern to me. When all of this started, one of the first concerns that occurred to us in the small rural communities – and I did have a problem; I went to certain meetings that were put on, not by the government but others, and I raised the question: What is defined to be rural PEI? It was a very difficult thing. There was discussion, but there was no define.

So when this MGA first came out, as it was going through with the bridging drafts and everything else, we brought concerns. Some were looked at, but one of the concerns, the most glaring was there's a five-year transition. We're into that first part now. We've talked about land- use and emergency measures. Well, we're not going to look at that yet because we're not – have

to look at it till year five; but what we saw, the financial feasibility of a small, rural municipality, is going to be unsustainable when we have to meet all the regulations, so we raised that as a concern.

We are asking: Is there any way in the MGA through some means to give recognition of the small, rural municipalities? We understand. We want to see the governance of the municipality here in PEI. They want to see the same governance of all municipalities across Canada. One size does not fit all. The vibrancy of your small rural communities, if you amalgamate – I don't believe there should be a fear of loss of culture or anything else like that, but the problem is you are changing some of the essence of the small rural community by making larger of these.

So if that is going to occur, number one, explain to those people that are being affected how they are going to gain by it. Gain by it meaning if it's going to cost more money, but you are going to get this. I am going to be a bit of a broken record. I've asked the question: What are the services that everybody talks about that small rural communities are asking for in addition to what they have now?

What we're seeing here, is you go through that flow chart, if you go down to the bottom, the regulation:

261(1) is which the Lieutenant Governor in Council looks at in consideration of the proposal, or the recommendation that comes through, and it was strictly – and it points directly to your principles, standards and criteria. There's only one other point or spot in the MGA, in the section, to do with restructuring. It's what's considered by when the report is being done.

If a supporting document carries terminology and direction to be considered but I don't see it in the ruling document, it creates a concern for me; but what I see here, why I was willing to come when the member asked me, when I saw what his amendment was, is to give more voice to the people that are being affected through the process. That's what I'm seeing. I don't believe there's anything negative on it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Biggar: I will – thank you, Mr. Chair – make some comments if you don't mind, from my perspective as minister, because I get some questions from municipalities.

One specifically was: If we amalgamate, does that mean we have to take over all those roads as well? If they don't – if they have roads now that they do, or they have to be responsible for roads.

I'll just give you some examples. For instance, we have 5,375 kilometers of roads that have to be maintained across PEI. The ones that the municipalities maintain on their own are Charlottetown, Summerside, Borden, Georgetown and Souris. They do their roads.

Now recently, we have had Montague, Kensington and Alberton transfer their roads back to the province because they didn't have enough money to maintain them. It was stretching their resources too far within a municipality to be able to afford to keep doing that. I want to make that point.

I also want to share – and I want to clear up that question of: If we amalgamate, do we have to do the roads? No, absolutely not. So that's not going to be forced upon any kind of an amalgamation –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) part of the bill.

Ms. Biggar: – because I did have that question asked to me.

I want to share a story, though. Before I was minister, and I'm still the MLA for the area, but in Richmond they were incorporated as a CIC. My own community started out as a CIC; but in Richmond, which is one of my constituencies, they had a CIC for years. And it got to the point where they weren't growing in their community. They didn't have enough people to sit on whether – they have a rink. They have a rink in Richmond, but they had nobody that could sit on a committee for the rink. They had nobody that would fill those spaces that they need to continue to be vibrant and to grow as a community.

Now, they didn't take – so, at what point do

you, then, look outside that boundary? They did not for – and some communities, going back to what’s happening now in Three Rivers – when you go out there if it’s not received, you get in a conflict with your neighbours.

The people that are set – and I don’t want to get into the Three Rivers issue but I will commend those people from the fire districts that chose those people to sit on the committee. We have fire districts all across PEI. That is a mechanism which was used, those people were chosen, and it worked well. There was a process put together and that’s where the process is now.

I guess what I want to come back to, I know within my own communities there are discussions going on with incorporated areas and unincorporated areas because the incorporated areas are stretched with what they’re able to do to grow any larger. As we know, and I’m going to ask you, hon. member from Emerald –

Mr. Trivers: Rustico-Emerald.

Ms. Biggar: Rustico-Emerald, Emerald-Rustico. I know you –

Mr. Trivers: The place with all the clay roads.

Ms. Biggar: You have Hunter River. You have the rural municipality. Rustico. You have a lot of incorporated –

Mr. Trivers: Breadalbane.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

A lot of incorporated areas that are doing good things in their community. But, the outlying areas are also using what’s happening in those communities, right? As, you know, the stress goes on within the incorporated area to continue and continue to provide and come to the same, perhaps, demise, I’m going to say, as Richmond did, because they weren’t able to continue to move forward.

Would you – do you think the people from Hunter River, for instance – how many people are in Hunter River that –

Chair: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – make up your – yeah, that’s a question.

Chair: Hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Ms. Biggar: How many people in Hunter River make up that incorporated area that pay into all of those things that are happening within the development of Hunter River? You’ve got a new medical centre down there. Government is doing a lot of work, as you know. But, they are contributing. They contributed to the waste water and, the expansion down there.

How many people do you have there that are making those investments in that community that are also supporting the outlying communities. How many people?

Mr. Trivers: I don’t have the exact number off the top of my head –

Ms. Biggar: Is it like 200 people?

Mr. Trivers: It’s around, just a little less than 500, I think –

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: – somewhere around there.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: Less than 500.

Ms. Biggar: So, you know –

Mr. Trivers: That’s a great community. There are lots of great communities in my –

Ms. Biggar: They are, yeah.

Mr. Trivers: – district and across the Island.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: All of these communities are, many of them, I shouldn’t say all of them. Many of them are looking for ways to grow just like you talk about.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: And I mentioned one of the municipalities trying to do that.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Without having a process in place through legislation they weren't sure, exactly, how to go about doing it. The approach of, I think, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment and the department was, just say, you do a feasibility study, we'll give you some money.

This whole thing with engaging the fire districts. That's not a legislative process. That's not a regulated process. That's something that, for the Three Rivers they chose to do, but it's not something – every municipality has to come up with their own process right now. This bill, this whole idea is, if you're in North Rustico and let's say you want – there are people in South Rustico or just Rustico, is really the proper name that want to join; this gives a way to start off the proposal that's fully open and transparent. Where the people in Rustico don't have to worry that anything untoward is happening because they'll know, someone is going to knock on the door, there's a petition. If you're interested. Maybe you're interested in joining with the town of North Rustico and then, they can decide to sign it or not sign it.

They'll say, oh, what is the proposal? What are we going to get? What are the new services – our taxes going to go up? All of those things. But it's completely open and transparent. It uses a signed petition to do that. That's what the first clause is about.

That's what we ask in the *Municipal Government Act*. That's what the government has asked unincorporated areas to do. For example, in my district there's the area around Millvale, as you well know there were the power lines that went through. They've – they're considering incorporating, right –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – that way they have a bigger say –

Chair: Members.

Mr. Trivers: I just want to finish here.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, let your member finish.

Mr. Trivers: The thing is, under this legislation, they're asked to form a petition to get 30% of the people in the area to agree to incorporate. I'm saying: let's do the same thing if a municipality does it, or if the minister does it. Let's just be fair across the board. Let's be open and transparent.

I think a petition is a great way to engage people because you have to talk to them and say: now, why should I sign that petition again? And then you tell them. If it's of a good reason, like in Millvale, they may have some very good reasons and people will sign it. It's as simple as that.

Chair: Members –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Chair: – in the view of the time –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Chair: – the Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Ms. Biggar: Oh, okay.

Mr. Trivers: Oh, it's that time again, is it?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) next time.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, no, they're (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Chair –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall it carry? Carried.

Speaker: Hon. members. Order!

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No.2)*, I beg leave to report that the

committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I call Motion No. 41, to be called. To be read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Bell: Sorry about that. I will get that right one day.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): Motion No. 41, the hon. Leader of the Third Party moves seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, the following motion:

WHEREAS seven of the ten Canadian provinces and the federal parliament ban corporations and unions from making contributions to political parties and candidates;

AND WHEREAS seven of the ten Canadian provinces and the federal parliament place annual maximum limits on contributions to political parties and candidates;

AND WHEREAS the Prince Edward Island Election Expenses Act currently allows corporations, unions, and individuals to make unlimited contributions to political parties and candidates;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urges government to amend the Election Expenses Act, prior to the next general election, to remove the ability for corporations and unions to make contributions to political parties and candidates, and to set annual maximum limits for all contributions to political parties and candidates.

Speaker: I will 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 very much, Mr. Speaker.

The long saga of campaign reform finance on Prince Edward Island has been languishing under this Premier's leadership. We've been debating it for two years and we are no further ahead. Meanwhile, in that same time, both New Brunswick and British Columbia have changed their rules to best practice, which is banning corporate and union donations and establishing strict contribution limits.

Government has repeatedly changed its position on campaign finance, and also the process by which it suggests we deliberate upon it.

In 2015, campaign finance was mentioned in the White Paper on Democratic Renewal. On the 11th of May, 2016, the Premier made a statement promising donation limits and a ban of corporate and union donations in upcoming legislation, and I remember my joy on that day in this House.

In December 2016, I received a letter from the Premier backtracking on these previous promises and instructing staff to draft legislation for 2017; legislation on which we were invited to comment, but of course could not because it never materialized. In November 2017, in the throne speech, it dropped all of these previous commitments and promised instead a discussion document.

I invite the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition to get to work, collaboratively of course, on this issue and to commit to modernizing these rules before the next election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct) get to work.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Seven out of 10 provinces and the House of Commons limit political donations strictly to individuals and place limits on those annual donations. It is only PEI, Newfoundland, and Saskatchewan that are lagging behind.

It's past time we followed best practice. There is no legitimate reason why we

shouldn't do the same as the other provinces. There are good reasons why these other jurisdictions have taken the money out of politics. Money buys influence. Governments have always defended the interests of those that fund them best.

As the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters emphasized just the other day, Islanders own these seats. This is the people's place; not political parties, not businesses, not unions, not big donors in other provinces. Any political party that accepts corporate or union donations is saying that corporations or unions are more deserving of representation than people.

BC made a major overhaul to its election finance regime just last year, less than a year after a change in government. We should have one-and-a-half to two years before the next election time. There's no reason we can't get this done in that. Let's get to work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As it has been said earlier in this House today, this is a landscape that continues to evolve and it is apparent that jurisdictions across the country are taking account of that and that there are changes that are coming about.

The members who've spoken to this motion are correct. We've been on record. We've been alert to this, and we're also alert to how things are changing, and that, for one thing, may indeed involve more than political contributions to get at where the indirect contributions are coming into our political decision-making and our democratic process.

I know that not long after the District 11 by-election, the Leader of the Third Party introduced a group in the Legislature here and gave great credit to someone, I don't know who he is, for leading or helping or guiding that effort. I think it's the kind of thing that might indeed enter into the debate or the issues that are being raised here today in terms of who has the influence or where that's coming from, or whatever extent of obligation comes with that.

I believe that there were concerns, and I've heard it expressed in the public domain, about where the resources came from that were involved in the plebiscite on electoral reform. It's something we haven't had before on Prince Edward Island and I think Prince Edward Islanders, based on that experience, are giving further thought to what exactly enters into, what resources are available, what influences are at play, and what commitments or obligations come with that.

This is not one of those questions that is a simple linear development or that is a simple process of it coming Prince Edward Island's turn to hop on the bandwagon that's going by. I think we were all very interested and I have to say, we get more concerned, perhaps, as time goes on.

I read a piece in *The New York Times* this morning following on the appearance by Facebook CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, before Congress and then Senate the previous day, about the extent of information that the social media companies have about us and how that, perhaps, in our collectively naivety, has entered into, or become a resource or a tool and a very important lever in our democratic process, even to the point where there are, I think, a lot of Prince Edward Islanders who are following the debates in the United States, or even closer to home, who are concerned about external influences on our democratic process and on our electoral decisions, and then how we proceed from there to do the people's business; to set priorities, to adopt legislation, to build and grow communities.

I had an email from a very fine friend of mine, and a person that Prince Edward Islanders admire greatly, Dr. Regis Duffy, on the weekend. He was just coming back from the United States where he spends a few months. He was in Toronto and he wrote to say: Wade, I've read through your Budget. He said: It's refreshing to come back to a jurisdiction where people believe that the first role of government is the common good and I appreciate that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: He went on to say that: I believe you've addressed the right priorities, and that this is refreshing to be on

my way home and to see that, in Prince Edward Island, we still have that shared sense of community and democratic sensibility.

We should treasure that. I believe that's the spirit in which this motion is presented today. Regis went on to say: Democracy is a fragile plant. We are involved in a process that is evolutionary; a process that builds on achievements that have built up over time, a process where we inherit traditions and institutions, where we do work here today that stands on tall shoulders.

Often when I hear comments made about people who donate to the political process, who donate to candidates, who donate to political parties, and it happens on all sides of this House. I start out by appreciating that. People can do other things with their money. People can give to someone else, to other causes. I think, for starters, it is a dangerous point to assume that everybody who gives to the political process, who supports a candidate, who gives to a party, is somehow doing that for improper purposes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: It is further regrettable that much of what gets said about people who have been elected to this Chamber in prior generations, that much of what they've done is somehow to be doubted, or put into question, or made to have seem somehow elicit or for the wrong purpose. Indeed, this very institution – it's regrettable that there are some who will advance their cause today by denigrating what has been done in the past.

I think we, as leaders today, as elected people today, owe it to our community today to instill confidence, to believe that we are here for the right purpose – to believe that those of us who've been here before have been here with good intentions and that their supporters have been here and supported them for the right reasons – because they believe in our province, they believe in our betterment, they believe in public policy, and they believe in political parties.

We should not start out as if this is somehow something to be embarrassed about or ashamed of or to be somehow denounced or

defamed or denigrated because that's the way things have been done for 160 years in this province.

There is a course of history and it's one that continues to unfold and that's what I said earlier in response to questions. There is a course of history and we can learn and see what others are doing, but we don't have to pretend that we've been somehow doing the wrong thing, or in the wrong place, or here for the wrong reasons. There will continue to be political contributions in this province and we should welcome that and we should invite Islanders to do this and feel good and be generous in that.

Further, we should continue to build up our confidence in each other and in our democracy and in this Legislative Assembly and that's exactly how we have been approaching this question from the first time we tabled that bill and had discussions and had feedback from the official opposition.

We continue to move forward, and to learn, and to listen, and to see where that further point will be when we can have the support from Islanders who give financially, who support as activists, who attend meetings, who encourage candidates to come forward. None of us would be here in this Chamber without that support and without those supporters. So, let's speak well of them. Let's respect them. Let's encourage them. It would be great if there were a lot more because that is, indeed, the ultimate lifeblood and test of our democracy is if people are engaged and we should be happy about that. I can say from this side of the House that we are happy. We're happy to have supporters, we're proud of them, and they're proud of us and that's why we're a government and let that continue to be the case.

What we do going forward should always be respectful or who we are, of who supports us, of the fact that we have a democracy that is a fragile plant and it's our job, as the gardeners, to do our best to ensure that that plant is as healthy as possible.

There's another very important point that we should understand on the question of campaign financing and we should be very thankful for it. Because we live in a small province, it's not a great expensive thing to

conduct an election. Every period of this province's history, we've had an election every 42 months.

When you look at the fact that we don't have to rent helicopters – that was tried in the 1970s – didn't work out too well – that we can go home and sleep in our own bed at night, that someone might give us a cup of tea, that I suppose someone would tell us we should report, but in any event we can get a cup of tea somewhere along the way and with the evolving media, it may be becoming even more possible to connect with people – as long, of course, as we're alert to as what may be some of the downside of the evolving media, let me say.

But in any event, I compare ourselves – I compare our province to British Columbia or Ontario, to take two, where political parties can't conduct a campaign without one or more airplanes or whatever ways they have to get around from – to cover a lot of territory. We should, actually, be alert to this and it may even be that we take a look at what's already in place in terms of the spending on campaigns. Frankly, we should be glad to be in a place where we can afford to have elections.

I've talked to my colleagues – it is quite eye-opening, Mr. Speaker, so I want to say it this way – I've talked to my colleagues who are in elected life in the United States, people who are great, upstanding people and great leaders in their jurisdictions and we had dinner together – this is in the context of the New England governors and the Eastern Canadian premiers – and to be a governor in the United States today, you spend one to two days a week raising money.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: Now, for what purpose, I have to say, I'd have serious questions. Frankly, if I lived in the state of Pennsylvania or Ohio I think I'd move to Arizona to get rid of the robocalls, or the incessant advertising on all kinds of public media. But thankfully, Mr. Speaker, we start from a very sensible set of parameters where it doesn't cost a fortune, you don't have to have a whole machine. You have to get around, you have to have supporters, you have to have people who work with you, mainly, you've got to know your community

– which is a great thing to be in a place where we have 27 members in this Legislative Assembly and the main thing we have to do is be engaged, and in turn for Islanders to be engaged.

We're not trying to drain the ocean or dig ourselves out of some deep hole, we're talking about what adjustments can be made and made with confidence, and made with pride about how we got here ourselves in the first place, and about the people that made this Legislature a place that we'd be proud to come and serve, and speak well of each other, and, of course, have supporters who are going to make a contribution, who are going to work with us, who are going to believe in us, and who are going to expect that the democracy – the plant – that we're responsible for on Prince Edward Island is going to be well-tended.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to this motion?

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

Mr. MacKay: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

This House will be in recess until 7:00 this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: You may all be seated.

Government Motions

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Order No.1, Consideration of the Estimates, in Committee.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

Permission to take a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Hon. members, we're on page 26 and we are under the second section: Marine Fisheries, Agrifood, Seafood and Regulatory Services. We'll wait until our stranger gets settled here at the table and we'll move on to questions.

Mr. Henderson: It's the third day. She's not a stranger anymore.

Chair: Would you please introduce yourself and your title for the record?

Mary Kinsman Director: Mary Kinsman, Director of Corporate Services, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Chair: Welcome back.

Mr. Henderson: I have a few points I want to clarify for questions –

Chair: Okay, sure.

The minister is going to make a few clarifications.

Minister, you have the floor.

Mr. Henderson: There were a few questions that we didn't have answers for yesterday regarding some of the issues around AgriInsurance, the number of people that were involved in AgriStability and AgriInvest. So I want to, for the record, read

in that we had 663 clients for AgriInsurance last year. That represented about 83% of the total acreage of Prince Edward Island. For AgriStability, we had 424 people registered under that program; and under AgriInvest, 554.

The other question that was raised – just to clarify a little bit, I wasn't quite totally certain – the Member from Rustico-Emerald mentioned about our farm counseling program that's administered by the federation of agriculture. We had our numbers for that, but I wasn't totally certain whether farm workers were eligible. They are not. It's for farmers and their families, so husband, wife, sons, daughters, those kinds of things.

The way the program basically works is that the federation of agriculture has a number of psychologists on the retainer, and they have a phone number and the farmer just automatically would call that and make the appointments on their own, and they get six free sessions from federation of agriculture members. If there's more than that, then they're responsible for continuing on with that. If they're non-members of the federation of agriculture, they have to pay for 50% of the six.

Hopefully that maybe clarifies a little bit more for the Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, just like other sections I'm going to read the section first, and then I'll open the floor for questions.

Agrifood and Seafood Services

“Appropriations provided for the effective delivery of information, and product and market development programs for both the agriculture and fisheries industries.”
Administration: 6,400. Equipment: 2,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 64,000. Professional Services: 5,400. Salaries: 454,600. Travel and Training: 43,300. Grants: 1,805,900.

Total Agrifood and Seafood Services: 2,382,100.

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

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

If I could have a little bit of latitude here on something, because this didn't come to my attention until –

Mr. Myers: A little latitude.

Mr. Fox: – last night, and I – it has to do with a section that we dealt with yesterday. It has simply to do with agriculture industry development. I'm wondering if I can – would you allow me, Chair, to go back to that, it's just a general question on that?

Chair: Yes. Which section?

Mr. Fox: Agriculture Industry Development. If I understand that section right, we're talking about the welfare and the development of the industry and how the agriculture deals with that.

In the last 24 hours, I've had a lot of calls and concerns about the placement of a rotary, a roundabout, out in the Newton Road and the Scales Pond Road, and the farmers are worried that with the placement of this roundabout out there that it'll hamper the industry in the movement of their large equipment in that area. We're talking right in the centre of the potato belt.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: That's the main road that's used for a lot of oversize harvesters and six-row windrowers and so on. Maybe if we could have the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy interject in this, too, the question is: Is there any – that roundabout – is there any way that we could postpone that roundabout or have discussions with the department of agriculture and the department of transportation to delay that build until we thoroughly have consultation, a lot of consultation, with the farmers in that area?

Personally, I don't think that's the place for a roundabout, and I'm wondering if the two ministers could comment on that or –

Mr. Henderson: Well, the first point I'm going to make before maybe the minister of

transportation, I'm certainly understanding of this type of issue because I have a roundabout at the O'Leary Corner and I know in that particular case the department actually designed it in a way that the six-row planters and all those things can get through. Actually, it's worked out quite well.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: I would be aware that they do have designs that can fulfill that obligation. We also have at the O'Leary Corner the issue around windmills getting through. You know, so those are –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. Henderson: – other issues, but the design was able to do that.

Now, I don't know – I'm not familiar with the proposal for that particular roundabout, but I would argue as minister of agriculture, I would hope the department of transportation understands the complexities of larger equipment and making sure that it's designed to meet those needs, especially, in a big agricultural area.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair, and member from Borden-Carleton.

Certainly, that area, as you are aware had a lot of tragedies at that particular corner. We did do a lot of safety measures there, which has made a difference. However, we do not want to take a chance that another tragedy may happen. So, we have, certainly, planned, for this season under our infrastructure program and that was submitted to Ottawa as part of that, to look at the roundabout there.

In planning those, as you say, that is – when we do rural areas or even in the city – we don't do the planning for the city, but in those areas that require that much of a leverage to go around those areas; it is a consideration that is taken into account in the planning.

There will be a public information meeting that would take place before anything starts on that construction with the community, if

there's – with the farming community, if that's a concern we certainly will take it into account in any kind of a planning process.

In terms of postponing it, I guess, the concern would be, if we postpone it and there's a fatality there as a result of it, then it comes back to, well, you should have put that in this year. But we will take that into account in working with the farming community.

If anyone has a particular question, we are open to having them contact our Chief Engineer Steve Yeo, would be happy to get together with a group and listen to that, as well.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Just a comment, and I understand totally what you're saying. I had to go out there years ago for accidents. I understand what you're talking about.

One thing I've heard from the community in that area, the people that reside right there, they've noticed a big difference since the department installed the stop signs with the flashing lights. It was a big plus. Also, there was a little bit of sight-line trimming. Then, they also installed overhead lights for lighting. My understanding is the department did an excellent job on that.

If we're going to have severe consultations on that, that would be great, too.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, hon. member. We'll now go back to the section that was just read.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

As you may have heard minister, there's a large oyster development planned for Rustico Bay, in my district. It's about 20,000 oyster cages. As well, there's a building permit, it's really it's a permit to expand a facility right on the shore there on Grand Pere Point Road.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: One of the key issues the community has is they've been told that the 20,000 oyster cages should not negatively impact the bay. They're going around a 220 acre lease, is what I understand. Any of the scientific research I have found says that, indeed, they probably should be good for the water.

The residents had the causeway put in there and they feel it negatively impacted the bay and they want to be very sure that the scientific research has been done for this and that there won't be a negative impact.

I was wondering if you could help get that information because, I believe, it does exist. I've heard it exists. From the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, as the provincial minister, help liaison with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to get that information about how oyster cages impact bays. In particular, if they have one study they did for Rustico Bay, if you could look into that.

Mr. Henderson: Okay, I'll just make a few comments on this. I'm familiar with the situation that you're talking about.

The very first issue is, is this is a conversion of mussel leases to oyster leases, okay?

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. Henderson: Right off the bat, as far as navigational issues and things of that nature, nothing really would change. The difference is, is that the off-bottom oyster leases tend to be a little more, a little higher up in the water than a line of buoys. You still can't sail over buoys versus oyster cages.

The other issue is, in general terms, you are looking at a species, whether it's oysters or mussels that are called filter feeders. They filter nutrients out of the water that would probably be detrimental to, you know – nitrates and things of that nature. More of them are better for the ecological system of the water in general terms. Like I say, there may be issues around navigation, that's a fair argument, but in this case you're converting mussels to oysters, so it's just a different species.

The issue that you're ultimately dealing with there, there really is no issue from a – our departmental perspective. The issue is really

more the communities, land and environment around a building permit to change the structure of a building, okay?

Mr. Trivers: I know about that –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah –

Mr. Trivers: – we don't have to get into that.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. So, I'm not sure, in general terms, what studies you'd be referring to that would say there would be any difference because, like I say, oysters, I mean, in fact, there's place, I think in New York Harbor, they're actually putting millions and millions of oysters in the harbour to clean the harbour up. It's a good thing from that perspective.

Mr. Trivers: This is what they've been told already. Pretty much that exact same speech you gave, I think is what they were told: don't worry, oysters are good, they filter the water. What they would like to see is the scientific and evidence that backs that up. What studies have been done? How do they know that 20,000 cages is not going to negatively impact the bay? Just to be sure. It's an issue of trust to a certain extent, I would say. I can't blame them because the causeway had a big negative impact.

I would guess that this sort of scientific information and studies must be available. I'm sure the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has done it. Can you help –

Mr. Henderson: Well –

Mr. Trivers: – them get that –

Mr. Henderson: – I guess the bottom line – yeah, I mean, I'll talk to my department, but I mean the people in my department, whether it's the Neil MacNairs or Bob, these are science-based individuals to begin with. It's like saying that there's oxygen in the air. It is automatically assumed that. But, I'll see what my department can find out to see what they can do to reassure any particular residents that this is not harmful.

I'm not aware of a specific survey or study that said that they've reviewed that particular location.

Certainly, comparing a causeway to changing species from oysters to mussels or mussels to oysters, there would be a divergence of issues there, would have impact. I get that, but, trying to compare the two just wouldn't be even plausible.

Mr. Trivers: I mean I think I understand that, but it's an issue of what the residents believe and the information they want. It's an issue of marketing, really for the oysters in general. I mean that's what this section deals with, right, delivery of information and product and market development programs.

I know that there are other places where people have said, you know, I don't think we really want those tens of thousands of oysters cages going in the bay. It's a matter of making sure they have the information in a solid format, scientific evidence that shows that it's not bad. Because if it's not bad then those studies must exist, and I want to go back to my residents and say; look, your fears are unfounded. The causeway is a different thing. Here is the scientific study that backs it up. You don't have to take somebody's word for it in a public meeting who is going to benefit from the development. This is empirical evidence from somebody who has done a study unbiased.

Mr. Henderson: Ultimately, what you're – well, I'll see what I can find out on that – but the issue that we are dealing with, and it's an issue of all agriculture, all aquaculture, is that it's a kind of theory of not-in-my-backyard syndrome.

The issue ultimately abounds back to, there are issues that are very valid about recreational boating, recreational activities and sharing water from an aquacultural perspective and that. That I get.

There are issues about landscapes and the views, the viewscapes, I guess, is the better term. That's a valid issue. People can say that they, you know, don't like the look of them.

Like I say, the river in front of my house is full of off-bottom oyster cages. I don't mind seeing that because I see fishermen coming there all the time. They're checking; they're working on it; it's kind of interesting. Every now and then there are few oysters wind up

on my doorstep. Those are the types of things that make a good relationship between your neighbours and people trying to make a living, right?

There are some people that just don't appreciate that. As a department and with our input into the leasing with the DFO, we are trying to work out solutions for some of these situations and I'd mentioned here yesterday about the issue at Mill River, where a very similar situation exists, and we are looking at ways that we can identify an area that isn't impeding upon recreational boating as much, isn't working towards the viewscape or not as many cottage and landowners with homes are impacted; and seeing if fishers would be willing to swap their leases. So, we could move them to another spot where they're going with an off-bottom cultured system and take where they are doing bottom now and making that public so that there won't be any off-bottom work there.

We're trying to come up with some solutions like that. The Rustico Bay issue is almost the same kind of a scenario. The biggest difference with Rustico Bay is that we're talking an existing lease and that's – it's still not going to change anything than what's already there and it's a little bit – who was there first and the viewpoint. But I will try to see what we can find to see as far as to get any imperial evidence that we can find that's science-based that I can get you on that particular subject about oysters and mussels and their impacts on the waterscape and the quality of water, that part I get.

But, I don't really think that's your issue that your residents are having. It's another thing that they're throwing out to say that that's another issue; we just want information on. But I don't mean to be flippant about it, but it's like saying there's oxygen in the air. It's there, it's a good thing, but I'll see what I can find.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

The residents in that area fully appreciate and understand the value of aquaculture to the economy and industry and this is not a case of 'not in my backyard' for the very

most part, it's a matter of communication, it's a matter of reassuring residents that the I's are dotted, the T's are crossed. Yes, there may be some people who are worried about the view of the bay, but those are in the minority in my opinion.

That's why I'm going to have another public consultation, so we can make sure we get all these issues out and what I'm looking for is to engage the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and hopefully you can help me do that as the provincial minister, so that we can make sure that we have the experts on hand – the unbiased – to talk about all the different issues.

Mr. Henderson: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: So, I do appreciate that and thank you for committing to that here today.

Mr. Henderson: I'll even go a little step further and I'll offer you this: If you're having a public consultation – that you have a meeting and you want somebody from my department involved with the shell fishery that would be a bit more of what I would deem to be an expert within our department, I would offer them to go and attend that meeting and answer any questions, as it pertains to the aquaculture industry.

I can't get into issues of recreational boating and that type of usage. That's not our mandate. Our mandate is making sure that we have aquaculture as an industry in this province and that we're doing safe, valuable, high quality food products that we can sell. So, I'm just saying – I just want to make that a bit clearer that – but I can give you that and I put a lot of faith in some of my staff that are involved in that.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

I met with a couple of oyster grower lease guys there back in the fall. One thing they were concerned about is with the climate change and the warming of inland waters coming off of rivers and little ponds up in – the area specifically they're talking about is up in the Bedeque Bay area, that they're

finding the water right as it comes into the main part of the bay; of course it's warming up because the waters coming off the ground are warmer, right?

Mr. Henderson: Yes.

Mr. Fox: And what they're asking is: Why is it seem like nobody's listening to them when they want to move their off –

Mr. Henderson: Off-bottom leases.

Mr. Fox: – off-bottom leases out farther. What they've told me is that, basically, they're falling on deaf ears when they talk to the DFO and the department.

Can you comment on that or why we're not dealing with that?

Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Chair: Great question –

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Chair: – but it's under aquaculture, I've been advised, so if you could just –

Mr. Fox: Aren't we in aquaculture?

Chair: No. We're in – that's on the next page. So, in the middle section of the next page.

Mr. Henderson: We're in regulatory services at the moment.

Mr. Fox: I can wait. No problem.

Chair: Thank you. You're very understanding.

Shall that section carry? Carried.

Agriculture Regulatory Services

“Appropriations provided for the enforcement of legislation and the operation of services associated with animal health and welfare and plant health.”
Administration: 11,800. Equipment: 3,800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 284,400. Professional Services: 8,800. Salaries:

610,500. Travel and Training: 107,200. Grants: 93,300.

Total Agriculture Regulatory Services: 1,119,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services

“Appropriations provided for the operation of services associated with the seafood buying and processing as prescribed by *The Fisheries Act* and *The Fisheries Inspection Act*. This section also supports the commercial fishing industry through strategic research, science and advocacy and industry development of both fisheries and aquaculture, through the Federal/Provincial Atlantic Fisheries Fund.” Administration: 5,600. Equipment: 300. Materials, Supplies and Services: 15,500. Professional Services: 6,000. Salaries: 495,700. Travel and Training: 46,100. Grants: 2,295,000.

Total Marine Fisheries and Regulatory Services: 2,864,200.

Total Marine Fisheries, Agrifood, Seafood and Regulatory Services: 6,366,100.

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

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

So, another question; I've had some people ask me whether we're doing any checks on invasive species coming into PEI waters from cruise ships and other cargo ships. Are we doing any checks on that? I know if I go – I hate bringing this up, actually – when I go from the cottage in New Brunswick and if I want to take the boat over to service in Maine, I have to make sure the hull is clean so that there's no invasive species on the boat. I've got no problem with that. I'm wondering after they raised the question with me is: Are we checking any of these hulls of other ships coming into PEI waters to do with invasive species on the hulls of cruise ships or that kind of stuff?

Mr. Henderson: I would say generally: not specifically, but we do – once again, if there's a complaint comes in, we follow up on those complaints, but there are protocols that all of the industry – like you just said

about when you transfer a boat from one lake to another that you're supposed to clean things up, so we're doing those same types of promotions here on Prince Edward Island.

As far as our staff, we are doing research around the green crab, as an example. It's already an invasive species that's here, so we're continually trying to monitor it and trying to come up with some solutions and there's researchers at UPEI that are doing some research around that, but we do have a staff that do inspections on a lot of our seafood plants, on any complaints that we do tend to have on that. But it's like the RCMP or whatever, it's just kind of a random thing that they would do and then if they had a complaint, they would investigate that particular complaint.

Mr. Fox: So –

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden –

Mr. Henderson: But they're not supposed to discharge bilge water and all those things –

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. Henderson: You know when you're in port and if they want to put any product into the waste treatment plant, they can do all of that, but there are the regular protocols, but unless we knew somebody was doing something, we wouldn't specifically be sitting on the dock waiting to see that, I guess.

Mr. Fox: My question with that is: My understanding is that DFO only around PEI, they hang a few plates in the water to check for invasive species.

Mr. Henderson: Yes.

Mr. Fox: Do we think the DFO's doing a good enough job, or that they should be doing more checking?

Mr. Henderson: Well, I guess if we said we've got green crab here now, which we never had before, so that would be an example. But I think the other one you've seen up in the Great Lakes, zebra mussels was an example, but we haven't seen indications of that here. We've got the striped bass that are out – these are all

invasive species that are around, but it's water. It could have happened over in New Brunswick or another location and they eventually swim and spread here, so I would say they could always do better, but it's a big area, it's a big land mass to catch every situation.

I'll give you, though, the example of things that we do hear of, like the issues around oysters, which is a good – from the MSX disease that's in the oyster industry or in locations in say Cape Breton, and we've caught situations where people get tipped that there's somebody fishing oysters from PEI in say Nova Scotia first thing, there's somebody waiting for them at the bridge and sending them back. There are things like that, but to say that you could guarantee 100% compliance in every situation, hard to guarantee, I guess. We do monitor and watch it. We are generally complaint-driven industry in that regard.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: No, I'm done.

Chair: You're good?

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, how is divvied up between fisheries and aquaculture?

Mr. Henderson: The Atlantic Fisheries Fund, there isn't a divvy up –

Mr. MacEwen: No.

Mr. Henderson: – it's just we have an agreement. We have –

Mr. MacEwen: I'm curious how it's going, though.

Mr. Henderson: Oh, well, we've had some applications in already, so obviously the PEI Fishermen's Association is one of our applications, which is going to improve storage handling facilities on boats, so that's one situation.

We do have a couple of industry, in the aquaculture industry that has applications in. I think there are approvals. We've done a couple of approvals so far. It's an application-driven. We've made the announcement. We've told the industry that these programs are out there. We're just waiting for applications in.

I don't think there's a specific to say that we're already guaranteeing that a set percentage goes to the aquaculture to see if a set goes to finfish or what have you. It's about trying to promote the fishery and to try to improve the quality and improve viability of all of those as a fishery.

We are ahead of the game comparable to most jurisdictions.

Premier MacLauchlan: If I might make a further comment on –

Chair: Sure.

Premier MacLauchlan: – this point about the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. It was a great example of how Prince Edward Island, by an advantage of scale, and because we're well organized actually got the hop on ahead of the other provinces. The fishermen's association, great example, if you go to Nova Scotia I think there are about 26 outfits that would have to come together to do something province-wide. The same is true in shellfish or aquaculture sector.

To date, or at least in the first couple of months of the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, the other provinces were looking at PEI wondering how we got, kind of, the move on so fast. It's something we see in many areas, but it was clear in this one.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

That's great. It's one of our strengths that we can do that.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: The lobster buyers. Do you have any handouts there on the number of licences applied for or given out this year?

Mr. Henderson: I'm told it's very close to last year. I think it might be down one or two? I don't have a specific handout myself. Maybe Mary has something here, but it's not significant the changes.

I had a good discussion with Bob Creed on the subject. Like I say, I think it's down one or two. There's one that we expect an application will come in. I think the deadline might have been right about now. I'm just not totally certain.

Mr. MacEwen: What's the department's thought on that? Are you happy with that number? Do you find any benefit when that number increases or are you just –

Mr. Henderson: The more would mean that there's a likelihood of more competition so that would be a positive thing. It shows that there's a demand and there's a number of different companies out there that are demand – want access to the resource. It allows us the ability to make sure that we have a sense on who's out there.

Like I say, the numbers haven't changed much. I just don't have the specific number on it here, but it might be down one from last year. That's about it.

Mr. MacEwen: Could you, maybe, just bring back the last five years and the numbers?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. We can get you that.

Mr. MacEwen: Perfect.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted a couple of questions on, you were talking about studies that you do in collaboration with UPEI and green crabs and the DFO, as well.

I'm wondering if you have the most recent, numbers on herring stocks in the Gulf?

Mr. Henderson: They have been down. That would be more of a DFO issue –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Henderson: – in knowing those numbers. We might be able to round up something here.

Herring stocks have declined. I don't know if we've gotten the exact quota yet on herring numbers but we do expect it to be, probably, less than what is was just based on that.

To say why the herring stocks are down, I don't know if anybody's got a definitive answer on that. We could say there are more seals, or there's more tuna, or things of that nature. It may be overfishing in other jurisdictions, it may be climate change related. I don't know if there would be a specific answer to that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Probably, perhaps –

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – a bit of all of them. One of the problems with that is that it – Island fishers, particularly lobster fishers, are going, you know, that's the most common bait used.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: If they can't catch that locally, for free, if you like, they're going to have to buy their bait elsewhere and that could be quite costly.

Is there any, sort of, provision anywhere in your budget to help fishers out, who may have to shell out a lot of money for bait for lobster?

Mr. Henderson: Not specifically. We have never done that in the past.

I will add one thing to the comment. Remember I mentioned there, yesterday, we had some persons who were doing their masters arrangement on the specific issue around irrigation in that particular case.

We actually have the very same situation happening in this section of our department where there is one of our staff people is doing an issue on alternate bait options. I'm not saying they're trying – it to be land-based product. They're trying different things to see what impacts that that might have on the catch-ability of lobsters with

that particular bait. I'd say there is some basic research being done on those options. I think that's only prudent.

I would say, there are always fishermen are even trying different things to see what might work. They don't try a lot of it, but to see if it might catch a – issues around, you've seen them put like male crabs, crushing them and putting them in their bait bags. You've seen mackerel. Sometimes, it's mackerel; fresh mackerel, salted mackerel. They try all the different options they can do.

You are, also, seeing fishers that are storing a fair amount of bait; catching it in the off-season, storing it through the winter. There are a lot of different avenues that fishermen do to try to lower their costs.

Specifically, we probably wouldn't be looking at a subsidization of bait unless we get into, you know, extraordinary circumstances, I guess, would be my point, yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks. That's a very full answer, minister.

The tuna stocks, I mean, that's a pretty contentious issue at the moment. There are some very differing views as to whether they're healthy or whether they're in serious trouble.

What's your opinion on that and do you have any updates on figures or studies by DFO or ICAP or anybody else at this point?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah. I guess the first issue on the tuna is, is that the tuna quota has been increased for the coming year.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. Henderson: We have to, you know, as province of PEI, we have to put some stock in the science that the DFO and the international, what's it called? Tuna federation? I'm not sure what ICAP exactly equals. There's an acronym.

In general terms, we have a large tuna fleet incomparable to other parts of Canada, like as the proportion of PEI. The challenge we've had –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – is that it's –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – because we have so –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: – many tuna fishers, we're dividing the amount that we get assigned up among a lot of fishers. In some cases, it's just a few pounds more per boat, which sometimes doesn't always make it viable.

We have the very same issue with the halibut quota –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's my next question.

Mr. Henderson: Oh, okay. Identically, the same types of issues. I guess we've been told that the halibut quota is going to stay the same as last year. As far as the tuna quota, it has been increased.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'll stay with tuna for a little bit because one of the solutions, if you like, to the potential problem with the tuna stocks, has been catch and release.

I'm wondering if you have any statistics on how successful that is, what the survival rate of the fish that are caught and released is, and if – how that's impacting stocks?

Mr. Henderson: On the catch and release, they are assigned a certain portion of that quota. They have a specific quota that's assigned for that even though the tuna is never caught, it's a part of an assumption that there's a certain amount that may not survive. We're taking that into account in the divvying up of the tuna stocks.

Personally, I think it's an opportunity from a development perspective, as far as tourists coming here. It's extremely popular. Once again, just as long as it's managed and comparable to the overall stocks of tuna, this is an interesting way to try to create opportunity for our fishers, yet not impact the stocks.

How many survive afterwards? Like I say, that's all part of a calculation that's been

done as far as the quota. I'll assume that that's accurate.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay –

Mr. LaVie: It's 7%.

Mr. Henderson: It's 7%, is it?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: You mentioned halibut a minute ago. That's an even more complicated or punitive thing when it comes to spreading –

Mr. Henderson: Ah, yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – a small pot across hundreds of fishers –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – I mean it's a couple of fish each and in some places –

Mr. Henderson: Well, the issue there is the way that the quota is measured. So, you find a person catching a fish, if he's 25 lbs over he's – the whole quota is over and he's charged and fined.

I had some neighbours that got caught in that very same situation. Totally, not by design –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Innocently.

Mr. Henderson: – they went out, in good faith, they fished the product, and, you know, in some provinces they calculate if you went over your quota by whatever the amount, say, it was 250 lbs for the province, that that comes off your quota next year. Prince Edward Island, that's not the case.

We've had some –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – it's a couple of fish each and in some places –

Mr. Henderson: Well, the issue there is the way that the quota is measured, and so you find a person catching fish – if he's 25 pounds over, the whole quota is over and he's charged and fined. I had some neighbours that got caught in that very same situation; totally not by design.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Innocent (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: They went out in good faith, fished the product.

In some provinces, they calculate if you went over your quota by whatever the amount, say it was 250 pounds for the province, that that comes off your quota next year. In Prince Edward Island, that's not the case and we've had some brief discussions with the industry on that to see if there are some solutions that we can have to bring that to the federal government's attention.

At the moment, they're not willing to change the process as it stands today, but I think that's something we need to work on, that we can have – not be putting fishers in a situation where they're having to be over quota and then have to deal with fines.

I know one of my neighbours that fishes, he says: I don't even know if it's worth going out there (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I've heard that.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, you know? It's just too risky to ruin my reputation. I think that's something, hopefully DFO will look at making that the same as some of the other provinces that do – and I say, it's fair, in my opinion, by taking it off the following year.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

I think I heard you say that in some provinces they do that. If you over catch this year, you take it off next year.

Mr. Henderson: Off of next year's quota.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So, does that mean it's under provincial legislation and regulation?

Mr. Henderson: No, it's just the way DFO has done it. I'm trying to get a better handle on that myself, but the way they allocate it here and I think that was sort of an agreement by the fishers themselves originally on how they divvy that up and got to maybe be able to rethink that and relook at it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, I wasn't actually aware. If that's the process they use in other provinces, we should absolutely be lobbying

for that here for fairness for the halibut fishers, for sure.

Mr. LaVie: Goes back to history.

Mr. Henderson: That's right.

At some point in time I guess it was decided that's the way PEI wanted it done, and ever who the minister of that day was agreed to that. Now, it doesn't work and now we've got to change it back. So yeah, the Member from Souris-Elmira probably (Indistinct) –

Mr. LaVie: If you want, I can sit in your chair (Indistinct)

Chair: Leader of the Third Party, do you have any more questions?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I have one more question, and the issue of history dictating the form and the size and the nature of the halibut fishery, and that's why we have the quota we do, because of stark catches and why we have such a tiny percentage of the Atlantic quota.

Is there any sense if there's going to be movement on that where Quebec and Newfoundland, the ones that have the line share, are going to be –

Mr. Henderson: Not for this year.

That's the indication I've had, not for this year, but it's the same argument we use on tuna which other provinces use on other species; the shrimp and things of that nature. These allocations get distributed over a period of time. It gets hard to sometimes change that back. I'm sure it's no different for us and other species that we might not want to lose. I think there's an issue around red fish quota. We have a historical use of that, and it's still somewhat assigned here. It's been gone somewhere else; trying it get it back becomes a challenge.

It's a fundamental big issue, but the way DFO seems to operate is it's a lot based on history and it's sometimes a challenge to change that quickly anyway.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I know that fights go on with quota all the time, you know, because it's that whole (Indistinct) -

Mr. Henderson: You could write books on that, I think if you take the history of fishing allocations (Indistinct) resources –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But with halibut, it's just so disproportionate. I can't remember what percentage we're at. It's like the tiniest – (Indistinct) or something like that.

Mr. Henderson: Tuna is identical. The snow crab would be another one that's the opposite.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, right.

Mr. LaVie: You fellows gave the snow crab away.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, right. We don't process it here on the Island. I know that because (Indistinct)

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Leader of the Third Party, you finished?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I am finished.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira, you have the floor.

Mr. LaVie: Oh (Indistinct)

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: No, no. I was going to tell you how to fix it.

How many tuna licenses do we have?

Mr. Henderson: We just had that number out here a second ago. Mary will look that up.

Mr. LaVie: That's Prince Edward Island, right?

Mr. Henderson: 360 tuna licenses of 770 for Canada.

Mr. LaVie: 360?

Mr. Henderson: 360 of 777, just to stand corrected.

Mr. LaVie: 360? What's Nova Scotia at? Oh, you don't know.

Mr. Henderson: Oh, I don't know that.

Mr. LaVie: You don't know? It's less than us.

Mr. Henderson: But, you're seeing that we have –

Mr. LaVie: So, do you know –

Mr. Henderson: – over half of the tuna licenses –

Mr. LaVie: – and the least quota.

Mr. Henderson: And the least amount of quota.

Mr. LaVie: So, you as provincial minister, I want you to write a letter to the federal minister to let him know that we want more quota here on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Henderson: I believe we have those letters. I think the previous minister has letters on file. There's probably a litany of letters that have been out there on that.

Mr. LaVie: It doesn't hurt to keep writing.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, no, and it's the same issue with halibut. We've been continually trying to make sure that we're making sure that they're aware of it. I know they're aware of it. I guess, it's just for whatever reasons the minister in question hasn't made that decision to reallocate that. But, I'm sure there's massive political overtones in taking from one and giving to another, which we've seen happen to us in past too.

Mr. LaVie: Sure.

Minister, can you do another favour for the fishermen? When we're doing transfers of boats and transfers of licenses, can you write to the minister – it's a real hassle when they want to transfer a boat into a licensed holder to go fishing and it's a heavy process to do.

I know when Newfoundland comes over here to tuna fish in our waters; their transfer

is just bang, bang, bang. They're fishing every day. But, our fishermen are finding it very difficult to do transfers with the federals. Have you had that discussion (Indistinct) –

Mr. Henderson: Can you clarify that a bit more? You're talking about transfer from, I'll say, Colin to –

Mr. LaVie: Sidney.

Mr. Henderson: – another fisher right next to you?

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Mr. Henderson: Sidney, okay, yeah.

Chair: If you want to use their proper names –

Mr. Henderson: Well, I'm just saying they're fictional names of transferring one to another.

Chair: Yes, yes.

Mr. Henderson: Fisher –

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Chair: Fictional.

Mr. Henderson: – not MLAs.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, not MLAs, fishers.

So, have that discussion with the PEI Fishermen's Association when you're talking with them.

Mr. Henderson: Okay.

Mr. LaVie: You should go through the PEI Fishermen's Association, right? I don't expect you to – just because I'm saying it, I don't expect you to do it.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, no. Exactly.

Mr. LaVie: You should have that discussion with the PEI fishers.

Mr. Henderson: I will add that to my list.

Mr. LaVie: Fishermen's association.

Mr. Henderson: We meet periodically with the fishermen's association. I'd be happy to get their feedback on why that's more complicated (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, and you're just going to show your support for them.

On the halibut, like the Green Party brought up, that goes back – that's all based on history and it's old history. This history is back in the 1970s and the 1960s, right? When everybody was catching halibut, we were fishing cod, hake, flounder, black bass – so we didn't get that history.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, that's exactly it.

Mr. LaVie: So have your discussion with your PEIFA – it was probably discussed before – but have your discussion with them, to talk to the federal minister and tell him that he's got old data and this is 2018, and we want a fair fishery. We want our fishers fishing.

Fishermen don't want to be sitting home on unemployment. They want to fish.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: We can see that they're fishing for nothing now when they go with this halibut, right? So, it's costing them so much to go. We want to make it worth their while to go fishing. So, have that discussion with the PEIFA.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, I know we've had that discussion with them and we'll continue to keep bringing that up to their attention to make sure that we can get some sense of fairness to those two particular fisheries anyway.

Chair: You good?

Mr. LaVie: That's good, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Aquaculture and PEI Analytical Laboratories

Aquaculture

“Appropriations provided to manage and support the sustainable development of both

the aquaculture industry and the estuarial shellfish fisheries.” Administration: 15,600. Equipment: 11,300. Materials, Supplies and Services: 62,700. Professional Services: 13,100. Salaries: 656,300. Travel and Training: 65,700. Grants: 793,100.

Total Aquaculture: 1,617,800.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I just want to check; this would be the part of the Budget where I would ask about the halibut fishery in Victoria by the Sea?

Mr. Henderson: This is aquaculture here, but am I on the right section?

Mary Kinsman Director: Yeah, we passed it but (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: Oh, you’re going back, okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, this is aquaculture, right?

Mr. Henderson: This is aquaculture here, but –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The halibut –

Mary Kinsman Director: He’s thinking the plant (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The halibut –

Mr. Henderson: Oh, the halibut plant?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes. Sorry, I think I said halibut fishery, not halibut plant. I’m sorry.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, the inshore – onshore, rather, onshore.

Chair: Just a moment.

Hon. members, if we could just keep it down a bit. I’m having difficulty hearing the person posing the question.

Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I know there was a big expansion there just a couple of years ago and I’m just wondering how things are going. What’s the update on that?

Mr. Henderson: I haven’t had the opportunity to actually visit that site, yet. I’ve had the opportunity to visit some of our other finfish locations across the province. Obviously, just became minister in January, it’s been a pretty steep learning curve. I’m really looking forward actually to get out and see it.

I’m told that the technology, things of that nature, are working well. It’s, as far as getting it to a level, certain levels of profitability that they’re looking for, probably not there yet. It’s evolving to that nature. I think the science is sound. The work is going on quite well. That’s my understanding, but I haven’t actually seen the site. I’m told it’s an impressive site.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It is.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) get there.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It’s a great facility.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Chair, I meant to ask this question in the previous section, may I?

Chair: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It was to do –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – with the increase in grants, which is considerable. It’s gone from less than half a million up to over \$2 million in the grants.

Is there an explanation for that? Can you give us a breakdown (Indistinct)

Mr. Henderson: That’s it. That’s the Atlantic Fisheries Fund.

That's our percentage of the Atlantic Fisheries Fund has gone into that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So, that did not exist in previous years then?

Mr. Henderson: Well, it existed in the last part of this year; this last fiscal year.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Mr. Henderson: Now it's –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So that accounts for the entire increase of \$1.8 million?

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Going back to the aquaculture section, which also deals with estuarial shellfish fisheries. In the 1980s there was an oyster enhancement program. You'd be well aware of that.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes. Which did really well, you know, there was a great return on the dollar. A seven-to-one return, the study that was done.

That program was sort of cut back or – at the most recent shellfish fishers' AGM, I know that program is coming back and it's being enhanced. What are the figures? How much money are you putting into that this year? What are the plans for the future?

Mr. Henderson: I think we have grant – I hoping I'm on the right – \$249,200. What we're looking at is, we continue with the quality oyster aquaculture program. That's an increase in that by \$200,000.

We have the PEI Shellfish Association, which had some challenges last year. We are supporting them.

Then we have a new program that we're focusing on here is the mussel genome project, which is a very interesting, exciting project to get a basis of why a mussel is what it is and what makes it grow a certain way or whatever it might be. That's something we're doing some research on. That will be a grant, as well. That gives you

some sense of an idea of what we're spending our money on.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Are there plans to expand that oyster enhancement project beyond where you are just now?

Mr. Henderson: Not specifically. We've funded them in the past. We've got them out of their situation that they're in. We're re-establishing the grants back to them, again, getting them back on track.

I've met with the shellfish association. I'm saying to them that we're willing to support them, but they'd better keep better tabs on how they're spending the money and what they're doing and making sure that they're dealing with – I guess what my line is, is if you're going to continue doing the same things you've done in the past, it's not working for you, so you really need to make some fundamental changes.

Some of those changes is from their organization, itself. As an example, we've provided them with some board training to understand the roles that they play. We're trying to do a bit of a business plan on their operation and how they try to make that sustainable. There are things that we may be able to – and maybe things like the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, maybe they'll have a unique project around that.

They have to really think about what they're doing; how they're allocating, getting the resources, because they tap into a myriad of different programs from labour help and things of that nature. Last year, we went out, we just bought seed. Maybe that's an effective way of spending their money. I mean, they have to make those decisions themselves. We are trying to provide them with the types of training and decision-making skills so that they can do that and do that on their own.

I keep saying, in my riding, I probably represent more public oyster fishers than any other riding on the Island. I want them to succeed. I want them to find markets for their products that are a bit different. If they're going to try to compete with the off-bottom cultured oyster, that's going to be a challenge for them. I'm not saying that they can't do it, but they need to find the niche markets that they can – that people want

specifically a wild, non-cultured oyster; that they want to, maybe, look at a shucked market. Maybe there's some things, that there are new technologies now that are out there that maybe that's an option for them.

They have to discuss that with the buyers. They have to discuss that with the market, and try to see if they can make the fits. I'd be happy to support them in that, but I, as minister of fisheries, I don't know if it's my responsibility to tell them what to do. I'm trying to get them to see the options.

I've given them my suggestions, and my opinions. That's just based on what I know as a person who has been involved in the industry, and a lot of my neighbours are; the conversations I've had, but that board has to make its own mind and find its own path. We'll support them as best we can.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, I wasn't suggesting that you do go out and tell them, despite your –

Mr. Henderson: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – experience in the field.

The challenge that they have, and I absolutely agree with you, the wild oyster fishers are up against it, but recently, in a big seafood festival, and this is not unusual. PEI oysters won the gold medal. They're the best oysters. And yet –

Mr. Henderson: Harris world fair.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah. We continue to dump our oysters on the North American market and they get mixed up with the ones from North Carolina, and Florida, and all the way up the coast. We don't get any value for the fact that we have the best oysters in North America, here.

Is there a program, or have you thought – is there anything within the department that would, sort of, latch onto the that, and, you know, we're the food Island, and say, we have the best oysters in North America. Rather than dumping them in the commodity market where we're getting no more than the oysters that are not as tasty and juicy as ours, is there a program that you're considering?

Mr. Henderson: We have all our food promotions that we do both with tourism and through our department, all the shellfish festivals; all those things are there to try to promote our product.

When we go on trade missions to Asia, Europe, things of that – there's almost, invariably, there's a number of oyster buyers that are going on that to try to find new markets for their product.

We brought in an expert on seafood pricing with the oyster growers' association recently. They had seafood.com, for anybody – not to give them a plug, but they are the pre-eminent experts in predictions of seafood pricing. They see a very positive outcome for any food product in the seafood industry.

But with what's happening in Europe, there's opportunities there. Our products are starting to get over there. We have to meet their standards if we're picking product over there, for quality, all kinds of issues.

Asia, to a certain degree, basically maxed out in its capability of growing much more food. They're in Prince Edward Island. We are a small component of an international oyster, shellfish, aquaculture industry. You know, I've had criticism that say, oh, all of this extra expansion in the off-bottom leasing, culture oysters is going to put us all out of business. I don't think that's going to be the case, because there's almost an insatiable demand for our products.

Like you said, Leader of the Third Party: We have a superior product. It, certainly, in our opinion, it is. I think there's an issue around the palates of worldly people that they get used to certain tastes and flavours that are maybe different than ours. If we can get our product in front of them and they can try it and they start to develop a palate for our little more saltier, zinc-oriented type of oyster, and mussels the same; we've got them forever. They'll never switch.

I just think, in the long-term, it looks like a very positive industry. I don't think we're even scratching the surface of what the expansion potential is. We have got a unique situation where we have a little colder water, which makes a better product. I think we've got our land, that certain changes the flavour

a little bit from a zinc, in some of the selenium and some of things that are in our soils here that, probably, get out into the water to the point of saying that that creates a flavour. It's all good. I think we need to go after that market.

The public fishery has to find its niche within that market because it's no different than organic versus conventional agriculture. There's a consumer out there that wants that. They have to understand that.

The other issue, I go back to the issue of the shuck. Sometimes, if there is one disadvantage that the public oyster sometimes can have maybe the shell is a little bit off type and things of that nature to what a cultured – but you can shuck that. The meat is all the same. So, you can shuck that. They need to make sure that they can figure out about what about that market.

I know that there are some industry people out there that are looking at that type of niche market and seeing how they can do that cost effectively and I think that's why I'd say: I think there's great opportunities for the public fishery. They shouldn't think negatively of it, but they can't continue the path they're on. It's not going to work for them if they don't make some changes in finding those niche markets and meet the demands of that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I absolutely agree with him. Whether it's selenium or whatever it is in the water – the temperature of the water – we do have a unique product here. It's not just us that say it's the best, in the Chicago World Fair they were voted the best oysters.

So it's an objective opinion that we have the best product. So, we're not just meeting their standards, we're surpassing them – we're the best – and unlike the lobster fishery where they can put a cent premium on the lobsters and collect that and create a marketing program for themselves, the oyster industry's not big enough to do that. That's where, I think, government has to step in and I think there is a role here for government to play if we have the best product in the world, and we're the food Island, I would love to see some money put specifically into an oyster product development marketing.

Mr. Henderson: From my end, I would say on that is that the Atlantic Fisheries Fund is an idea vehicle for them to – if the PEI oyster growers association or the PEI Shellfish Association or the aquaculture alliance, if they see an opportunity that they look at either some research, some market development, things of that nature, that's a perfect vehicle for them to apply to the Atlantic Fisheries Fund to get some help to go make that a reality.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: You're welcome.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: You had a question under the aquaculture section?

Mr. Fox: Yes. I'm going back to that question I asked a little while ago.

My understanding – the water's coming off the shore or off the land in these small streams, it's warming up the, what did you call them? The bed areas for the whatever?

Mr. Henderson: Yes.

Mr. Fox: Are we doing any consultations with DFO to – they're asking for their leases to be able to move out a little bit farther –

Mr. Henderson: Yes.

Mr. Fox: – into a little bit of colder water and my understanding they're not talking a lot of movement – (Indistinct) 50 ft. or 25 ft. or whatever. Are we talking to DFO about that concern?

Mr. Henderson: Yes. Well, actually, that's what I've mentioned earlier about moving some leases the bottom leases are off-bottom and trying to work that so, actually, we're kind of working through all of the different bays and areas to try to see if there's options that that can happen.

Now, there are some areas that there isn't much – they're fairly congested as it is now and that creates a bit of a problem. There are

also issues around the recreational navigational issues or an issue that's out there for that, so we can't block that.

But I know I'm dealing with a fisher in I think the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning's riding right now where he wants to make a few changes in his lease and it's not actually DFO that's the issue, it's Transport Canada. They have some significant issues around how to access the water and get out to a certain area. I'll say that there are things that don't necessarily make sense, but I don't have a background in the Transport Canada's mindset on navigational waters and why they would want to make these things so big and problematic for fishers.

Mr. Fox: If it was simply a case of moving the lease and Transport Canada wasn't into it and DFO was in it, so is it strictly a decision by your department?

Mr. Henderson: It's leasing. DFO is in charge of leasing, but we have a person that sits on the board and believe me, we've made recommendations around those types of things and that's what we're working through for some of these solutions. Where we seem to be running into a problem, Transport Canada doesn't sit on that board – that's a whole, separate entity and they're focus is about the navigation of waters for all fishers, right?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madame Chair.

Minister, going back to the PEI Shellfish Association and the challenges, I'll say, that have occurred in the past year, I met with a lot of those fishers during that turbulent time, I'm going to say, and I want to commend your department, your deputy, and staff for the guidance that they gave them in working them through those first few months of that and then putting together the assistance with the governance and I want to commend Kenny Arsenault and the

new board there for taking on what certainly was a challenge of trying to regroup and go forward. I think, as you say, we need to be accountable for the money that we give to certain groups and to hold them accountable, but the work that they do is certainly very valuable to growing that.

Now, I, too, did attend the PEI Shellfish Association AGM and the federal MP for Egmont was there, Bobby Morrissey, and he mentioned – I don't know if it was the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, but there is money from the federal government that is going to be available for that industry, but as he noted, and as you say yourself, it comes back to the fishers to put that proposal to government, not for government to come and say: Okay, you need to do this, this and this and we'll give you x number of dollars to do it. It's to challenge them, certainly, on what innovation they can come up with. Just one more thing, minister, have you been out to UPEI to see new development that the students out there – the engineering students have come up with a new type of cage for flipping the oysters?

Mr. Henderson: Yes, I have seen that, yes.

Ms. Biggar: Okay. So, I think that can certainly help the industry and move forward.

Mr. Henderson: Yes. As the minister of transportation – and if there's a second riding in this province that is significantly impacted by the oyster industry, it's that riding too.

We want to make sure that they're as successful as they possibly can be and work together as members to try to solve some of the issues. I think they're getting back on track – time will tell, but we're there to be as supportive as we can to guide them through that.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, minister.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Henderson: I'm cooking like gas now.

Chair: Soil and Feed Lab

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the Soil and Feed Laboratory.”
Administration: 52,000. Equipment: 11,100.
Materials, Supplies and Services: 160,600.
Professional Services: 8,400. Salaries:
638,000. Travel and Training: 2,600.

Total Soil and Feed Lab: 872,700.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I just want – because it hasn’t been brought up before and I’m not even sure if this is the right section, but the wireworm problem that we have here on PEI; I know there are some natural ways of trying to deal with that, the mustard that we’re planting as a part of the rotation, but is that where money for programs or R and D into dealing with wireworm would come from?

Mr. Henderson: Yes. Not specifically in this section, but it is something that we have funded and we have a staff person specifically working on wireworm issues and doing research on wireworms. They’ve made a presentation.

I had the opportunity to participate, actually, in their presentation on what their findings are; still a complicated problem. I don’t think there’s – but we definitely know of some things that might work. You’d mentioned the mustard, but there are other items. I think the biggest issue is knowing the lifecycle of the wireworm more accurately. They weren’t even sure how they reproduced and there’s a lot of issues that the science really wasn’t there on, so we have a staff person that is working on that, specifically, and it’s good research and we continue to fund it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: One of the other methods is fumigation. I don’t know if you have been approached by anybody –

Mr. Henderson: Oh, yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – to do studies or pilots on that and what’s the departmental position on that at the moment?

Mr. Henderson: It’s a concern.

Fumigation – it does happen in other places. I’m not aware – they have to go by a special permit to do that here on Prince Edward Island. I’d have to research if we give a special permit. There might be one or two or something, but it’s not many anyway. It’s just something that would have concerns, I think, in the general public with the concept of fumigation.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: You mentioned there are one or two permits out there. Is that for particular –

Mr. Henderson: I’d have to double check that, but I don’t think there’s many of them and I’m pretty sure it’s something that you have to have a special permit to do and request, so I’d have to get more information on it. I’m not an expert on that subject.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I take it from the way you’re speaking, minister, that this isn’t something that you imagine expanding quickly anytime soon.

Mr. Henderson: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No? Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Dairy and Plant Diagnostics Lab

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the Dairy Lab and Plant Diagnostics Lab.” Administration: 65,900. Equipment: 2,900. Materials, Supplies and Services: 220,100. Professional Services: 2,500. Salaries: 400,000. Travel and Training: 8,200.

Total Dairy and Plant Diagnostics Lab: 699,600.

Total Aquaculture and P.E.I. Analytical Laboratories: 3,190,100.

Total Department of Agriculture and Fisheries: 32,513,200.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Thank you, minister. Thanks, Mary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: Thanks, Mary. (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Good job.

Chair: Who's next?

Ms. Biggar: Education.

Chair: Education.

An Hon. Member: Where is he?

Chair: Hon. members, the next minister coming forward will be the hon. Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture.

Hon. members, if I could draw your attention to page 56, we'll be starting there. Once the minister gets settled on the floor, we'll be asking a stranger to come onto the floor.

Also, you may notice that I'm a stickler for sticking to the section with your questions, and the reason that we do that is to keep it orderly; but it's also to assist our research staff, so in 10 years' time if you want to find out what questions you asked on aquaculture, we'll be able to go right to that section instead of –

Mr. LaVie: What a good chair.

Chair: – instead of keeping –

Mr. LaVie: What an awesome chair.

Chair: – the conversation going all over the place.

Mr. Trivers: It's part of the whole setup. If we could just get better handouts as well, (Indistinct) –

Chair: Okay, thank you. I'll ask that.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: They're all online.

Mr. Trivers: The handouts?

Ms. Biggar: All the handouts.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay, order! Order! We'll bring the House to order.

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

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Myers: Wonder how many times he'll have to correct Jordan?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I want to say ten.

Chair: Hon. members, there's four handouts that will be coming to you shortly.

Could you please identify yourself and your position for the record?

Chris DesRoche Director: Chris DesRoche, Director of Finance and Administration.

Chair: Welcome.

Chris DesRoche Director: Thank you.

Minister, do you have an opening statement?

Mr. J. Brown: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Members, it's with a fairly large degree of excitement that we get the opportunity to address our budget here before you. The budget this year, as I indicated today in Question Period, is, I think, one of the best budgets we've had in quite a while in education, perhaps since kindergarten was introduced.

The big thing that this budget really sets out to do is to enhance and protect frontline positions in education, to provide additional supports to children with special needs, and to provide increases to our early childhood education system.

This year, we're very happy to have been able to do that through the addition of \$17

million – 17.4, I think, to be exact – in additional spending. We're very happy to have had the access to that, and really that's through a successful economy. I think what excites me most about it is to see that with that success, and with Prince Edward Island being on a tear, we are taking the opportunity to reinvest in education in our province.

I think the other piece of that is that we're doing it kind of across the entire spectrum of Prince Edward Islanders that we serve. Again, that's, I think, a great piece of this budget and it's something that we're very happy to see and really across the department we're seeing some very welcome increases.

With that, I think, Madam Chair, I'll turn it over to you.

Chair: Great. Thank you, Minister.

First section –

Mr. Myers: Question.

Chair: First section: Finance and Administration.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) question off the top.

Chair: I'm going to read the section and then I'll come back to you.

Mr. Myers: It's not about the section. He gave a preamble. I have questions on the preamble.

Chair: If you don't mind, I'm just going to read the section. I'll come back to you.

Mr. Myers: It's not about the section. It's about off the top.

Chair: I'm going to read the section and then you can come back and ask the question off the top.

Mr. Myers: I can ask whenever I want to. You already said I can't.

Chair: No, I'm going to let you ask the question. I'm going to read the section to start.

Mr. Myers: Seven years this is the way we've been doing it, and you (Indistinct) –

Chair: Finance and Administration

“Appropriations provided for operation of the Minister's and the Deputy Minister's offices and other administrative support services for the Department.”

Administration: 134,700. Equipment: 195,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 82,200. Professional Services: 182,000. Salaries: 692,400. Travel and Training: 31,600. Grants: 1,678,000.

Total Finance and Administration: 2,995,900.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I have a question that's not really with this section, but can I ask it?

Chair: I've asked people to keep it to this section. Are we coming to the section?

Mr. MacEwen: No, this is on –

Chair: I don't mind going back to a section once we –

Mr. MacEwen: It was on the Chair's overview.

Chair: Yeah, sure, you can do that.

Mr. MacEwen: Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you've been in the position now for a little while. The previous minister, before he left, took a lot of questions about his deputy minister and being the chair of the public schools board. Before he left last summer, he talked about: Do you know what? Maybe we do need to look at that, maybe she is in a conflict.

Do you share that same opinion that your deputy minister's in a conflict as being the chair of the public schools board?

Chair: Minister?

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do not share that opinion. I don't think the previous minister would share that opinion, so I'll take the opportunity to state that for the record. You know what? I will say overall we, in respect of the Public Schools Branch and how that's constituted, we will continue, obviously, to monitor that as we move forward and look to see whether there are ways that we can improve that or not.

It's actually quite interesting, hon. member, to note that there are others that are now moving towards that model. That's certainly not for us to say that it's perfect or it's without question or anything like that, but it is kind of the model that we all here have chosen to move to.

We've had a lot of change in our – I'm going to say the structure of how we bring schooling to Prince Edward Islanders now, or Prince Edward Island students. I think we're – this budget in particular, I think we start to see how that can be productive for Prince Edward Islanders; but with any change, you have to give it some time to see how it's working before it makes sense to move on.

I noted Michael Fullan did a report for the department in 2016 and that was one of his, kind of, primary notes in the report; was you can't keep changing and changing structure and expecting that not to impact what you're doing in terms of delivery of education.

I think we have a great system. There may be ways we can tweak it a little to improve, but by and large, we're happy with it for now and I think we will look to continue to move forward with this system for the foreseeable future.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

Mine is kind of in on the same seam, but less so.

Your deputy is the chair of the Public Schools Branch, which I know is ridiculous, but if I can look past that, which I just barely can, I'm wondering – there's a special Public Schools Branch meeting coming up

and being as your deputy is also the chair of the Public Schools Branch, talking about the Charlottetown family capacity issues.

Can you enlighten us what those issues would entail?

Mr. J. Brown: Sure, I guess.

We went through a process last winter where this was essentially the subject of the process. There were a number of different, I'm going to say, capacity issues that were discussed at that time and I think they were fairly well considered. I'm happy to, to whatever extent I can here tonight, answer specific questions on them.

But, there was a rezoning process that was undertaken. It was our first time that that had been done in a very significant period of time and there were a number – and I can use my own electoral district as an example. I have five schools in my electoral district. Within that district alone there were two zones where students had the option to go to one school or the other, and there were capacity issues relating to the schools where there was that option.

We saw a lot of rezoning that was undertaken in the Charlottetown area. I think the number is roughly about 1,500 students that were impacted in terms of the zoning process. I think that allowed for a much more sustainable short-to-medium term kind of picture in the Greater Charlottetown Area in terms of the ability for the various schools in there to deliver education in an equitable way.

There will be a requirement to further review that in some way as we move forward.

Mr. Myers: I'll ask specifically – and I do understand. I followed that closely so obviously at the time I would have been a critic for it, so I could have been quite involved in lots of calls and different messages about the issues.

Is this a process where they're going to want to move forward with the new school or addition in West Royalty? That was one of the things that they had asked for, wasn't it, initially?

Mr. J. Brown: You may recall, hon. member, that there is an addition going on to West Royalty school –

Mr. Myers: There is one?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

When they had made recommendations over the school closure thing, I can't recall – I guess I could look it up – but they had mentioned new schools and I can't remember; one was Stratford, so can we talk about Stratford for a second?

Mr. J. Brown: Sure.

Mr. Myers: I do have a question on Stratford from somebody I was talking to, and they were wondering, through the planning process; who have you kind of talked to? Have you talked to the teachers and the parents to see what the best fit for a school is?

We know there's like a big crowding issue there, and you have them broken up into two different schools with different age groups in it now. What is the plan to alleviate that? Is it a third school; or is it an addition to one of them? Have you consulted the teachers and the administrators out there and the parents to kind of see if that's the kind of thing that they'd be happy with?

Mr. J. Brown: I'll say a few things, hon. member, that I hope will kind of address your question because depending on what you know now, it might require more or less detail.

There were – if you go back to, I think it was April 3rd of last year – the Public Schools Branch held a meeting and at that meeting they made a number of recommendations publicly and one of the recommendations that they made at that time was – and it says: Be it resolved that the Public Schools Branch recommended the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture that immediate action be taken to add additional school infrastructure in the Stratford area.

Hon. member, again, you participated in the school review process so you'd know a lot

of this, but if you require anymore background just ask. But there was an immediate crunch at – and the hon. Leader of the Opposition has raised questions about this a couple of different times – immediate crunch at the Stratford Glen Stewart coupling of schools in terms of classroom space.

Basically, my understanding would be that the Public Schools Branch looked at the most effective way to address that problem for right now and the way to do that was – the most effective way to do that seemed to be, as aggressively as possible, move towards an expansion of those sister schools –

Mr. Myers: Both of them?

Mr. J. Brown: Well, one or the other.

My understanding is, actually, Glen Stewart can't be expanded on anymore; just the way it's kind of structured. So, Stratford is being expanded on, and they're going to move a portion of – they're going to move, basically, a grade over to Stratford school. They'll actually end up with seven classrooms to kind of grow into in that area for the elementary schools.

That being said, there's a longer-term piece to that as well and I believe the board – I'm not sure what the meeting date was, but the board has discussed that. There was actually a meeting in Montague – I'm not sure if you attended that or not recently –

Mr. Myers: No, I was aware (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – where there was a presentation from a group –

Mr. Myers: Yes, I remember, I had another meeting that night. I do remember they asked me to go, and I couldn't.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, so again, they were advocating I think for a fairly holistic kind of further review, I think, particularly in relation to high school situation –

Mr. Myers: I think a junior high or something (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – and that's kind of the issue, is between junior high and high

school, what does the future look like for growing communities? How quickly does that need to be addressed? What infrastructure options are available and that sort of thing?

I know the Public Schools Branch is taking steps to look at that.

Mr. Myers: On the more specific side, then, is have you consulted with the teachers and the parents, and have you – I know there are concerns now about it removing grade 3 away from the primary part of the school and into the – which sounds like that's probably the decision, into the Stratford school.

I guess it's kind of a three-pronged question. Have you consulted with the two groups, teachers and the parents? How do you plan to alleviate the concerns that go along with the move of grade 3 into the other school?

Mr. J. Brown: Okay, again, I just want to be – I can tell you what we're doing again. If you have more questions, let me know.

The two schools have representatives on the – you've got the construction planning committee for this addition –

Mr. Myers: It's faculty?

Mr. J. Brown: There would be staff members and there would be community members.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: They have – actually, from what I know and actually Chris is on that planning committee so he might have some more kind of input or whatever – but from what I know of it, the parents that were – basically the community that is involved in that renovation was extremely pleased with the space plan that's been put forward in relation to Stratford schools.

I think they're quite happy with the level of input that they've had. I know one big concern that they had was space in the, we'll say, in the playground on the Stratford side where the addition is going to go, and we were able to – I think TIE was great to try and figure some things out for them so that

they could, in a cost-effective way, use the space as efficiently as they possibly could.

There are some pieces of that that went very well. We had some great input from the community that led to that going as well as it did.

Mr. Myers: That's good. Thanks for that. It answered the question that I had from the person who had the question.

Let's just go back to the – so this meeting, then, next week. I guess I don't understand how it all – how they actually work because they made a motion asking that the Stratford school situation be dealt with at the public meeting right that night.

They effectively can't say: I'm building a school or expanding a school. This week, they can announce that they're building something, if you've allowed them. If you've granted them the money or they're going to call for you to do something at that meeting. There's only one of the two things. They really can't just go in and say: We're doing it. And everyone is like: Oh!

So, you're building – are they planning construction or are they just going to talk about their – are they re-jigging students or are they – how are they dealing with the one item on their thing, then?

Mr. J. Brown: This is actually a great question. I might just say, everybody might want to pay attention to the answer to this because it's not the first time that I've it.

I'm going to address this is two different ways. One, the process for capital improvements is set out in the *Education Act*, okay? What needs to happen if we're going to have, basically, some money spent, but a capital allocation of funding towards a project, the Public Schools Branch or the French Language School Board, needs to decide through their mechanisms that they have a capital priority that they want to spend some money on. They need to put that priority forward to us as a department.

Then we as a department take those priorities and we put our lens on them. Then we move them forward from that point through the capital budgeting process as priorities of the department. We seek the

money through our capital budget to do them.

Ultimately, and you'll see the recommendations from the Public Schools Branch. Again, I'll read the Stratford one out because it's a good example: It resolved that the Public Schools Branch recommend to the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture that immediate action be taken to add additional school infrastructure in the Stratford area.

Basically, they put a plan forward to us. It's their responsibility to give shape to that plan. It's our responsibility to work with them to put a budget around it. Then we put it forward as a priority from there.

I get the question sometimes, and we've had them here, recently; minister, will you commit to doing this, or doing this infrastructure project or that infrastructure project or whatever? The answer from me is always going to be: No, I can't. The reason for that is because the Public Schools Branch does that. They have the capacity to examine that and do that work.

The other underlying piece of that is we would have to go out and contract somebody to do, as an example, the demographic data or the demographic/geographic data to decide if we were going to build a school or whatever. We don't have, in our department, folks that are capable of analyzing population trends in an area to determine whether there's a population requirement for a school there. Public Schools Branch and the French Language School Board do that. They make the recommendations based on that.

Mr. Myers: That, actually, clears it up quite well how the process works.

I want to come back to the meeting next week. But, your answer spawned a question for me and it is: How, then, can the Premier announce a school during a by-election when it's not actually his duty to do; it has to come up through the proper channels of the Public Schools Branch to do?

Mr. J. Brown: Sure. Actually, thank you very much, hon. member for brining that up. I think I actually answered that last year during the capital budgeting process and

during Question Period. I'm happy to answer it again. I'll start back at that April 3rd meeting of the Public Schools Branch.

At that April 3rd meeting there was a resolution that said: Be it resolved that the Public Schools Branch recommended the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, that the department consider the need to add additional space and improve the infrastructure for students in the West Royalty school attendance zone; the Sherwood attendance zone, and the L.M. Montgomery school attendance zone based on the recent and projected growth in the area, the current capacity in the schools and the physical condition of some of the schools in those areas.

That, last part, specifically referred to Sherwood, so what happened from there, once they went through that piece they had TIE come in and look at the condition of the schools in those areas and see what might be able to be done to either add on or bring the infrastructure up to a state where it would be suitable for that purpose.

In respect of Sherwood, my recollection, I think, the date is – anyways, it's 70-years-old or something close to that, 56, actually. Chris is telling me right here.

Mr. Palmer: 1956.

Mr. J. Brown: 1956, sorry, it was built. My memory is not that bad –

Mr. Fox: Were you born, yet?

Mr. J. Brown: I wasn't born yet, no. Not by a long shot.

Mr. Myers: Were you, Jamie?

[Laughter]

Mr. J. Brown: It hasn't aged that well. TIE looked at it and they essentially said, for two reasons, it's not feasible to renovate that space.

One is because, we've had conversations about Three Oaks here in the last couple of days, but one is because with the, kind of, land envelope that's there and the way that the school is built, the ability to renovate

and move students around during the renovation time is just not there.

The second is, is that there's nothing – the structure that's there is not worth renovating. The decision was made; I'm going to say over the course of the summer, between TIE and Public Schools Branch to put forward a priority request to build a new school in Sherwood. I think it's September 17th or September 19th, I can't remember which, PSB sent a letter to our department with that on their priority list for capital consideration. That went forward for consideration, at that time.

I think it was a month and a bit after that, that minister Currie resigned. It's my recollection that by the time he had resigned the capital budgeting process was very well underway. That had already been submitted through for consideration in the capital budgeting process.

Mr. Myers: I'm wondering, because your structure of the Public Schools Branch is to basically make them autonomous. They operate on their own even though your deputy chairs it. I know it sound strange, but it's true. Even though, that is the case.

I'm wondering if you commit to the House to release all of those things outside of a writ period so we know all of the schools and all of the work that's going to be done that's planned now so they can't be used for political gain.

I agree, the Sherwood school needed to be replaced. It was really old. It had a lot of issues. The students there deserve to have a new school. I don't even question that for a second. I think what upset people, and probably it showed at the polls, was that the government was using it for political gain. It's not really fair to use students or children or schools or government money, for that matter, but let's just stick with the students and schools.

It's not really fair to use the plight of poor students in a shabby, rundown building as an election issue because if you're thoughtful and forward thinking, you're, like you said, already looking at it. You already had it. It was already in the capital budget. It was already well on the way. People deserve to know, outside of a writ period, and I think

many people would agree one of the things I probably heard the most during that by-election was that people thought it was a dirty move.

I'm wondering if you can commit to us to giving us those things in advance so that no one can use the well-being of students and the overcrowding situation as an election springboard.

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not totally sure, hon. member, what you're asking me to commit to provide, but again, I will say that this process is inherently a public process in terms of how it unfolds. The capital budgeting process, I'm talking about right now.

It's set out in the *Education Act*. The Public Schools Branch has public meetings where they make these recommendations in public and then it's usually within a couple of days, their resolutions or their minute or whatever, is put online for everybody to see and know about.

Then through the budgeting process, again, the Public Schools Branch puts their priorities forward. Then, by the time we're here in the fall, so that's to happen by, I think, it's September 15th, and obviously they're considered through the typical channels that we would all be very aware about. Our department puts forward the priorities. In particular, it looks at the two priorities from the two boards and puts them forward for consideration of the capital budgeting process. Then within a very short order, we're back here with a document that, once it's tabled, is the public document.

Between when those priorities come, let's say it's September 15th, and when we're back here, this year it was November 15th, basically you have the finance department looking at what resources are available and what capital projects can we undertake? Then, we get the document that comes tabled as soon as we can get it here into the sitting.

Mr. Myers: I guess what I'll ask, and I'll ask in a different way: Can you ask your deputy, who is also the chair of the Public Schools Branch, which is ridiculous, I know, but it's true, that whenever they put their priorities forward that they make them

public so that everyone knows where they stand on the list?

I know, for example, Montague consolidated is overcrowded and they have an issue and they want extra space or something, or a solution. I'm not going to suppose what the solution might be out there. They want a solution, whatever the solution is.

It would be great if they were able to know where they were on the priority list of the Public Schools Branch. It's all a mystery and it would have been, probably, largely a mystery to the people, who were concerned about the Sherwood school, where they actually were on the priority list. Perhaps, a few people knew. I don't know.

If it was public, you know, it could be a living document because that could ever be changing. Suppose you had a gym floor that was flooded with water and there were concerns that there was going to be mold after the water dried up and it was in a rural area and it was really important that they had gym floor and maybe you had to shift money. Maybe it had to become a priority. That's all right. People understand that thing. I think it happened to the Morell school in, was it 2011 or 2012 in the Morell school? It was unforeseen circumstances. They had mold and government just changed gears and said: okay, we have to fix this. It became the top capital priority.

I'm wondering if that can be, if the Public Schools Branch can post that somewhere so that all Islanders know what that circuit looks like; what their current asks are. Then, we can all match it up to how well the government does with their capital budget. You know what I mean? There are a lot of different leads out there and everybody thinks theirs is the most important and that's understandable.

Mr. J. Brown: There are two different things I'm going to say about that. One is that I would recognize and actually, I can tell you that as recently as the end of, I think, Friday of last week, I did have a conversation with my deputy about basically the way that Public Schools Branch communicates.

The way it's set up, we do have a bit of an issue in terms of their ability to make their

thoughts available to the public, we'll say. Part of this – I can use the example of the Stratford situation right now, okay? We've had some parents from Stratford that are concerned that something gets going now so that when there's a need, the considerations have started already and we don't have to wait a considerable period of time.

The comment that I would make back to them, and this is only, again – I know this because I have had the ability, and this is the great thing about having my deputy as chair of the Public Schools Branch, I do have the ability to go ask: Okay, what's going on at the public schools, at the director's level, in terms of the consideration of these things? You don't want to be there telling the Public Schools Branch how to do what they need to do, but by the same token, there is some level of responsibility there to ensure that what needs to get done is getting done.

But, a part of that is that the community always needs to have some understanding of what's going on. Right now, the way that the Public Schools Branch communicates is through resolutions at a meeting. They don't have a great mechanism to have a conversation. It's not really their job to go and to say, at a meeting: We're thinking about, as an example right now, again with the Stratford and Charlottetown situation, we're waiting for some new numbers' data to come in. From that point in time, we're going to set out to determine what we need to do to develop a plan to move forward.

You have parents that are concerned that they haven't heard anything in a while. They know that there's an issue. They're going to look at ways that they can do better to communicate what is going on in that process, if you will.

One of these pieces that, again, we're not saying that the way things are set-up is perfect. I think the system is, I think, pretty good and if we give it a chance, we can tweak those sorts of things as we move forward.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Coming to the section on finance and administration and a question regarding professional services, I see a significant increase, which looks to be represented primarily by a substantial allocation to a coding project contract. I would be very interested in hearing details on what the context is of that contract and who is delivering it and how it was awarded, please.

Mr. J. Brown: I can tell you that.

I think part of that is in one of the handouts here, is it not? In front of you there is a, if you have them –

Ms. Bell: The one that says coding project contract, \$160,000.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, 2018-2019 professional and contract services.

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: The first line item references coding project contract. That contract is set up with Brilliant Labs. There was a, I believe it was a tender that was done – it's a federal program where we, essentially, provide resources to – they effectively pay for the part, the, I'm going to say the delivery mechanism, and we provide resources to integrate that into our school community.

There's a big federal piece to this, ostensibly. Then, we provide some capacity at the school level to enable it.

Ms. Bell: The contract is with the federal government, ostensibly, but through Brilliant Labs, which is out of New Brunswick. David (Indistinct) I think, but this is a cost that is being put into the budget here for professional services.

What are contracted to pay for?

Mr. J. Brown: I want to be very clear here. Brilliant Labs has contracted with the federal government provide this service.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

This is the cost, the provincial contribution to that project?

Mr. J. Brown: Yes, I think they're – I'm just kind of looking for this as we go through, but I think there are Makercarts and a staff person that's there to facilitate –

Ms. Bell: This is project that Dave Cormier is working on? Is this the project that Dave Cormier has been working on?

Chris DesRoche Director: Essentially, we're going to provide a curriculum specialist and they are going to provide us Brilliant Labs staff.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Chris DesRoche Director: The \$160,000 is a contract with Brilliant Labs to provide the supplies for the Makercarts.

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Chris DesRoche Director: That's our contribution. They'll match, basically, the contribution.

Ms. Bell: Great.

If this is what Dave Cormier has been working on as the expert, is that correct? What are you going to do when he leaves? Because he's leaving for Waterloo in July.

Mr. J. Brown: Dave Cormier right now is on a contract in the first place.

Now his contract was supposed to go through, I think, until September of this year. Dave's actually a neighbor and a friend of mine so we'll be very sad to see Dave and Bonnie and their family go.

But we will, of course, have to staff up to have that dealt with. Dave had a larger kind of role than just this too, so –

Ms. Bell: Good.

Mr. J. Brown: Anyway, we'll have to sort out exactly how a lot of the stuff that Dave was doing will continue on.

Ms. Bell: It's really exciting to hear (Indistinct) and I said I've got to play some of those things on the Makercarts and they're pretty awesome, but how long is the agreement with this kind of multiparty, Brilliant Labs stuff going to be happening in

the system? Is it a two-three year project, or just the one year?

Chris DesRoche Director: It's a one year contract and after that one year, the department's going to provide the resources to help keep filling the Makercarts with supplies.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: I might just add to that, Chair, if I can too.

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Chair: Sure.

Mr. J. Brown: The way that Dave is currently setting it up to roll out is that schools are essentially – he's been consulting with them. They're going to indicate: Yes, this is something that we're kind of ready to take on in our school and then he will, as the ability is there, move them forward.

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: And so there's kind of a ramp up capacity issue here. So the idea is that this would be enabled and the capacity would be built one school at a time as we go through this and once the capacity's there the capacity is ostensibly there for good – not to say it won't have to be built on, but there will be a base capacity that'll be –

Ms. Bell: Sure.

Chair, how many schools are in this initiative roll out? Are there carts for every school in the province, or is it a select number of schools that have been including in the project?

Mr. J. Brown: Basically, if the schools want it, we've kind of made a commitment at this point in time to start to roll it out. I don't know if – and Chris might have some thoughts on this – if the analysis has been done to say if all 60 some of our schools said: we want a Makercart the first day, we can do it, but we wouldn't have the capacity to roll it out to that many within that first time span in any event.

Chris DesRoche Director: It'll take the full year to roll out. We're starting at the K-6 level and then moving into junior high and high school.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

You good?

Ms. Bell: Thank you. Yes, I've got another question and I've still got other questions after this, but we'll go with this one.

One of the things from a rolling out perspective is you've talked about the equipment and building the capacity and one of those challenges that we hear from teachers is that downloading of additional things for them to learn and that there's a limit and capacity that the teachers themselves have.

Is it a voluntary participation for the teachers to be engaged in this? Because not all people want to or have the capacity to take on something like this, which is quite a different learning curve for some.

Mr. J. Brown: Yes is the answer to that. That's exactly what I was saying.

Dave had kind of gone out to the school leadership groups and said: We're going to be doing this. The call has gone out to canvass interest and there has been a number, as you might expect, that would indicate interest and then the next call is preparedness – do you have some teachers that are there that are interested in learning this and kind of moving forward with it? The answer to that is yes. There are schools and teachers that are there and prepared and want to have this.

But, yes, that was one of the key criteria in doing this project. Then, of course, the other piece of it is: Do we have the – it'd be one thing if you had Brilliant Labs and the Makercarts and the actual widgets to kind of do this stuff – totally a different thing to be able to take that and ramp up. So in other words, you need to have the capacity to transition physical stuff into hands of people that are going to be able to do something with it, as you've identified. So, that's kind

of what this line item is and how the contract works between the two governments.

Ms. Bell: I'm thrilled to see it and expect it to be one that will continue to see investment and growth because it's very exciting. It's great to see that happening to make those connections. Thank you for clarifying that.

If I may move on to ask a question, Chair, in the same section on the grants section? Relating to a couple of quick points, there's a number of grants in here regarding to finance administration, particularly ones that are in some ways providing operational or core funding for some key delivery things like literacy and supports for tutoring programs. Just one quick administrative point that I'm assuming that PEI council of the disabled is actually PEI Council of People with Disabilities. So just there is a difference in the name there, and can qualify to that's for the summer tutoring program? Is it the –

Chris DesRoche Director: That's in another section.

Ms. Bell: It's in another section? Could you –

Chris DesRoche Director: The English program section has the PEI Literacy Alliance.

Ms. Bell: So the PEI Council of People with Disabilities, with a \$21,400 grant, could you advise what that is actually to provide?

Mr. MacEwen: Chair, could you tell us where we are?

Chair: Sure. We're on page 56 and we're under finance and administration. We're asking questions to that first section.

Ms. Bell: The grants.

Chair: She's asking a question on the grant section.

Mr. MacEwen: So we're into (Indistinct)

Chair: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: So, 2018-2019 grants, hon. member.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. J. Brown: The answer to the question is: I'm fairly certain it is core funding.

Ms. Bell: Core funding? Okay.

I guess that leads on to some of the other ones where you've got the Learning Disabilities Association of PEI, Aboriginal student achievement, which also have that kind of core funding piece.

I guess my question around this is two things. One of them is: at what point do those recurring funding pieces get renewed or reviewed, rather, because they're consistently the same and often that unfortunately says to me, perhaps, that there isn't a review process is saying is this actually meeting needs? Does it need to be increased, or changed, or decreased – hopefully not decreased, but increased – and where there is a significant grant, like of into the \$172,000 or \$200,000 amount or at \$951,900, what are the conditions around how those grants are determined to be awarded? Do they roll over every year, or is there any kind of evaluation?

Mr. J. Brown: Oh, yes. Sure.

So I'll say something quick and then I'll let Chris kind of take a crack at this.

Most of these would be applied for on an annual, yes. There is a constant need for most of them, but they're obviously all a little bit different and they would be applied for. I think our government particularly, you might have noticed in the last number of months, has recognized that where we've had some funding available, we've been able to reinvest it back into all sorts of different NGOs that provide a very direct service that's leverageable and I think we've been very fortunate to be able to do that. Maybe with that, Chris has got some extra thoughts.

Chris DesRoche Director: Just two that you mentioned, the larger ones: the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority – all

the Atlantic Provinces contribute to it and both the deputy minister and myself are on a committee for the finance committee and it's essentially a pro-rated budget for the operation.

It's across from the IWK. It's a school for the deaf and the blind, and part of it is core funding and part of it is they provide us teachers back to our system.

Ms. Bell: So specialist education support? Is that –

Chris DesRoche Director: Yes.

Ms. Bell: – that you're providing funding to enable that to happen.

Chris DesRoche Director: We provide funding. They train teachers for visually impaired or hearing impaired and then they send us teachers to work in the system. And the other one; the Aboriginal Student Achievement Program, that's a tuition agreement with the bands and the federal government provides them tuition that is provided to us and we take \$2,100 of that tuition and put it into initiatives.

So, there's a committee between the bands and the Public Schools Branch that determines which initiatives are chosen each year. It's not a – it fluctuates depending on the number of students each year, but that's pretty close.

Ms. Bell: Yes. So a flexible fund that's taking a proportion.

Chris DesRoche Director: More or less it's a pretty consistent number of students.

Chair: Charlottetown-Parkdale, do you have another question?

Ms. Bell: I do have some more questions –

Chair: Yes, sure.

Ms. Bell: – on this.

Chair: The floor is yours.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Thank you.

Mr. J. Brown: I might just mention, Charlottetown-Parkdale, on that last one; the moneys are currently are allocated in part to one and a half staff positions between the two bands. So, you get some kind of a sense from that as to the base of what might be there.

Ms. Bell: Sure. And Chair, if I can point out –

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Ms. Bell: I will complete that for another time, Chair.

Thank you.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Mr. J. Brown: Madame Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll call on the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Friday the 13th of April at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The House adjourned until Friday the 13th of April at 10:00 a.m.