

# 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 to everyone today. This being Friday, it's always important to mark a further week of achievement in this House. For those who are not superstitious, we can be glad that it's also Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>.

I'd like to welcome in the gallery Lily Reaman, who's executive director of the Prince Edward Island arts council, and she's with Michelle MacCallum, who's the director of arts and culture programs for the province.

We have representatives of Hospice PEI, Ellen Davies-Ward, and Nancymarie Arsenault, welcome.

Marion Menard, who is visiting from Toronto, she is the sister of Laura, who works in our sound booth. So, it's great that you're here Marion.

I want to welcome Roisin Mullen. Roisin, we're used to seeing you come in with your mom and now you're in the lead. I didn't get a chance to find out, is that a brother you've got travelling with you or another Mount Stewart student. Let me know, whatever it is, Roisin, you're up to good. We certainly admire what you're getting done in your local community and frankly, on the national stage in the good causes that you're taking on.

The coming week is the RCW Week in Canada to recognize the outstanding work of home support workers, resident care workers, as well as patient care workers. We all want to recognize the many RCWs here on Prince Edward Island and thank them for the care that they provide all across our province for Islanders who benefit from those services.

Finally, of course, to recognize that, as others have earlier in the week, that Sunday, the 15<sup>th</sup>, will be the opening of fishing

season for fresh water species, and to wish everyone great success and enjoyment on that day. Of course, safe and successful fishing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today. I'd like to welcome everyone here in the gallery and everyone watching at home. The members from the arts council and from hospice. I'd like to also recognize Roisin for coming in today and also Rylan MacEwen, the Member from Morell-Mermaid, his son.

This weekend is going to be busy. We know tonight is the Women's Institute's Spring is in the Air dinner and gala. I just want to recognize all the Women's Institute groups across this province for the good work that they do.

Just on that note, tomorrow is a spring luncheon for the Mount Buchanan-Point Prim Women's Institute at the Belfast Rec Centre from 11:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m.

Also, this weekend, we've got the Standardbred Horse Owners Association, they're holding their annual awards banquet. They're recognizing the best in harness racing industry. The guest speaker is the industry's leading trainer, Irv Miller and his daughter, Hannah, who is two-time US national amateur driving champion. I know it's going to be a great evening with lots of horseman and women there.

Of course, as the Premier mentioned, it's the start of fishing season. I know anglers are pretty excited and awaiting with anticipation for Sunday. I just want to wish all the anglers happy fishing. Everyone have a great day.

Thank you.

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

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

I, too, would like to wish everybody well in the new angling season, which is going to get underway on Sunday.

I mentioned, a couple of days ago in the House that the fishermen's breakfast in Bonshaw is happening again this year. Now, renamed the Matthew Murphy memorial breakfast and I would encourage everybody to be there for that.

I also want to congratulate all of the volunteers at Glenaladale, the homestead in Tracadie Bay, 160 acres, which is now, thanks to funding, preserved for Islanders for generations to come. A very special place, and I'd like to pass on my personal thanks to Mary and Aggie-Rose and all of the others who have spent an unbelievable amount of time and energy promoting the preservation of that homestead, and to finally have the funds in place to be able to do that. It's a wonderful thing so thank you to them.

One final thing, Sunday afternoon is the final concert of the PEI Symphony Orchestra at the Zion Presbyterian Church here. This is their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary season. They've had three very success and exciting concerts. I would just like to mention to everybody what a great cultural icon they are here on PEI. For such a small place to have a symphony orchestra, I think, is a wonderful attribute to the strength and the depth of the musical community here on PEI.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm glad to hear the Premier talk about fishing this morning, actually. I hope, maybe, he'll be one of the guys that are up there on the wharf when we get it reopened in Borden-Carleton so people can go fishing.

On another note, I want to say hello to the family of Lee Schurman and the passing of Darlene. Darlene Marie Schurman passed away on Tuesday. She was a very close friend of ours, our family and Lee's a great friend of mine. I want to give sincere condolences to the Schurman family.

Especially, Darlene's two daughters. They're two great young ladies and it's just too bad that this lady was taken by her fight with cancer.

Thank you.

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

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

I'd also like to welcome everybody here, today.

It's PD day across most of PEI today. I want to wish good luck to all the teachers that are doing some great things out there.

With that, we're able to have two young guests with us here, today, that normally would be in school.

First of all, we'll talk, the Premier mentioned Roisin Mullen, who goes to Mount Stewart consolidated. We've had Roisin in here before. She has done some wonderful things. She's in Grade 6 in Mount Stewart. She's also going to an international summit this fall in October to speak about cyber bullying again. This will be her third international summit. It's wonderful to see our youth taking leadership.

Speaking of leadership, I've got my own son, Rylan MacEwen, for the first time in here, today. Rylan is in Grade 5 at Morell consolidated. He's big into hockey, big into baseball; loves that stuff. He's got a keen eye – he teaches drawing, as well. He's got a keen eye on fishing. He made the provincial science fair this year on circuits, energy circuits, so he might have an engineering future there. I don't know, teaching, engineering, fishing, we're not sure where he's going to go, but he's –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** – a –

**Mr. R. Brown:** Keep him out of that.

**An Hon. Member:** He's smarter than that.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Mr. Speaker, I know he doesn't mind the salty language because he

comes from a fishing family, too, as you know.

We are so proud of him, him and all three of our kids. We're really happy that he can join us here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) on the boat.

**Mr. MacEwen:** He'll be there.

Statement by Members

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

**MacTalla Farms-Master Breeder Award**

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

I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Allan, Colleen and Jeff MacQuarrie of Bonshaw on recently winning the Master Breeder Award.

Tomorrow evening, in Quebec City, MacTalla Farms will be recognized nationally, and will receive their Master Breeder Shield for the Holstein Industry.

The Master Breeder Award is the highest honour that a dairy farm can achieve. Only 20 farmers of the 10,000 Holstein breeders across Canada are so honoured per year.

The MacQuarries are the only winners of this award from the Maritimes this year. Since 1929, when this award was introduced, only 19 farmers from Prince Edward Island have ever won the award so this shows just how hard it is to achieve.

To be successful, points are garnered, not only on milk production, but also on classification of the milking herd. These points are calculated over several generations of cattle, showing an improvement in genetics over this period of time.

This recognition by the Holstein industry is a true testament to the hard work and dedication of this family farm. For this reason, I would ask all hon. members of this

House to join me in congratulating the MacQuarrie family of MacTalla Farms on winning the prestigious Master Breeder Award.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

**Daffodil Month**

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

As some may agree, April is a time of excitement with spring in full force and summer not too far away. It also happens to be an important month for me, also, as it is Daffodil Month put on by the Canadian Cancer Society.

The daffodil is a symbol of courage and hope, as well as a way to honour those who have lost their lives to cancer. Nearly one in two Canadians will be affected by cancer in their lifetime. The Cancer Society sells fresh cut daffodils and pins throughout the month of April in order to raise money for such a worthy cause.

There are currently over 800,000 Canadians living with cancer and we continue to raise funds to find a cure. The money from both the daffodils and the pins go towards finding a way to eradicate this terrible disease.

It is incredible to see how gracious Islanders truly are and I am optimistic that this year's campaign will be one of the best yet.

The PEI Canadian Cancer Society is led by Executive Director, Marlene Mulligan and her team does a terrific job at promoting Daffodil Month to all Islanders.

I wish the best of luck as they begin raising money with these flowers. We will find a cure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Women's Institute Gala Dinner**

**Mr. Trivers:** Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today and recognize the Women's Institute of PEI and their 18<sup>th</sup> "Spring is in the Air" Gala Dinner taking place this evening at the Rodd Royalty.

It may not feel like spring is in the air today, but I can guarantee that if you're at the dinner this evening, the lingering winter weather will be swept out of your mind.

The Women's Institute has been creating positive change in communities across Prince Edward Island since the first branch opened in 1911. There are currently 80 branches and some 1,000 members today.

Each year, the Women's Institute gala dinner raises tens of thousands of dollars for hospitals across the Island. This year, all donations are going to the Prince County Hospital.

I was looking over the Women's Institute's website and I was enlightened to read their core values. I'll repeat them for all to hear: We focus on women, family and home. We believe in a culture of collaboration and sharing. We always strive to protect the environment. We believe that through education, leadership and goodwill we can build stronger communities.

I identify very strongly with these core values. It's no surprise, as my grandmother, Mary Trivers, was president of the Federated Women's Institute of Ontario from 1962-1965.

Their community work and volunteerism is extensive. They have provided scholarships and awards, which have helped hundreds of Islanders throughout the years. Their annual Roadside Cleanup is key to preparation for our tourism season. Their handcrafts, horticulture and art show at the provincial exhibition is a core destination at Old Home Week. The WI Active Like A Girl event promotes active lifestyles and helps celebrate international day of the girl.

These are just some of their initiatives and community involvement. For example, when the community held a public meeting about the Stanley Bridge roundabout, it was hosted at the Women's Institute hall and they provided a strong voice for the community: true community leaders, indeed.

I'm very honoured to be emceeding their gala dinner tonight. It will be an exciting night with a live and silent auction with some excellent prizes. I'm truly looking forward to what will be a fun-filled night with good laughs and cheer.

The Women's Institute is a crown jewel of Prince Edward Island organizations. I hope as many Islanders as possible can make it out tonight and help support them and the Prince County Hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

#### Questions by Members

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

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

Yesterday, during the debate on our bill to amend the *Municipal Government Act*, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment said the following: I live in the city, and you talk to the people in those apartments, and a lot are from rural PEI. And when you ask them why they moved to town, they say it's because there are no services in rural PEI.

#### **Services in rural PEI**

Question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Do you understand how insulting that is to many people in rural PEI?

**Mr. Myers:** Oh, good question.

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

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

It was a great debate yesterday in the House. I'm just relaying what some people are telling me.

People want rural PEI to be successful. I want rural PEI to be successful. What makes Prince Edward Island the great place it is for people to raise families and live here, is because of rural PEI. And the city is great

because of rural PEI. That's what I want to do is make rural PEI great.

**Mr. Myers:** We don't need your help.

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

**Mr. Myers:** We're doing fine on our own. We don't need your help.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member –

**Mr. Myers:** Stay in Charlottetown.

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

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

I looked at that as a ringing endorsement of how this government has hollowed services in rural PEI and it was basically supported by the minister.

Rural PEI has seen this government decreasing our services while forcing tax hike after tax hike on us.

Question to the minister: Why do you think amalgamation and higher taxes will do more for growing communities than ending the cuts and restoring services to rural PEI?

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

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

This government is totally committed to rural PEI. The Premier has created a department of rural development because he recognizes the importance of it. I wish the members across –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) Robert Ghiz.

**Mr. R. Brown:** – would recognize the importance of rural PEI –

**Mr. Myers:** Robert Ghiz did that.

**Mr. R. Brown:** – too. Because without rural PEI, without the vibrant communities in rural PEI, we would not have a great PEI –

**Mr. Myers:** Robert Ghiz (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** – as we have today, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) 90 million (Indistinct)

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

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

### **Erosion of government services in PEI**

Let's ask the Minister of Rural and Regional Development: Do you support the erosion of government services and forced amalgamation in this province?

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

**Mr. Murphy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker; pleasure to get up and answer some questions.

Of course, I support the development of rural Prince Edward Island. That's in my mandate and my mandate letter. I'll do everything I can to bring economic development to rural Prince Edward Island. That's why our government recently announced rural growth initiative –

**Some Hon. Members:** How much is that?

**Mr. Murphy:** – with \$2.6 million –

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

**Mr. Murphy:** – to help advance rural Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LaVie:** Not the rural development fund.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) laughing over there.

**Mr. LaVie:** \$5 million (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** Rural Prince Edward Island back (Indistinct)

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

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

The Minister of Communities, Land and Environment blames his forced amalgamation on rural PEI because there are no government services.

We have seen this government come for our schools twice –

**Mr. Myers:** Shame.

**Ms. Compton:** – this government has come for our emergency rooms and our health services –

**Mr. Myers:** Shame.

**Ms. Compton:** Islanders all across Prince Edward Island are concerned.

### **Restoring services and growing community**

Does the Minister of Rural and Regional Development agree that restoring opportunities and services and growing our communities is a better solution than forced amalgamation?

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

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

I support the growth and development of rural Prince Edward Island and I support the communities being the makers of their own destiny. The Three Rivers project came – it was community-based. That was driven by the community. And all along our government has been saying it: we're not going to force amalgamation on anybody that doesn't want it.

I don't know where this line of question is coming from.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

We did a little research here from the Legislative Services and found out that only 11% of positions in the provincial government are located in Kings County –

**Mr. Myers:** What?

**Ms. Compton:** – and only 8% in West Prince.

**Mr. Myers:** No.

### **Provincial government jobs in rural PEI**

**Ms. Compton:** To help rural communities create their own destiny wouldn't it be a great idea if we took some of those over 10,000 positions in the provincial government, including the civil service, health, education, only 11% in Kings County and only 8% in West Prince, wouldn't it be a great idea to move some of those jobs into rural PEI –

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

**Ms. Compton:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Myers:** There it is.

**Mr. Trivers:** There's a solution for you.

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

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

The previous Liberal administration did move the department of fisheries and rural development to Montague. The department of education to Summerside, We built a new Holland College facility in Alberton –

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

**Mr. Fox:** What's that got to do with government jobs?

**Mr. R. Brown:** They're government jobs.

**Mr. Murphy:** These are government jobs and I think we'll continue to look –

**Mr. R. Brown:** (Indistinct) Holland College.

**Mr. Murphy:** – for opportunities to support rural Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

11% in Kings County; 8% in West Prince.

**Mr. Myers:** Shame.

**Ms. Compton:** We're talking about growing our rural communities and growing the economy. We're talking about ensuring people want to stay in their communities –

**Mr. LaVie:** Wouldn't mind having a doctor.

**Ms. Compton:** – the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment spoke yesterday about the fact that they don't want to because the services aren't there. While, if there were jobs, people would live there. They would stay in rural communities.

Cuts to schools, health care and an unequal distribution of provincial jobs.

Question to the minister: Why are you allowing the minister of communities, from downtown Charlottetown, to run down rural PEI and why is this government not distributing more government jobs, more fairly in rural areas?

**Mr. Myers:** Good question.

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

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

That was one of the reasons why people switched governments in 2007, because the former Tory government wanted to divide Prince Edward Island: urban and rural; wanted us to fight with each other all the time. That was their –

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** – mantra: get them fighting with each other. The Liberal government of the day said: no, we're one Island community. When we came to power, we wanted things right –

**Ms. Compton:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** – across Prince Edward Island –

**Mr. Myers:** It's called Charlottetown –

**Mr. R. Brown:** – you know what –

**Mr. Myers:** – (Indistinct) that one Island community (Indistinct)

**Mr. R. Brown:** – I am extremely proud to be an MLA from Charlottetown, but what makes me more proud is, I want rural PEI to grow. I want people to move to rural PEI because if it's good for rural PEI it's good for the City of Charlottetown –

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** – and it's good for people of Prince Edward Island.

I want to unite this province, not divide it, because that's (Indistinct)

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** – because that's what we should be doing.

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

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

Parents of young children are already struggling to make ends meet. That shouldn't be news to this government. After you pay for housing, food, transportation, many households don't have much left in their bank accounts.

### **Impact of discretionary spending of young Islanders**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Does your department worry about the impact that discretionary spending is having on the overall health and wellness of our young Islanders?

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

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

I'd like to thank the member for the question. A few weeks ago, we released our child report on Prince Edward Island that showed just where we are at this point in

time. Certainly there are areas of concern in that report, where children are experiencing difficulties and families are experiencing difficulties when it comes to best food health, in areas of development, in recreation. So, there's work to be done there, and we'll continue to work with families all across PEI to aid those situations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The minister should know that social determinants for health are complex. They include social services, personal health practices, culture, support networks, education and so on. At the end of the day, the overall health and wellness of our children has many moving parts, but it rests on his department's shoulders.

### **Social determinants of health**

Question to the minister of health: Does your department work with other departments to ensure that social determinants of health are being satisfied for our children and our youth?

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

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

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

This is a great opportunity for the Minister of Finance, who just presented, likely, the best budget in 40 years in the province of PEI. You want to talk about what we're doing for vulnerable Islanders, let's go back two years ago where we talked about the Generic Drug Program.

We just increased child subsidies of 400 spaces right across the Island. We've taken students from the cradle to a career; over 1,000 students with – likely coming from low income families – over 1,000 students with free tuition. We've increased the shelter rates; we've increased the food rates. We're looking after mental illness, which can be attributed sometimes to low income subsidies. We've decreased the rate of electricity.

We are looking after vulnerable Islanders and it's sometimes frustrating to hear the opposition continuously trying to paint a picture of desperation when the government of the day is looking after Islanders in many ways.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Research has shown that our children and our youth are not getting enough physical activity. One of the biggest barriers is the rising cost of living and the increased cost to participate in sport and recreational activities.

In 2016, the Liberal Party of Canada announced they were discontinuing the children's fitness tax credit that helped countless families ensure their children participate in sport and recreational activities. We're now starting to see the effects of losing this tax credit.

### **Tax credits cut for kids' sports**

Question to the Minister of Finance: Why is it that your Budget failed to provide assistance to families so their children could participate in programming that provides physical, social, and emotional benefits that can impact the rest of the children's lives.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we've been really trying to promote Be Aware & Get Your Share; \$25 million extra coming to the Province of Prince Edward Island – \$100 million over four years.

There are all kinds of initiatives out there that we're acting on as a government to ensure that we do look after our most vulnerable and the children of PEI. I've had many people come up to me since this budget has rolled out saying: Thank you, you're making life much easier. Not to mention the personal income tax exemption. Not to mention that we've got near 30,000

people and they're not paying any tax on Prince Edward Island anymore.

Thank you.

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

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

Aside from the lack of affordability, the next barrier that parents are identifying is the lack of time to allow their children to participate in these programs. More often we are seeing parents working multiple jobs in order to make ends meet, which means they have less time to provide elective opportunities like sports to their children.

### **Ensuring of physical activity for children**

Question to the minister of education: What is the department of education doing to ensure that children are receiving 60 minutes of moderate physical activity each and every day?

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

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

I'm happy to get this question because it lets me talk about the new health curriculum that we're developing and the fact that that's going to be rolled out this upcoming fall. But I also want to go back to the preamble to this question where the hon. member was talking about parents that were working.

As we noted here, we have had tremendous investment in our early childhood sector. That's allowing parents to get back to work; 700,000 is going into child care subsidies that's enabling that. We've set up programming to allow parents that work irregular shifts to be able to go to it. We've added spaces to the programming and overall, it's enabling children to have a better life that they had before.

Thank you.

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

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

The reality is that research shows that physical activity can be directly tied to academic performance. Teachers in this province agree that children need physical activity for proper development of their physical, social, and emotional wellbeing. The most recent physical education curriculum posted on the government's website shows that the minimum requirement is not in line with research that says children should be getting 60 minutes of physical activity each day. The curriculum only requires students in kindergarten to grade six to get 75 minutes of physical activity per week.

### **Allotted time for physical activity in schools**

Question to the minister of education: Do you stand by these standards, or do you believe that it's time the department of education take a serious look at the allotted time for physical activity at our Island schools?

**Mr. Trivers:** Easy solution (Indistinct)

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

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

This is something that the curriculum folks in our department do look at on a regular basis. I'm not going to profess to be a curriculum expert here today, but I will say this; from the last that I had heard, the curriculum experts were looking at new benchmarks in that area where we're looking at the time – kind of the intents of time to have that period of exercise on each day, or in given intervals, over the course of the week, rather than one prolonged period necessarily. We've seen a lot of different things in our schools including stationary bikes, including balls, including little stools the kids sit on in classrooms.

There's a lot of yoga and mindfulness being practiced now at schools that wasn't a couple of years ago. So, we're looking at this, but that's to say we always have room to improve and we're looking at doing that too.

**An Hon. Member:** Right on.

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

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

The teachers in this province obviously believe that physical activity plays a key role in the healthy development of our children. That's why you see them volunteering countless hours that they aren't paid for, coaching and providing extracurricular activities.

### **Health and wellness of children in province**

Question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: You obviously haven't talked to the Minister of Finance and you obviously haven't talked to the minister of education about the importance of physical education on the overall health of young Islanders.

Will you commit today to working collaboratively with other departments to lay a better foundation for the health and wellness for the children in this province?

**Mr. Trivers:** Illness prevention.

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

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

We, as a government, we understand how important physical activity is for our young Islanders all across our wonderful Island here. It provides – two-fold, actually hon. member – it develops their physical literacy skill, but it also develops confidence in our young people on Prince Edward Island.

That's why we recently signed our recent sport bilateral agreement with the federal government that helps us with funding so we can put dollars out into community organizations that are running organizations in communities all across Prince Edward Island – as well as Sport PEI, sport councils all across Prince Edward Island. So, we're making significant investments –

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Mitchell:** – because we know the full value of having our youth involved in sport and it's a multipurpose function for these youth to develop confidence, to develop academic skills, and develop athletic skills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Two weeks ago a large sinkhole was found by highway staff on the Irishtown Road, forcing the road to be closed after the culvert failed. Thankfully, there were no safety issues and staff from highways quickly responded to the situation.

### **Failed culvert on Irishtown Road**

Question to the transport minister: I understand that the old, failed culvert will be replaced with a new, larger culvert structure. How long will these repairs take?

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

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

The member's correct. It was, not really what we call a sinkhole, it was a failure of the culvert that was under the road, which caused that washout of that culvert. We did immediately call in a contractor to start that work. They were onsite immediately that day that it was found. We are increasing the size of that structure, actually. Work is ongoing and I can bring back an estimated completion time, but we will be working within the next couple of weeks and that should be wrapped up.

We are aware that there is a detour there, and we'll be very cognizant to have that completed as soon as we can.

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

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

The new larger culvert structure will be more durable and should last longer.

### **Cost of new culverts**

Question to the minister: How much will these costs – do these repairs take?

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

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

As it was an unbudgeted expenditure, obviously, I'll have to go back, hon. member, and determine what it is expected that that cost will be.

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

### Tenders for culvert work

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

Question to the transport minister: Was this work tendered?

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, due to the emergency that occurred because of that washout, we had to go out to the type of construction company that would be able to do that work onsite immediately. It was not a tendered process, no, because of the urgency that needed to have somebody onsite right away.

A tender process takes about a month, so we couldn't wait a month to put things out to tender because, as you say, you want to know when the work is going to be done and by the time a tender was done, we could have had the work done.

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

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

Well, the minister just stated that we didn't go out to tender on this process and we went to a company that does that work.

### Contractor from minister's district

Question to the transport minister: Why was this contract issued to a company directly from your district when there were other

companies closer that do the exact same work?

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, great question. Rob Vessey must have (Indistinct)

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

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

**Ms. Biggar:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, the company who got the contract to do this work is Noye & Noye Construction. They're not from my district.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

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

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

Well, maybe the Member from West Royalty-Springvale was onto something yesterday with his questions. Common sense would say to me and Islanders, that if you needed to make quick road repairs that you would use a contractor closer to the job site than your house.

Question to the minister: Is this a one-off case or is this political patronage?

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

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

As I said, we have to employ companies that have expertise in doing that particular kind of work. Again, to reiterate, the company that is doing that –

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

**Ms. Biggar:** – work is not from my district and I have no affiliation with them other than their families in the –

**Mr. LaVie:** They cut your grass.

**Ms. Biggar:** – area. They employ all kinds of different –

**Mr. LaVie:** They cut your grass.

**Ms. Biggar:** – political stripes as part of their workers.

**Mr. R. Brown:** Vessey must have picked (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, our main concern was to get on the job, get the work started, make sure the road is safe and get the work complete.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct) all it says.

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

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

Yesterday afternoon the third party introduced a motion calling on this Assembly to urge government to amend the *Elections Expenses Act* to ban corporate and union donations and also to set a cap on individual donations to political parties.

In response, the Premier spoke quite passionately about our electoral traditions, but perhaps the most single impressive aspect of the Premier's remarks was that he managed to talk for 17 minutes –

**Mr. Roach:** Question.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – minutes on this topic without once using the words 'union', 'corporate', or 'corporation'.

### **Banning of union and corporate donations**

A question to the Premier: Could you please state once and for all what your position is on banning union and corporate donations?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that the Leader of the Third Party is keeping track of the time that was spent speaking to that motion because the mover and the seconder spoke for a total of four minutes and 30 seconds, which doesn't indicate that they've got too much interest in the subject.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Clearly the fragile plant of democracy requires both water and fertilizer in order for it to thrive.

Yesterday the Premier also spoke about Islanders and supporters who contribute to our political wellbeing, and how we really need more of that type of engagement.

Again to the Premier: When you referenced these Islanders, were you thinking about the banks and the investment firms that donated \$25,000 to your last election campaign, or the over \$60,000 that your party received from construction companies?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'd recommend to the Leader of the Third Party that he go back and replay my remarks from yesterday. He must have; he got it to 17 minutes. I thought I spoke longer than that.

But in any event, as I recall, I spoke about supporters. I spoke about activists. I spoke about people who encourage people to nominate, that people who would engage on political issues. I was very clear that we're talking about the full span of Islanders who will engage in our democratic process and be encouraged and honoured and respected for what they do to take part in our political life, and I stick to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It would seem that the Premier cannot distinguish between corporations and actual people.

A question to the Premier: Why do you think it is acceptable for you and your party to take money from corporations and unions, when seven provinces and the federal government have already banned this practice?

**Mr. Trivers:** Apparently money buys respect (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about this going back to 2015 and I believe people in this Assembly have spoken about this for generations before that; to perfect, to build; to continuously improve our political process.

I don't think it's very healthy to approach that as if everyone, except apparently the Leader of the Third Party, is somehow up to no good, or to be dishonourable, or to be not contributing properly and democratically to what we're achieving around here. Some days, I wonder if the third party's program is that no one around here was either smarter or honest until they showed up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

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

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Prince Edward Island is heavily dependent on our road network, providing safe transportation to Islanders and to get our goods to market.

### **Recap pavement completed last year**

Can the minister please inform the House how much recap was done last year?

**Mr. LaVie:** And where and when?

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

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

Actually, Prince Edward Island has the most roads per capita in Canada –

**Mr. Myers:** Good MLAs get pavement. How come you don't?

**Ms. Biggar:** – with 5,375 kilometres. Just to recap, the amount that has been paved – in 2015 it was 66 kilometres; 2016, 77; 2017, there was 100 kilometres.

This year we expect to do in that range, and over that period of time there was also 120 kilometres of capital paving, for a total of 361 kilometres since 2015. That actually brings us up to about 10% of those roads being paved across PEI.

**Mr. LaVie:** 10% (Indistinct)

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your first supplementary.

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

My question is to the same minister. Yesterday, there were comments made about politics playing a part. I know how much my district received last year. Then I heard the long list of investments made in the District of Georgetown-St. Peters.

**Mr. Myers:** Good MLA.

### **Department decision for recap of roads**

**Mr. Roach:** Can the minister inform the House how the department decides which roads to invest in?

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

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct) I'll put it on Facebook (Indistinct)

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

There are many factors that go into how many kilometers of roads we're able to do on annual basis; one of that is asphalt prices. The other thing that comes into account is the traffic on those roads.

What this government did when Justin Trudeau's government came into power with us working as a partner, prior to that it had to have 10,000 cars on a road before you qualified for any kind of federal. Now, it's down to 1,000.

We concentrate on our economic connectors, as well; our farming areas, our fishing areas. That all comes into account –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters seemed to be –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – surprised how much he had. He might want to get out and have a drive around and see what I did do.

**Mr. Myers:** You know when I'm the focus of your questions things are going wrong over there.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, your second supplementary.

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

### Fair decision on investment of roads

My question is to the same minister: Can the minister inform the House whether investments in roads and recap have been made in a fair manner across this province?

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

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) Budget estimates.

**Ms. Biggar:** Mr. Speaker, the members across know that I have communication with them. What are your priority roads? If –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – you have a road –

**Mr. Myers:** You don't (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** – that's bad, I get calls. I get calls from the municipalities in that area. Calls from people who live on certain roads and I work with them.

There were some petty accusations –

**Mr. Myers:** You blocked me on Twitter.

**Ms. Biggar:** – made in this House yesterday –

**Mr. Myers:** You blocked me on Twitter.

**Ms. Biggar:** – from the Member from West Royalty-Springvale. If he would like to talk about conversations, he might want to talk

about his conversation wanting to be Lieutenant Governor and a senator.

**Speaker:** The hon. –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) yourself up.

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

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

My question today may have a different theme than the Leader of the Third Party's but it probably has the same content.

I've been approached by several young families in my district and their concerns is that all public places have proper baby changing stations so that mothers and fathers can change their baby's diaper without having to worry about it.

So many of these places are – restaurants and that, that are accessible it allows mothers and fathers the comfort and the privacy to spend their money at these places, and go to those places more often.

### Regulations for baby changing stations

Minister of Health and Wellness: Are there any regulations in place for seeing establishments to have baby changing stations on their premises?

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

**Mr. Perry:** Sorry, Peter.

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

Certainly, the health and safety of our youngest Islanders are top priority for the Department of Health and Wellness on Prince Edward Island.

Currently, the public health nurses have several programs for our Island infants; the immunization program, the baby reading program. We also have prenatal education and as well, as the breastfeeding supports program, and many, many others.

We do not have a policy on change tables. However, our inspections department do

inspect that the sanitary needs are met for those baby changing stations. But, we do not have any regulations in place, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I can certainly relate to these young families. I know back when my boys were younger they always chose the most inappropriate time to change the aroma in their surroundings.

Mothers and fathers should feel comfortable while they're out in public; if so, if the child needs to be changed that they should have a proper place to do this.

Minister: Will your department act upon this and put proper regulations in place?

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

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

Certainly, as mentioned, young families of new babies, certainly face a lot of challenges; sleepless night, for one, car – or getting their car seats ready for their vehicles, baby-proofing their house. They have a lot of things that they have to work with.

What we did initiate recently is the baby friendly initiative breastfeeding program. We work with facilities all across the Island; rinks, sports facilities, and commercial business, to establish areas where young mothers can breastfeed their babies in a very private, yet open way. We're continuing to work on programs such as those.

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

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

Young families are quite a bit different than our generation. They're on the move more. They're out spending money.

Would you consider putting incentives in place for restaurants and other

establishments to install or to implement baby changing stations?

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

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

Certainly, I am sure, as others on the floor of the Legislature are aware of, I'll say, commercial businesses that already have installed baby stations. We know when we are visiting those areas of business we see these facilities.

The university has one. Some rink facilities have them, as well. They do provide that service for those young families. I think, you know, as far as regulation of installation that would probably fall under some kind of a building code method. As far as incentives or anything of that nature, I think that would probably be something that we could look at through, perhaps, the family – with family and human services. Or, if it's a commercial area, perhaps we can develop a program, as well through workforce or something of that nature. We'll continue to look at options, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Let's get some truth.

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

**Mr. LaVie:** Some truth.

**Mr. Myers:** So after seven years, I've finally become the subject of a Question Period, which was actually pretty fun. A couple of clarifications that the minister needs to hear is that she didn't do anything, and neither did Justin Trudeau to change that collector roads thing. It was Rob Vessey and Denis Lebel who brought it in. He did all the work. You can't take the credit for him running your department.

As far as the open communication she has, everybody who is blocked on Twitter by her, which is the majority of Islanders, would know how open the communication is with her.

### Taxpayers' dollars used for protection of Liberal party

Question to the Premier: Premier, will you finally tell Islanders why you believe it's acceptable that you're using millions of dollars in taxpayers' money to further and protect the interests of your party?

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) what that is.

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, we have a budget of between 1.7 and \$1.8 billion. That was, indeed, further and advance the interests of all Prince Edward Islanders, whether that's in electricity rates, or child care spaces or health care or education or assistance for people who are vulnerable Islanders.

We're proud of that. I expect that's one of the reasons that we're in government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Cabinet approved \$2 million to a numbered company owned by Austin and Ramona Roberts. Ramona was one of the Premier's handpicked candidates, as you recall, in the last election; the one that actually lost to the Member from Borden-Kinkora. Talk is, the Premier is trying to line her up to run again.

Question to the Premier: Why is it your loan practice to use millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to secure yourself a Liberal candidate?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the hon. member in his long question used the word 'loan' that was probably the closest to an accurate representation of what this is that he came.

Austin and Ramona Roberts are great leaders in their community. They're great business people. They've got – I was out there to visit that place. I wasn't there for

political reasons; I get around the community. They've got well upwards of 200 employees in their various businesses. They're redeveloping that site at DeSable, which was defunct for 12 years or more.

This pattern of running down and defaming and denigrating good Island businesses is something that we've seen regularly from the minister from Morell-St. Peters –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – from St. Peters-Georgetown –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – and we've seen it from others across there. It's time we started recognizing what our Island businesses have done to advance and continue to do to advance our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I have a picture here. I'm going to talk about the picture later.

\$2 million, now \$2 million you gave to a vacant property in DeSable to a veiled Liberal candidate, who you're trying to get to run again. The same day, the same Cabinet meeting, a second loan of \$5.25 million was given to another business owned by Ramona Roberts and her husband.

### Dollars to secure Liberal candidate

Premier: Why are you using taxpayers' money to the tune of \$7.25 million to secure a Liberal candidate?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the word 'loan' had been deployed in the previous question, but you don't give a loan. This is done through a rigorous process through our investment agencies and those come forward through Treasury Board and Cabinet. They are done where there's a business case for it, where

there's a proven track record, where the money is being repaid –

**Mr. Trivers:** If only the information was public (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – where the money is being repaid, and there is no consideration whatsoever of whatever political affiliations people may have.

I can assure this House – I can assure this House that there is no link at all between the business relations – and it's a business relationship that the province has with the Roberts and whatever their politics might be.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

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

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

Well, I have a picture here that has Ramona Roberts' close – the Liberal Cabinet in her restaurant. So I have this here and I'll table it later.

### Timing of loans approved

Question to the Premier: did you approve Ramona Roberts' loans, both of them, at this meeting before this picture or after this picture?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, the facility where we met in Kensington that day, and I hope the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque was pleased to know that we were out there spending some money, was we were there for a meeting. We were there for the first time, in fact, to use that meeting room and we paid our bill and it was a perfect room for it.

As we arrived at the meeting, I said we should call Ramona to see if she'd come and see us because we're here in her place, being the first ones to use that facility and she came in her farm clothes because she was at the wash plant working. That was the extent. We were in her community and in her facility, and we invited her to come and see us, as we did the Mayor of Kensington,

Rowan Caseley, who came and joined us as well.

This is all about being out with our community and being associated with successes, whoever they're associated with, and we're proud of that. I'm proud of what we can see throughout the area of Kensington-Malpeque.

I want to say one more thing because they keep saying and saying about rural PEI, rural PEI – when we did the last electoral boundaries, we had three districts in this order that had grown relative to three elections ago.

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** The first was Stratford.

**Mr. Fox:** Bingo.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** The second was my district, York-Oyster Bed and the third was Kensington-Malpeque.

So, let's stop all of this rural-urban fighting that they're encouraging from the other side. Rural PEI is doing well and is doing well because of –

**Mr. LaVie:** Is this a statement?

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – the work of people like Rowan Caseley and Ramona Roberts who joined us for that lunch.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Well, that's an awful long ramble to defend how dirty Liberals have become here in Prince Edward Island. Dirty Liberals doing dirty Liberal work. Islanders aren't surprised with that.

I was down at the garage in Cardigan the other morning and I had a fellow told me he hurt his back and he had to go to the hospital and he was in Halifax for four months, and

he had a personal loan for his business because he couldn't get money from the government and he had to figure out a way to pay back every cent of those payments back, four of them, while he laid in a hospital bed with no help and no way of operating his business at all.

### Loans to businesses

Question to the Premier: Are you having so much trouble convincing candidates to run for you that you have to buy their way in?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, people in this House may recall that there was a lot of election talk here last Friday coming from across the floor and we tried to quiet that down. Now, they're trying to start it up –

**Mr. MacKay:** (Indistinct)

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Now they're trying to start it up again. I'm happy to say that I spend a lot of time getting around in this province and we don't have any trouble getting people to associate with our party, to support our party and to be prepared to run for our party.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

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

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

Well, we'll certainly see because I'm hearing some gems out there. You're going to have quite a bunch running –

**Ms. Biggar:** Buckle up.

**Mr. Myers:** – for you next time from what I hear.

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

**Mr. Myers:** This is the government here –

**Mr. LaVie:** We see them.

**Mr. Myers:** – dirty Liberal government doing dirty Liberal tricks and using taxpayers' money to help their dirty Liberal friends. That's what this is all about. It's dirty, and Islanders are sick of you guys, how dirty you are. I'm sick of it.

Your taxes are through the roof. You're jacking taxes up on Islanders. A normal Islander can't get a business loan because they're not a dirty Liberal.

### Even playing field for all Island businesses

Question to the Premier: When are you going to stop the political abuse of taxpayers' dollars and let everyone in at a fair and even playing field even if they're not a dirty Liberal?

**Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** Mr. Speaker, that may be clear on this point, that as the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism tells us on many occasions, our loan portfolio was throughout the province 60% in rural district; \$30 million, Member from Georgetown-St. Peters in the Georgetown-St. Peters district.

Good businesses; we believe in them. I hope you don't think and go back and tell them they're dirty. I guess that's what you think you said today. But, let's be clear, and this is what we talked about yesterday when no one from the official opposition was prepared to even get up and speak on the motion that the third party –

**Mr. Myers:** I was on the list and wasn't given a change (Indistinct). You filibustered it.

**Premier MacLauchlan:** – dealt with so briefly.

People who support political parties – and we still believe in political parties, by the way – people who support political parties in this province should be recognized and encouraged for their engagement in the political process and people who do well in business should be encouraged and supported and recognized for the success that they're producing and there's no connection between the two, but all of them

should be respected because they're great Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

#### **Advanced Care Planning**

**Mr. Mitchell:** This Sunday, April 16<sup>th</sup> is National Advance Care Planning Day, a day of awareness and action for all Canadians.

Many people think that advance care planning discussions are about death and dying. In actual fact, it's about how well you want to live. Advance care planning is about sharing your values and wishes with your family and health professionals now, not later, because you never know when you may face an unexpected event or illness and lose the ability to speak for yourself.

Conversations about living well and dying well can be challenging, which is why Hospice PEI and Health PEI developed a free online workbook, to help walk you through this process. The online workbook has launched last spring and since then, we've had over 10,000 Islanders visit the website, with 300 downloading the workbook and more than 60 completing the online registration. The new tool is helping individuals to think about the important people in their life and suggests ways to start what can be a very difficult conversation.

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

We have all been moved over the past week by the tragedy of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, and a stark reminder that unexpected events do happen.

In closing, I want to commend Hospice PEI for their work on this initiative – and all of our healthcare professionals who work

diligently for the betterment of Islanders, including palliative care staff, physicians, nurses, home care supporters, paramedics, our patient navigators, councilors and many others.

Joining us in the gallery today we have: Nancy Marie Arsenault, Executive Director of Hospice PEI; Ellen Davies Ward, Executive Assistant for Hospice PEI; as well, we have staff from our provincial palliative care centre. With us today is Sharon Ruckley, Palliative Care Resource Nurse; Peter Howatt, Provincial Palliative Care Centre Manager; and Dr. Mireille Lecours, our Provincial Palliative Care Medical Consultant. Thank you all for the work you do each and every day and make Islanders' lives better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Thank you the minister for the statement on advance care planning that's being celebrated today and this weekend.

It's a wonderful initiative and I want to give so much credit to the members of Hospice PEI as they would know, Alycia McGuire helps host the Brian McGuire Memorial – the Onion Tournament out in Crowbush every year. They do wonderful work. My mother's been trained as well. Much appreciated.

I'd also like to mention Peter Howatt is here, who was a mentor of mine when I first started in the healthcare department when I first graduated. I appreciate you and all your colleagues' work that is done too. The minister said it best, you're right: It's never too early to start planning for any type of event, so I applaud the initiative and all the work that everybody here's doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The minister in his statement mentioned the tragedy that happened a week ago today and I think when something as awful as that happens, if there's anything good that can be rescued from that – and certainly the spike in donations – people willing to donate their organs – is an example of that. So, I appreciate your reference to that, minister.

I also want to pay homage to the work done in the Hospice PEI, the palliative care unit. One of my sons is a music therapist and the most meaningful work, the most touching work that he does is when he goes from nursing daycares all the way to palliative care units and he tells me it's the most meaningful and touching work that he does. I want to thank you for that. It's such an important service to us at the most difficult time of our lives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **PEI Centre for Craft, Culture Action Plan Update**

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

I would also like to start by welcoming Lily Reaman, the Executive Director of the PEI Craft Council to the gallery along with Michelle MacCallum.

Last November, government committed to supporting the work of Prince Edward Island's cultural and creative industries for the long term by launching our first ever culture action plan.

I am very pleased to say that in five months we have: supported over 17 artists in arts grants; renewed the provincial Art Bank by purchasing a total of \$20,000 in art from 12 artists; invested \$50,000 into FilmPEI to help expand the Screenwriters' Bootcamp to include more training for the film industry; invested \$50,000 in artsVest, an organization that provides training and sponsorship opportunity for artists; funded the Black Cultural Society of PEI for Black History Month celebrations; supported youth programming at The Guild; funded the PEERS Alliance for youth programming for

LGBTQ+ youth; and provided Fédération culturelle with \$10,000 for an Acadian craft development project.

The cultural action plan is a collaboration between my Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture and of economic development and tourism. Working together with the Minister of Economic, Development and Tourism, government's dedication to culture is twice as strong.

*Monsieur le Président, les industries culturelles et créatives sont une priorité de notre gouvernement.*

That's why our new 2018-2019 operating Budget invests more than \$1.45 million to support this vibrant and thriving industry.

Craftspeople are ultimately small business people in their own right, and our 2018-2019 Budget will generate savings for the Island's small businesses that they can use to reinvest and to grow. A small-business tax cut will save individual businesses up to \$2,500 a year, and a small business investment grant will give companies a 15 percent rebate on their business investments up to \$25,000, saving them up to \$3,750 each year.

There are many more investments to come from the culture action plan and I look forward to sharing over the next coming months, but I am very pleased to share one with you here today. A specific action item from the cultural action plan was to invest in a craft development centre in partnership with the Prince Edward Island Crafts Council. And indeed, we are doing just that. Our government will invest \$115,000 in the new PEI craft centre – soon to be open at 98 Water Street in Charlottetown.

Culture grows and thrives through collaboration. The PEI Centre for Craft will allow craftspeople to meet, mentor, and network, while providing a space for their craft to be enjoyed by Islanders and visitors alike. It will make the public more aware of fine craft and help cultivate export markets and employment opportunities in the Island's crafts industry. This new centre exemplifies the best of what makes us the mighty Island – innovative, hard-working Islanders using our small size and

connectedness to our advantage to make big things happen.

*Pour terminer, Monsieur le Président, j'invite tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative, les médias et l'industrie des métiers d'art à se joindre à moi après cette séance au tout nouveau Centre des métiers d'art de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard au quatre-vingt-dix-huit, rue Water à quatorze heures pour partager plus de détails au sujet du centre et pour souligner les activités à venir.*

Mr. Speaker, I invite everybody to 98 Water Street at 2:00 p.m. to partake in the opening.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Certainly a great announcement, minister. Any time we get to rise in the House and talk about the great arts and culture on PEI, certainly a booming business on PEI right now. We've got a very unique culture on Prince Edward Island. You tour – no matter – tip-to-tip, Souris to Tignish and you see so many businesses, small businesses, striving with this right now. Great announcement – also, anytime you can stand and talk about the film industry on PEI – we were missing the boat on this one for years, so I'm glad to see government has listened and are investing in that. We've got some of the nicest viewscapes in the world and to show the rest of the world what we have to offer is certainly great.

So hopefully these investments continue in the future and wish each and every small business a great summer as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

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

It's great to see Lily and Michelle in the gallery here today. I've had the pleasure and privilege of working with both of these great women leaders in a number of different capacities right back to a booth at the

Farmer's Market in 1997 with Michelle, so a pretty hands-on experience of crafts in PEI.

The Crafts Council was formed in 1965 and incorporated in 1975 and it's been a key player in the story of what PEI looks like and feels like in promoting, supporting, and nurturing the handcraft and artisanal community in PEI. And it has really been challenging for that organization to do its good work under the radar, in some cases, as not being recognized in the same kind of breath as perhaps some of the other industries and sectors in the community.

So, it is so refreshing to see the economic impact and value of the cultural sector being recognized by this government and I am so pleased to see that happen. It has been a long time coming. There's been a huge amount of work done on this and this is a great start.

What I would like to encourage the government to ensure that they consider in that long term planning – and I'm sure it's in there because you've got great people working on it – is that a initial investment in a well-needed craft development centre of \$115,000 should not only be an initiative investment, but ongoing and expanded operational funding for a long-term basis because these things take time.

So, I'm hoping to see a longer term plan that not only gives that initial funding, but provides further to provide good, solid support. Obviously there's a broad span of other funds that are out there and that would be the same story from us to you, is that long-term investment, consistent support, and recognition of growth and development.

The other piece is to see this being done in cooperation with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism is again, I would strongly support there being a dedicated support officer and dedicated programs who recognize the value of this as separate from, perhaps, our more traditional investment in export-ready small business.

So, again, thank you to the government for having put their money where their mouth is with this commitment and please make that a long-term one so that this sector can finally get the support that it is so needing.

Thank you.

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

### **Federal/Provincial Infrastructure Funding**

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

It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize the continued federal-provincial investments in infrastructure that are helping our Island communities grow, prosper and thrive.

By pooling our resources, the federal and provincial governments, often in collaboration with municipalities and community partners are making important investments that protect our province, keep travellers safe, assist our traditional industries and enable economic growth.

Since 2015, this collaboration has meant over \$218 million in investments to provincial highways, public transit, water and wastewater projects. Not to mention another \$142.5 million for the installation of new submarine cables connecting Prince Edward Island to the mainland; the largest infrastructure in our province since the Confederation Bridge.

These are investments that improve the quality of life of Islanders and support the continued growth and development of our Island communities.

I want to thank the federal government for being responsive to the Island's needs and for working with the province and municipalities across PEI. Because of this partnership, Prince Edward Island was instrumental in securing a change to funding criteria for roads and bridges that benefits the entire community and across PEI.

For Prince Edward Island, this funding criteria change has resulted in an additional 650 kilometres of strategic Island roads now being eligible for funding. These roads are critical routes for commerce, for tourism and for keeping our Island's communities connected.

Some of this work has included; Cascumpec Bridge, Route 1 in Mount Mellick, Route 4 in Cardigan Prim Rose, Route 1A Central Bedeque, Route 2 Miscouche, south west

Lot 16, and Route 6, Kensington Margate, as well as all aspects of the Trans-Canada Highway extension in Cornwall.

Later today, I will be joining the federal minister of agriculture, Lawrence MacAulay, to announce further investments in our Island's highway network. I would like to invite all hon. members of this Legislative Assembly to join us at Stratford Town Hall at 2:00 p.m.

The Province of Prince Edward Island will continue to be strategic, choosing infrastructure projects that help support our province's continued economic growth for all communities.

Thank you.

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

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

I agree with the minister, federal-provincial infrastructure projects are very important to, not only, urban areas, but also rural PEI. The point of that is, though, they must be equally accessed across the whole province.

We must make sure everybody's getting a piece of the pie. We must also take into account, these infrastructure projects; climate change. It's something that I've been saying overly and overly, that we must make sure that our infrastructure today that we're putting in the ground is going to be able to deal with climate change, environmental changes down the road.

I think, we remember back, I think, it was last year, I talked about, we're putting in 16 inch culverts. Should we be moving now to 24 inch culverts? Different municipalities have done some work with improving underground culverts in raising them to deal with tidal surges and also increasing the sea levels.

We also must take into account when we're dealing with infrastructure, especially roads, the transportation industry. We're not – the roads of today are – were made back in the 1970s, the 1960s, the early 1980s and they were based on a lot of trucks that were only carrying tandem axles. Now, we're seeing a lot of trucks on the road that have tri-axles

and quad trailers, and there's increased weight. We must make sure that we're building our roads to deal with that increased weight.

I also believe the cable project was a great project. It was much needed for the province. It was something that I said that we needed in the ground or under the water as quick as possible. But we must make sure – and I wish the member, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism was her –, but I wish and hope that the cable project in going forward –

**Mr. MacDonald:** Just have a meet with your leader.

**Mr. Fox:** – also takes into account the City of Summerside.

The City of Summerside needs open access to the power coming across the cables and we must make sure. I know the minister has been working with the City of Summerside on this. I hope that these talks do continue because it is very important.

Infrastructure projects help with employment across PEI. They help with all business across PEI. We must make sure our small businesses get a kick at that cat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Clearly, it's very important for every province and we're no different, to enter into these funding agreements with the federal government in order to update and maintain the infrastructure that we have.

The minister mentioned that with the new agreements with the federal government over 600 new kilometres of Island roads become eligible for the 50 cent funding, the 50/50 funding with the federal government.

This is great because, as the minister also said, this morning, we have the largest number, or the most roads per population, kilometres per population, than any province in this country. And maintaining what we

have is a real challenge, partly for that reason, the substructure of the roads and the weather that we endure here on Prince Edward Island, are other factors.

Clearly, the maintenance of the roads that we have is a challenge. We only have to look to the Irishtown Road, that was mentioned earlier this morning, as to what critical problems can suddenly appear.

Last year, we had an almost identical situation in West Prince where another collector road suddenly developed a large sinkhole, almost identical to what happened in Irishtown Road.

One wonders what other ticking time bombs lie under Island roads from tip-to-tip. That's where I have a problem with the focus of this government's spending. In that the majority, \$30 million of provincial funds and a similar amount of federal funds are going into the Cornwall bypass. Money that could be used to upgrade and protect and preserve those roads that Islanders travel on every day and which create problems –

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – I want to make – because this is, perhaps, an opportunity for me to do so, the Premier, sort of, inferred that until the Green Party arrived in this House there was nobody of intelligence or integrity here. I take exception to that. I have given great credit to current members and past members of this House –

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** – for clever decisions; for good things that have been done here. I claim to be no smarter than anybody else in this House. But the Green Party is doing its bit to restore trust and faith of Islanders in government and in politicians.

When we hear the rhetoric, and there was an example of that this morning, one side implies and I will use more temperate language than was used: you're unethical rascals. Yeah, maybe we are, but you are unethical rascals when you had your hands on the levers of power. That sort of conversation, if you can call it that, does nothing to restore trust and faith of Islanders in government.

I don't claim to be any smarter, but I do claim to be doing everything I possibly can to restore Islanders' trust and faith in government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Before I give way to the hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, I want to give way to the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning for recognition.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of  
Guests (II)

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

I'd like to welcome everyone to the gallery, but a special welcome to my wife and my three grandsons. It makes me feel very special that you would come down here on PD day to see grampy.

I'll introduce them –

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

**Mr. Gallant:** We'll go from the youngest to the oldest. I'd like to welcome; Brysen Gallant, Fischer Gallant –

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

**Mr. Gallant:** – and Jaxon Arsenault. You know grampy is a nice weather fisherman, but if it's a nice day Sunday, maybe we can go fishing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Casey:** Oh my god, they're adorable.

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

**Retirement of Mayor Clifford Lee**

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

On behalf of my portfolio as minister involved in municipalities, I'd like to recognize Mayor Clifford Lee for this tremendous leadership in the City of Charlottetown over the past 30 years.

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

**Mr. R. Brown:** The mayor and I go back a long way. We grew up in the same neighbourhood, the east end of Charlottetown. We served on city council together, and we had the opportunity to work together on many projects that improved the city.

The city has seen significant changes under the mayor's leadership. Look at the waterfront today. Not too long ago it was – from one end to the other, was full of oil tanks and industrial sites. Now, it is a beautiful facility for all Islanders to enjoy.

We have the bypass, the transit system, and the city is recognized in North America as a tourist destination. Charlottetown is a great little city, and today I want to recognize Clifford Lee for his leadership in his role he played in creating our vibrant city. I know the mayor will work right til the end of his term.

What he said on the news last night about his greatest achievement, was the new funding formula with the Province of Prince Edward Island, and he was really proud of it, because for 30 years we've been fighting for a new formula for municipalities across Prince Edward Island, and this formula spreads the money all across Prince Edward Island. The mayor was supportive of that very much so.

I want to thank the previous finance minister for doing such a good job on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd like to echo the sentiments of the minister over there. I want to congratulate Clifford Lee on – I don't know if he necessarily said he's retiring; he's just not running for mayor again, but I'm sure we'll see Clifford again. I'm sure this isn't the last time we'll see Clifford. But as the minister said, Clifford has done a great job with the city here the past number of years. Charlottetown has come a long way. He's had some great guidance and leadership.

I want to talk about more of the other side; everybody else can talk about how the great of a job he did, and I think it's noted here in Charlottetown with his popularity, but how straight forward and straight shooting and how much he put the people who he represented before anyone else. Clifford would be a good model for any politician who wanted to get re-elected, that your constituents should come first and their needs should come first. Clifford did a very good job of that.

I know that we probably had some spats in the public realm, Clifford and I, but we are both trying to do what's best for the people that we represent and I have great respect for Clifford for doing that. Any time I ever meet Clifford, he has great words to say. We always have a great chat and I know we always will, so Clifford is a good guy. He's done a great job here with the city and maybe he'll aspire to something higher, who knows.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

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

I, too, would like to extend congratulations on behalf of the third party to Clifford Lee on his exemplary service in the last 30 years in his municipal roles.

I would particularly like to recognize the work that Charlottetown has done in being a leader in activities, particularly around inspiring people to be more engaged citizens; the Inspired City program itself; a collection of programs and initiatives around sustainability and community engagement have been examples of how to do it right.

With the integrated community sustainability plan, providing the objectives and goals for that programming; we saw micro-grant programs, art and culture awards, certified sustainable business awards, family violence prevention, pride festival support, and then also water metering, conservation and the lift assistance program. These are things that have directly impacted, not just sort of how citizens feel that they belong in their city, but also that

Charlottetown can be an exemplary example of how to implement great programs that have a great impact.

I would really like to thank Mayor Lee for his work in being a leader in those areas and stepping up into spaces that often going first is hard. So, it's been fantastic to see that and I wish him all of the success on behalf of the Green Party in whatever he chooses to do next.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

#### Tabling of Documents

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

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

Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table further information about the Irishtown Road, its completion date, cost and the contractor, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table details regarding the registered address location of Noye & Noye Construction that clearly states are in the minister's district of Tyne Valley and located at 12884 Enmore Road, Tyne Valley, 42 minutes –

**Ms. Biggar:** That's not my district.

**Mr. Fox:** – from the construction site and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

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

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the picture I spoke of the Cabinet meeting with Ramona Roberts earlier and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, 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

Government Motions

Orders of the Day (Government)

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

**Mr. Mitchell:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Finance, that the first order of the day be now read.

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

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

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

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point.

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

Hon. members, we are on page 56. The first section, finance and administration, has been read but has not been carried.

Permission to bring a stranger on the floor?

**Some Hon. Members:** Granted.

**Chair:** We'll wait until he gets set up.

Could you introduce yourself and your position for the record?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** Chris DesRoche, Director of Finance and Administration.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Hon. members, just so we get started off on the right foot, we're directing our questions to finance and administration.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

I had mentioned in my earlier remarks today about having two young students with us. The minister knows both of them pretty well. These two young students are quite interested in art. If you can beg my indulgence for a second, but probably more specifically about the art curriculum and how is the department trying to work that in?

We know we've got some really good teachers that try and introduce that to their class, but I don't know if it's a real strong part of our current curriculum.

Are your curriculum experts looking at ways to introduce more of that culture, more of that creative side in the classroom?

A lot of teachers want to do it, but, as you know, minister, there are so many things they've got to check off with those curriculum guides to do, it's often hard. Are we looking at getting more arts and culture into our curriculum, specifically in the early years?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thanks, hon. member.

Happy that you brought that question up; We do actually have some great programming going on in relation to the addition of arts into our curriculum. In

particular, Vicki Allen-Cook, who works in our department is working on that.

Hon. member, in further detail, I guess, she is working on the implementation of a new STEAM program, which is basically the STEM program with arts added into it. That, overall, is being added into our curriculum on an ongoing basis.

I should mention, too, that ArtsSmarts is another huge project that has become a great success story in education, early learning and culture. It's a great example, I think, too, of how really something like arts can, kind of, integrate all the aspects of our department into it along with the community.

I'll give you a great example that was done or coordinated through Dina Blot, who is an artist here on Prince Edward Island. She actually moved here fairly recently, so one of those great mighty Island success stories. She was awarded a grant to do a project at West Royalty school that finished earlier this year.

What they did, I think there 70 students. It was three, I think, grade 4 classes, if memory serves correctly. What she had kind of lined up was that they were going to do an ecosystem. What they did was effectively a saltwater marsh or a barrier between a waterway and land that involved a saltwater marsh. You can see it at West Royalty school now. There are three panels that represent the three different areas of that ecosystem. There were 70, I'm going say, animals, I'm not even totally sure that that's the right term, but 70 living things that each of the kids were assigned one. They had to research what that was. Then, they had to use the materials that she provided to actually build those beings, and paint them and whatever else. And then put them in the ecosystem where they would naturally be.

This, after it was all done, exists now on the walls at West Royalty school. It's a phenomenal story of how a local artist has taken the time to go into the school system and really look at a holistic project that is engaging for kids, to, kind of, work on and take that through.

You can only imagine and I'm sure Roisin and Rylan would be pretty excited with a

project like that particularly, knowing Roisin's mother, Heather, and how she likes to work with things like that, as well. That's the kind of thing that you would remember, probably, for the rest of your life when you work on that at school. There's a lot of cool stuff going on with that right now.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Just a follow-up.

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair, I appreciate your indulgence with this topic.

I couldn't agree more. That is the stuff that you remember. You learn everything. That's the stuff that you take with you. I know in Rylan's class, yesterday, in the Grade 5 curriculum they do the medieval day, where they all perform and they go through it, so it's quite good.

Chair, I appreciate your indulgence just bringing that up with our special guests here today. I'll let you get back to finance and administration.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

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

I just want to finish up on the theme I was on last night about the capital part. I probably won't have a whole lot more question, period.

We talked about the meeting that's Monday night and we talked about the overcrowding capacity issue in Charlottetown last night. You talked about some of the solutions that you have.

Can you, kind of, give us a brief overview of what proposed solutions there's going to be to help the overcrowding issue that is in Charlottetown?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yes, and no.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I can't tell you what the proposed solutions are going to be because they've not been developed, yet.

Where the Public Schools Branch is with this, and this is what I was saying last night. They have, kind of, undertaken the first parts of the planning process to look at what those issues are; look at the impacts of the rezoning that was done over the course of last winter for the first time in 20 years, and get a good picture of where we are, and what, kind of, the hot spots are.

It was actually interesting, over the course of the news there, last night, there was some conversations about housing in Charlottetown. I'm not sure if you picked up on that or not. There was an indication; I think it was, East Royalty is approved for 150 acres of developments. There's something like 850 approved building lots out there. That's just the tip of the iceberg. Stratford, I'm sure, has a lot of capacity to come on as well as West Royalty. The Premier indicated that his district is one of the quickest growing on Prince Edward Island right now, as well.

Overall, we are growing by tremendous leaps and bounds and we've even seen it in my district where we have a lot of immigrant families that are coming in with young children that are school-aged.

It's to get a handle on, kind of, what the trends are. And after things have settled out from the rezoning process, what capacity looks like on a heat map, if you will. They've got some new data on that. They'll be taking a look at that. Then, they'll have to look at what the infrastructure picture looks like on the long-term. They'll have to figure out what they need, in terms of an ability to analyze that on a go forward.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, that's great. Just one more question and it has to do with the Montague consolidated overcrowding issue.

I've heard, I have a pretty good knowledge of it. My sister is on the home and school and the district advisory council rep, so at family dinners it has come up.

I have an understanding. I guess I know what causes the issue and it's that all of the other schools feed into that for French

immersion. I would say that the large portion of the overcrowding issue is caused by the number of students that come in from outside.

What do they have to do to get theirs on the radar, I guess? What do they have to do to get their plight of overcrowding on the radar?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Again, hon. member, it's the Public Schools Branch that looks at this data and deals with it. I would guess that they – I haven't – I can't say that I recently had a specific conversation with, as an example, Deputy Willis or Parker Grimmer or anybody from the Public Schools Branch, specifically in relation to overcrowding at Montague consolidated.

But, they do look at that. I know they're looking at school infrastructure in the Montague area overall. I would suspect that that would be, kind of a, long-term, medium to long-term, I should say, consideration of the needs that the Public Schools Branch has going forward.

**Mr. Myers:** Okay, thank you.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

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

Yesterday we were speaking about the grants section in the finance administration. Can I confirm, Chair?

**Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Bell:** So I thank you for the story around the clarification around some of where these grant lines come from.

You had mentioned that these applicants have to reapply every year, but also the amounts that they are getting have not changed and so I'm wondering about: a) Why would, if it's a recurring funding agreement, then why are they required to reapply if things aren't going to fundamentally change? If it's recurring operational costs, then it's not a grant. It's an operational cost. And certainly some of the line items in here, things like: school milk programs, or athletic associations, or so on are recurring things. So I guess my

question is: What other measures are you expecting when people have to do applications if the funding is going to remain the same?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sure. Thank you for the question.

So, I'll just say a few things or touch on a few themes, maybe, in relation to this. The first is that: When you look at the list of grants that's there, whether it's our government or past governments in the province, there's been a historical commitment to a lot of these organization and these types of organizations, but in addition to that – and I would say to you the reason that you kind of do that on a year after year basis – and I'll take this back to the breakfast programs as an example.

Our government in 2015 doubled the commitment – upped it by \$100,000 – to the breakfast program and changed the structure of that to make it so that all of that money was going directly out to school breakfast programs, rather than having a lot of it tied up in the administration of the programs. So it's to kind of constantly be vigilant in relation to what's going on and ensure that when public money's being given out in the form of a grant, that you're looking at the complete list of your community needs in the context of each other and doing your best to determine that as a whole, your community is getting good value for the dollars that you're putting out there in grant money.

**Ms. Bell:** I appreciate hearing that the value for money is part of it, especially when it is about programs that have a significant community impact like food programs.

Two questions, one of them is: If that increase isn't here, where is it? Because the line item, again, hasn't changed. And if you are allocating the same amount of funds though the community need is changing, why would you not be increasing those funds? To be really clear, I'm advocating for people to get more funding if that is what they need, but if the line item is the same every time, then there doesn't seem to be a measure – any reflection of the actual need in the community. If it's being put somewhere else, then where is it being allocated?

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, you asked me about, as an example, the breakfast programs. As I indicated, that was a 2015 commitment to double that budget.

**Ms. Bell:** And you'd said it'd been doubled and it's been made \$500,000, but the line item here is \$200,000, so where is the other \$300,000 in the Budget?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry, no. I said it doubled and it went up by \$100,000 to \$200,000.

**Ms. Bell:** I see.

**Mr. J. Brown:** In 2015, okay?

**Ms. Bell:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, I don't know if that answers your question, but I mean –

**Ms. Bell:** Not really.

**Mr. J. Brown:** The reality is, again, I wish we could sit here today and look at these and double every one of them. I'm sure everybody that's involved in a community organization or that's touched by one wishes that we had a bottomless pot of money.

The Minister of Rural and Regional Development mentioned there today that we do have a great new program to focus on building communities that our government has initiated here through this budget. It's to look at – as we see here, we have, in our department, a list of three pages long of grants. So, when you tally it all up, we think it's a great program to deliver to Prince Edward Islanders and we think that we do our level best to ensure that when we put them out, that impact, as the Premier mentioned earlier today in today Question Period, is in the areas that Prince Edward Islanders would like to see it the most at that particular point in time. That's kind of the way these are set up.

**Ms. Bell:** And I appreciate that. Again, coming from having worked with clients and being one of those clients that has to go through that process or reapplying, if there are not objectives and measures that sort of say: a) Is this actually meeting an identified need and if that need is increased, how do we have that conversation that says that the

time it takes to negotiate may take two or three years, but not every program should be doubled – though I'm sure they wouldn't say that themselves, but that also just that when you see exactly the same year-to-year, it doesn't give great confidence that those have been reassessed because every grant line item is exactly the same.

It would be great, perhaps, in another conversation or in future conversations to talk about what performance measures are being used to assess efficacy and value and need – because like you said: If you, over a year ago, doubled the breakfast program by \$100,000, that says that that program – that that was a need. Yes, making those priorities is part of that story.

Chair, I guess my second question to that – that wasn't really a question. My question is: In that case, where do new projects get funded? Because these are ongoing and where in this section do you do the new project funding allocation? Is it in here, or is it somewhere else?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Two questions – I'm going to do my best to address them with the long preamble.

The first was in relation to the breakfast program and I'll just give you a little kind of overview of the impact that that's had. The school breakfast programs, my recollection is, are now done – or school, meal, and snack programs, I should actually say because that's what they've evolved into – are now done in 67 schools across Prince Edward Island. They serve 40,000 meals or snacks to 10,000 students across the run of a week. So, the impact of those programs on communities has been huge and that's not to say – really, that \$200,000 that goes into that has leveraged huge amounts of community volunteer work and huge amounts of community money.

Again, when you look – to try and answer your question as best I can – you look at areas of need based on what the community is coming forward and saying: we need. A breakfast program was one of those. And when you see a bunch of community volunteer organizations or businesses within your community – I can think of one at St. Jean's School, MRS Accountants, goes to

St. Jean's School and puts on a breakfast for the students that are there. When you start to see organization like that that are rallying around those sorts of things, you know that – if you can put a little bit on the table, that's going to be matched by a lot of others. That's not to say that everything you put a grant towards is going to necessarily be matched by others, but you start to get a pretty good sense of the need over the course of time.

Again, the idea is to look at that and to determine – I think a big piece of that is we come back here every year with this handout. We all know what's going on in our communities and we all collectively look at this and we approve collectively in our budget a grants line item where grants are going out into our community, so we know where the money's going. We have the ability to come back to, in this case, myself, or our department, and say: We think that this organization should get more money for next year, or whatever the case might be.

I think it's a pretty effective way – and you have to look at, too – I mean overall, there's a large dollar value going out in relation to grants, but if you start looking at the line items, you've got a lot of them there that are \$5,000 or less and so you have to be very cognizant of how much you spend administering those grants and that can be a big issue when you're looking at those microgrants you'd often hear them called.

**Ms. Bell:** Just a couple of things on there: I'm very familiar with how much the community works to leverage that funding because I actually have been a long time volunteer on school breakfast programs and work in my community to help them manage. I know how much volunteer work makes those happen.

I think the other thing, too, is when you talk about the burden of, for instance, having to reapply every year for it, there is an administrative burden on both sides. There's a burden for those within the department, but there's also a burden for those non-profit organizations who have to go through significant work to demonstrate their ongoing need.

Again, I think we both know that is part of that story and in the context the scale of these grants is really quite small, on a scale of the overall budget. So, I will be very clear that I'm advocating always for better funding and support for non-profit and community organizations that do great work.

In terms of my section question; my second question is: Where does funding show up for new projects and new initiatives? You mentioned the STEAM program was one of those. If there is actually a non-profit called STEAM PEI, Amber Jadis is one of the co-founders of that one, so I'm wondering if there is an instance where new project funding is done in cooperation. So again, a two-part question: Where does the funding show up and what partnerships are done in communities?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Again, you would see new funding show up in this particular section. There are no instances of new funding this year, but you would see it show up and this is where you would see it. An additional line item would be added.

**Ms. Bell:** In here?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** We do recognize that there is a process to apply for this funding every year and we appreciate our community partners for taking the initiative to do that and you do see how important that gets to be.

We've seen instances where, through complacency or whatever, it doesn't happen. I do need to say that that can sometimes be a signal that maybe it's time to look at other things as well. Our focus has been on frontline programs that leverage community involvement or that leverages something that enables a community to thrive as a result of that grant.

In terms of the work that Amber does, I would commend her. She has been a force in the, what I'm going to call, community education field. She's done tremendous work and I wish her the best, and her family the best, as she goes through a bit of a tough time.

**Ms. Bell:** Difficult time, yeah.

Chair, my last question in this section is just – you mentioned investments that aren't in here. So, they're investments that are happening internally rather than grants externally, but there are two things. One of them is ArtSmarts that you mentioned which actually shows up in another section, but the entire funding in your budget is \$26,000 for ArtSmarts which, again, great, but not a lot of money when we've got 67 schools to implement art programming.

And your STEAM program; when you've got initiatives happening internally, I'm not quite sure with 'complacency' is perhaps the word I would use, but often great initiatives happen in the community and there is an opportunity with a small amount of funding from your department that you can actually, again, leverage as you do with the breakfast program to leverage great things to happen in the community without it needing to be a full on, full-line investment from government.

It would be really a positive move to think from that context. I am absolutely clear that I am not advocating for cuts of funds, but I am advocating for perhaps mostly creative allocation of funding. But, I appreciate your information on filling out the details on the grants in this section as presented.

Thank you, Chair.

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

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

I just have questions on one specific grant in this and it's the breakfast program grant and you've already mentioned, minister, that that doubled in 2015 and I'm assuming that the 40,000 meals and snacks you have for 10,000 kids, that's on a weekly basis, is it?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yes.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah, so it's a fantastic program filling a very large need in community.

In the school that my kids went to, Englewood, it was largely run or perhaps entirely run by volunteers there and I think

that's probably true for many of those programs. I'm not exactly sure when he was here, but cafeteria man, Tony Geraci, I think it was about a year ago, maybe a year-and-a-half ago and he looked at the system here that we have and the opportunities on PEI to create a universal, free lunch program. This is above and beyond, of course, the snack and breakfast program that we currently have.

**Mr. Trivers:** October 2016.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Oh, October 2016? Two years, goodness.

Now, Tony said all kinds of wonderful things about the potential here on PEI to create that universal, free lunch program and the benefits that would accrue from that; whether they would be educationally in terms of kids being properly fed, health and wellness in terms of the food they would be receiving, economic development particularly in rural areas; and of course the agricultural community by using local products.

It was a really beautifully integrated plan; something that he's been able to do successfully in Baltimore, I think, is the place where he started but has now spread to many places in America. But, he mentioned that PEI is the only place he's ever visited – and he goes all over the place doing this – where all of those elements were in place and we could do it here. I'm wondering if you have an update on – has a study been done to expand the pilot projects? I know some pilots have been started here; has that been costed? I know that Tony offered to do all of these things, or help us with that.

Has a study been done? Has it been costed and what are the plans, if any, to expand this across the Island?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, hon. member, for that question.

In part, where the money comes from for the work that's being done on this is actually the section of the budget that's been passed in ag and fish, but we were fortunate to get – and last year it was \$100,000 and my recollection is this year it's \$100,000 again to hire a staff person – I think she's a nutritionist.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Morgan Palmer, right?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yes, that's right. Morgan Palmer, who has worked with schools and Chartwells has the cafeteria service for a lot of our schools that have infrastructure for cafeterias, and to look at community organizations that can kind of partner with them or partner with a parent organization in the schools to be able to deliver that kind of a thing.

We have some tremendous examples that are coming together and I suspect, hon. member, this is not something that you can look at always having a cookie-cutter model that will work for every school community across Prince Edward Island. We've seen champions in this right from a particular parent that was recognized in Kensington this year for her involvement in the program. Hunter River has got a great program as well.

You can look at different examples across the province where different things are starting to happen, and Morgan has also put together a number of different events. One, as an example, at East Wiltshire was a partnership with Brookfield Gardens and I think it was MacPhee's Meats and different local providers where, in that example, they put on a roast beef dinner – a traditional roast beef dinner with some fresh vegetables from Brookfield Gardens.

As much as it's an opportunity, again, just like ArtSmarts, to have the discussion with the children in that school about the value of healthy eating and what that really looks like, and to have the discussion about where your food comes from; there's a huge piece of that that I think all works together and to see the kids at East Wiltshire be as engaged as they were in that project was great as well, hon. member. Morgan will be looking at that over the – she's started the work this year obviously, and as she moves forward – given that we got that funding again this year, it will be great to see it.

The last comments the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale had made; I'm very excited to see – over the course of time, our government, I think, has watched the pennies and nickels and dimes fairly well and we've seen the economy, to use APEC

words, go on a tear and that's kind of setting the table for reinvestment in a lot of these different sorts of things. That's kind of a huge piece of this.

When you see departments working together, like ag and fish and our department, to promote this kind of initiative, I think we can make great things happen as we go forward if we focus those resources and look to leverage community initiatives to move forward. A lot of this has to be done from the community up, and you make a great point; that there is a desire to do this on Prince Edward Island.

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

I absolutely agree with you that the foundation of funding for all of these programs and everything else we do comes from good fiscal management and I appreciate your comments on that.

I think, however, there's a real lost opportunity here. You mentioned the Chartwells are the people who have the contract for the schools in the area, and nothing against Chartwells. I'm not disparaging what they do, at all, but the opportunity here with the CIC and the chefs that live here on the Island, who are generally busiest in the summertime, the time when the schools are closed, perhaps, could – many of them leave the Island to seek work elsewhere because the seasonal restaurants close down. An opportunity for that kind of partnering and with the agricultural community here on Prince Edward Island, as well, I think this is something, if a government was committed to such a program that this is, and Tony Geraci said: there's no reason why we couldn't roll this out across the Island, if we had the political will, within a year. I'm pretty sure he said, within a year.

Even if that were optimistic, the idea that this is something that could be done within a very manageable timeframe.

I hear you saying that Morgan, and Morgan's doing great work. Don't get me wrong. I think she's fantastic. But, you're saying that she's – the same funding is being provided for this initiative this year as was last year. That doesn't sound, to me, like this

is a government priority or an initiative that you see providing great benefit.

I realize there's a cost here, but I think the benefits, both tangible and intangible, would far out weight the costs. I hope that that \$100,000 gets magnified in years to come and do you have a plan to do that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Hon. member, you know, I think we do need to be very careful to recognize that these things do take time. If you want to start right from the ability to have a space in all of our schools that you can do this programming in, to have a parent group that's committed to having this kind of programming on an ongoing and a sustainable basis. Community organizations that are able to provide the kinds of services that we're talking about.

This stuff doesn't happen overnight. A lot of the interest in it has got to come from the community in order for it to be sustainable. As I mentioned, it's not something that you just say: Here's a cookie cutter model. We're going to implement this at every school across the province.

Our breakfast program is a great example of that. It was becoming very administratively burdensome when you were looking at, and, you know, this is not to disparage in any way the group that was administering it before, but when you have a group that's administering a program and the responsibility starts to devolve back to an administrative organization to put that forward, it doesn't work because the community is not there and invested on an ongoing, sustainable basis to deliver it.

I think that's the key aspect of it that we need to ensure is in place before we say, to Chartwells, and again, not to be offensive, as you mentioned, to them, because they may well be a community organization that can help provide this.

But, that, you know, we want to move to a model where we're looking at possibilities for sustainable community food programs in our schools. The key piece of that is sustainable; you don't have the community behind it, it can become problematic.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I mean government is there to have a vision for what they want to

accomplish and to provide the funds to do that across any department that you want to mention.

I understand that, currently, the way the breakfast program, how this conversation all started, is heavily reliant on volunteers in the community. There's no reason why this program could not be set-up with sufficient funds from government to be self-sustaining. If government had the will and made this a priority.

I know Tony Geraci made it clear that he was available to discuss with any department, whether it be agriculture, or health and wellness, or your own department, how he has done this in other places and what it would take, in terms of dollars and cents and human resources to make this happen on PEI.

Has you, or anybody from your department talked with Tony Geraci over the last two years?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Hon. member, I personally, have not ever heard the name Tony Geraci before –

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh boy.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – I'd be happy if you –

**Mr. Trivers:** Priorities –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – want to forward his contact –

**Mr. Trivers:** – priorities.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – along to have a conversation with Tony Geraci and see what input he's got.

But again, we want to be careful to note that we, it sounds like, may have a different, kind of, view of how this works best. Again, we've made an effort to engage the communities in the process to build this. PEI Home and School has been very involved in the process and to provide their thoughts so far.

We have a process that's moving forward. I think, Tony Geraci, if he's got input, would certainly be welcome to provide it.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I'm sure he would jump at the opportunity if he were invited to do so.

My view of this is, from the subject matter expert in the field, somebody who has proven that such a program is possible when government has a willingness to do it. That's where my vision comes from is listening to somebody who has done this and made it happen.

Again, I would encourage your department to follow-up with Tony. I have his contact. I can, if you want me to ask him to contact you, I'd be happy to do that, minister.

Thank you, Chair.

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

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

My questions are right here in the grant section, as well. Really, they– I, first of all, wanted to recognize the great work that PEI Home and School Federation does under the leadership of President, Lisa MacDougall and Executive Director, Shirley Smedley Jay.

I wanted to talk, specifically, about the universal school lunch program that they've been advocating for for the last number of years now. They've had experts in like Tony Geraci. In fact, the Premier went and cooked with him back in the fall of 2016. The fact that you don't know his name makes me wonder if this really a government priority.

Really, this is about long-term health and wellness. This is about teaching kids how to eat healthy so that they can do that for their whole life. As well as, of course, supporting local. This Home and School Federation is a community-driven grassroots organization. These are parents in schools – and so, I guess my questions are along the lines of the Leader of the Third Party.

I want government to show real commitment to this. This is something I talked a lot about when I ran for leader last summer. There's a lot of support out there. It only makes sense and I believe it can happen if government does make it a priority and does fund it.

You talk about, you know, we got to get a buy-in from communities in order for it to be successful, blah, blah. I mean, private industries are already chomping at the bit. They're making this happen.

Teachers within schools like Gulf Shore consolidated are already doing this sort of thing. They've got the Yellow House, for example, chefs there that are making lunches for the kids. By the Bay right there in North Rustico, I believe, does some of the lunches, as well.

It's just a matter of making it happen. Personally, I'm sick and tired of talk. This is something that's going to impact the long-term health of our children. It's really, really be good for our province –

**Mr. LaVie:** No plan.

**Mr. Trivers:** – and I just – can you commit to really taking this as a project, maybe even as a personal project for you as the minister of education, to see that you really, truly listen to the Home and School Federation and see if you can do something about getting this universal school food program in place.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, hon. member.

I'm going reiterate what I said, just a moment ago, which is that we have committed between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and our department to move this initiative –

**Mr. Trivers:** I'll take that as a yes –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – forward and we'll continue to –

**Mr. Trivers:** – good.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – do that and work together with the PEI Home and School Federation to move the initiative forward.

**Mr. Trivers:** When do you expect you'll have the universal school food program in place, then? What's your timeline?

**Mr. J. Brown:** We will look at the different alternatives that are proposed through the work of Morgan and together with

community organizations and we will see. I suspect that this is something that's going to roll out over a period of time, as I've indicated, as the community support starts to envelop around this kind of a project.

Just to be clear, again: this is not something that's necessarily driven out of our department. We are working together on this and certainly we advocate with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for the funding that we get to be able to move this initiative forward, just the same as the other community organizations do that.

As I indicated, when the community starts to rally around these kinds of causes, we see that the resources that we're able to put toward them are able to be leveraged and great things happen in communities.

**Mr. Trivers:** Minister, people are getting tired of the political doublespeak, the passing off; it's not my department, it's the other department.

If you're going to commit to it, commit to it. That's all I'm asking today. It's clear you're not willing to commit to it. So, just be upfront and straightforward. Right now, there's no timeline. There's no long-term funding –

**Mr. LaVie:** No plans.

**Mr. Trivers:** – and there's no commitment to a universal school food program. I don't know. I would like you to do that. I would love to see you up there making a minister's statement, or the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. I mean, we did have the former minister of agriculture and fisheries talk about a very small piece of that that gave some funding, but it's not a universal school food program. It's not what's going to really help our kids in the long term; help our population be healthy in the long term. I'll leave it there, Chair, but thank you for the floor.

**Chair:** Do you want to address it?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yes. I will say a few words, Madame Chair.

Hon. member, again, thank you for the long speech there along the same theme. We in the department of education have been very

careful to look at a broad range of priorities and to ensure that we are putting dollars forward in a fiscally responsible way and in a way that can leverage impacts within the community. That's not to say we have all of the dollars we would wish to have in every spot that we would wish to have them. As I say, it's a matter of doing the things that we think that will have the most impact right away.

Over the last 12 months, we've added 168 frontline positions in our school system. That's the kind of commitment that we haven't seen in decades in the education system here on Prince Edward Island. I wish we could add double that over the next 12 months. Is it going to be possible? I don't know. We're not going to commit to doing something that's not sustainable and I think that's the key to all this is that we will work towards making good, sustainable investments for Prince Edward Islanders and in this case, for the betterment of our Prince Edward Island children because that's what the education system's really all about.

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

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

Minister, I meant to catch you when you were talking about the expansion of the schools. As a member, I'm appreciative that West Royalty School is expanding and everything and I think that's great. I'm just wondering if the department is taking into preparation – the Mount will be opening soon – the new private school. I don't know what their enrollment would be expected, but minister, has the department given any thought or planning of how that's going to affect the public school system?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, hon. member for the question.

As I indicated previously, it's the Public Schools Branch that looks at this information and, yes, they are well-aware of the fact that the Mount's opening and various other private schools as well. That will be factored into considerations in relation to infrastructure.

**Chair:** Member from West Royalty-Springvale, can we – we've already gone through all this –

**Mr. Dumville:** Yes, I know. I tried to catch you, but you had moved on. I'm sorry about that.

**Chair:** Hon. member, if you could focus your stuff on finance administration, I'd appreciate that.

**Mr. Dumville:** Yes, no. I tried to catch you on the opening there and I missed. That's all.

So, I'm just curious: Is a private school going to help you, or is it going to hinder you going forward?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I would suspect, hon. member, again the Public Schools Branch would have the data to answer that question.

Honestly, it's probably not going to have a huge impact in the Charlottetown area, although every little bit, I guess, in some way helps – if you want to look at it that way – in terms of having students that might otherwise be in one place that's kind of got a strain on space, going to a different space.

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

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

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

Minister, over the last three years I've sort of learned and listened to your comments and the former minister's comments that basically the Public Schools Branch, in my mind, is nothing more than a Crown corporation. That's what it appears to be. Then we have the department of education, which is another layer of bureaucracy.

So I have to ask you the question: Why do we need the Public Schools Branch or why do we need the department of education?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Madame Chair, I will tell you in a very forthright way that the Public Schools Branch is a Crown corporation and I'll be as blunt as I possibly can be in saying that because that's exactly what it is. To give you the overview of how this works,

there are two different school boards on Prince Edward Island: the French Language School Board –

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and the Public Schools Branch. French Language School Board runs French first language education in the province and they have a cultural aspect to them as well, and the Public Schools Branch runs English programming and immersion programming in the province.

We, as the department, have a mandate to basically oversee and direct education in the province. So if you can think about education taking place from a policy level, that happens at the department. The department develops curriculum. We have a leadership and learning group that rolls that curriculum out in a logical way to staff, whether they be at the Public Schools Branch or the French Language School Board. Then, we have an assessment group that looks at how we're doing with that and ways that we can improve.

It's kind of a loop that feeds back in. At the Public Schools Branch or the French Language School Board level, you have the operational aspects of the delivery of that education. So in other words, you have the principal – you could start from Parker Grimmer – and he's got staff under him such as John Cummings, who – you guys are always asking me about different things going on in schools, well John Cummings is in charge of school infrastructure, and bussing, and all that kind of stuff. He has people that work under him. Fred Horrelt is the manager of school infrastructure, so he'd be going around looking at these schools, determining what gym floor is getting replaced when, what roof's getting replaced when, what might need a boiler or a stack or whatever and they do that frontline, operational stuff.

Then we have down to principals in schools and there's a pretty lean organization there and then, of course, the teachers on the frontlines. As I've indicated, if you start to look at that overall, I think Public Schools Branch has got 45 staff for something like 19,250 students. I think there are roughly 1,500 teachers, so you start to think about people that need to issue paycheques, hire

teachers, do all that kind of stuff – take care of schools – three and a half million square feet of schools around, a few hundred busses.

All that stuff takes people to run it and in my view, 45 people running an entity of that size is a pretty good bang for the buck. At the department, I think we have something like 135, Chris? Anyway, not a huge number of staff at the department either and I think we've done a very good –

**Chris DesRoche Director:** 131.

**Mr. J. Brown:** 131 – a very good job of providing a very good service with the resources that we have there and I think the combination of the two – the old Borden department staff into one area – has the potential to make a huge difference for students in classrooms, particularly as we see the assessment groups and the leadership and learning groups start to combine more and start to work more directly together on initiatives that we realize that we might need some increased emphasis on.

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

**Mr. Fox:** When the Public Schools Branch goes around with that guy and they make up a list of what their capital projects are going to be for 2019, 2018, doesn't matter – to make up that list – and that's basically more than likely on a priority scale of how old is the infrastructure? What's failing that needs replaced, whatever?

How did that process actually work in the 24 hours when we've got the four committed to being fixed? Can we not look at saying: Okay, this might be on the list for capital expenditures for 2018, but this emergency has come up, it automatically should go too, because the welfare and the safety of the kids should be number one priority hands down. So, if there's something that's on the list to be fixed, but we have an emergency in school where the kids' education is being affected, whether it be at TOSH or down east, that should go to the first of the list. Why does that not happen?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, hon. member for the question.

Again, it's a welcome opportunity to provide some clarity on this. Because we've had some great questions from some of the hon. members here, this week, on this point.

I wish, hon. member, I could say I was clairvoyant, and I knew that these questions were going to come from these hon. members, and I'll be honest in saying, I suspect, part of it was because the Public Schools Branch staff were out in those couple of schools –

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah, you say that now.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – earlier on –

**Mr. MacEwen:** And said no.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – this week and last week and they were looking at the issues that these hon. members had brought up. They do that. They use that to develop their list.

I'll just use the example, again –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) list.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – of the gym we were talking about earlier this week –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – we've known about that – the Public Schools Branch has known about that for a significant period of time –

**Mr. LaVie:** Did they?

**Mr. J. Brown:** – as I indicated that before, is an old floor –

**Mr. LaVie:** (Indistinct) new house (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and they had fixed it on a number of different occasions. They had on that on their priority list. They had committed to, I believe, it was Tuesday of this week, they had committed to fixing the floor before the hon. member had asked that question here the other day –

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

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and so, subject to a tendering process –

**Mr. LaVie:** Six months ago –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – which is undertaken by them –

**Mr. LaVie:** – a year.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – (Indistinct) look at that kind of thing.

I'll give you another example –

**Mr. LaVie:** A year.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – through the course of the winter we had a couple of boiler stacks blown out. Obviously, a very important piece of infrastructure when you're talking about a school.

When you see something like that happen, and I'm not trying to get into the Public Schools Branch's business, but I just want to give you an indication on how this works. They obviously, don't leave that, you know, and say, oh, we had a preconceived list of 20 things that we're going to do (Indistinct) year.

That become an emergency that needs to be fixed right away. They take steps to fix that right away. That may mean that something that was less urgent gets pushed down the list. That list – they have a list, I suspect, that would probably change this time of year, in particular, on a daily basis because it's this time of year that they're going around looking at their priorities, which they will then submit to us in the fall as I indicated previously.

We'll then take that; we'll move it forward in our capital budgeting process and we'll look at what's needed. There are two pieces to that. One, is the ongoing commitment, which as, I said, it's \$2 million a year at this point in time. Then, there's the larger specified project, capital budget that we have for additions to schools or new schools.

**Mr. Fox:** I was quite, actually, surprised when you said that you knew of that, or somebody knew of that a significant amount of time ago. Kids, the safety of kids, to have the best learning experience in the most

safest environment should be priority number one, no question about it. It's no different than a culvert being washed on a road. We get in there. We get it fixed. Done.

If there's a roof leaking and it's effecting the school. Or if there's a floor that's broke. Get it fixed. Get it done.

Change gears just for a quick second. You said something that reminded me of something. What ever happened with, in Kensington, we had the concerns at a school over the placement of the fuel tank system? Was that ever dealt with? Or is that fuel tank system still there? Are they still concerned over a possible breach in the system, which could leak into the ground? Was that ever fixed because that was, I want to say almost about a year ago, or eight months ago?

**Mr. J. Brown:** It was late last fall. Actually, there was a caucus meeting that the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters was talking about earlier in Question Period today.

I had a good opportunity to have a chat with Mayor Caseley about that again, at that point in time. I mentioned John Cummings earlier with the Public Schools Branch.

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Brown:** I do know that John Cummings has been working with town council in relation to that tank since it became an issue for the town, last fall.

I want to say a few things. One is, and again, this is the Public Schools Branch, it's not the department.

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah.

**Mr. J. Brown:** But, I know a little bit about this. In our view there is not an issue. So, I'm going to start from there.

**Mr. Fox:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** That being said, we have indicated a willingness to work with the town if there's some reasonable solution to deal with this. The big issue, at this point in time, has become, we're not going to move that tank

from one spot to another and have the same issue in the second spot.

Mr. Cummings has been working with the mayor and the town council to ensure that there is some solution to that. In the interim, New Jersey barriers have been –

**Mr. Fox:** So, can I stop you right there, minister? Can I stop you right there.

Here's – this is what I'm getting right to right here. Okay? We're eight months down the road, there are still discussions being taken place. Common sense, would say, get one of them en-cagement areas, which is a concrete bath – bathtub. You put it on the site. You don't have to move it from anywhere else. You pick the tank up and you put it back in the tank. That's common sense.

We shouldn't be dealing with problems like this eight months down the road. There's a concern raised by the town. It might not be a concern right now, but instead of putting jersey turnpikes, let's get rid of it, pick it up, put it in a bathtub and call it a day.

That's what frustrates me and other people. Can you explain that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm going to go back to the start, here again. This is the Public Schools Branch who is dealing with this. The Public Schools Branch has a recent report from GNL Environmental saying there's no issues with that tank. None.

I recognize that you have a solution that you think may be a better idea, but the Public Schools Branch (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** I dealt with petroleum for over 15 years.

**Mr. J. Brown:** GNL Environmental, who is an expert in that area has looked at this specific tank and says that this specific tank is fine the way that it is.

We've actually taken and added additional jersey barriers around that tank to act as a belt and suspenders and, in addition, to that we still say we're willing to work with the town to move that tank to allay any concerns that they may have.

As I said to you before, we're not going to take and put that tank someplace that's still going to be an issue to the town.

The second piece I'll say, is that your concrete cradle that you'd put it in, is not a fail-proof solution either. There are all sorts of issues that you can run into then, mostly that relate to the freeze and thaw cycles that we go through here on Prince Edward Island in the wintertime, and the plugs that have to be monitored –

**Mr. Fox:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – in those cradles.

There are different kinds of tanks. Different solutions for all of those different kinds of tanks (Indistinct) GNL has produced a report saying this tank is okay the way that it is, despite that, PSB is working with the Town of Kensington to hopefully come to a solution that allays concerns that they have, and that's reasonable to everybody involved.

**Mr. Fox:** I'll just end with this, Chair.

I know GNL very well. They did a lot of work for me in the past. I know about the valves in the cradle system. I know about the valves in the structure systems to, you know, to contain a spill if it were to occur. The tank might be fine. That's good. But, those containment things are built for emergency situations to stop a spill that might happen. Yes, they do have to be monitored. Yes, they have to be drained from water. I know all about that. They have a purpose and they would work in this situation.

Thank you.

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

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

I just want to talk about the breakfast program. It has been an issue with me for close to 20 years now. I just, first of all, want to thank each and every person that works in the breakfast program, especially the volunteers. If it wasn't for the volunteers, we wouldn't have a breakfast

program here on Prince Edward Island. I think they do a tremendous amount of work and they do great work.

I want to keep the volunteers involved. I don't want to make it a bureaucracy because I think the volunteers that come out to work these things, it's a great opportunity for them to connect back with their community, and they want to do it. They want to return to the community some of the benefits they've received over the years.

I just really want to thank them because I go around to them. We have St. Jeans; Prince Street, they do a tremendous job, Birchwood, and the other ones I've been in.

I was pretty impressed the last election there, where we doubled the food allowance, or the food for the breakfast program to \$200,000, which was a tremendous amount. I commend the Premier for making sure that the money went into food and not to the bureaucracy. I think that was the biggest, the best decision of all; directly get it out there.

I know it's working. I know it's a great program. I want to commend the food bank and the Upper Room. They're doing a little bit of a program now for lunches in the afternoon. I want to congratulate them because, you know, I remember one time we were having a debate in the Legislature here where we were talking about the breakfast program and that and some members were saying: well, how are you going to distinguish between the people that need it and not need it?

I was impressed by the Legislature here, said: no, we're not going to do it that way. We're not going to make you get a card or anything or, you know, the breakfast program is for everybody and anybody who wanted to come it. So, it was a totally integrated program. That was a good day in the Legislative Assembly, not wanting to stream the kids into one room and another room.

There are a lot of good community groups. I think the Leader of the Third Party also was saying some groups that want to get involved in this process and help out. I've been talking to the ADAPT council, Phil Ferraro, and he has a program – it's in New Brunswick – food collection from the

agriculture community. He takes it in, and then it's distributed back out to the schools. He has applied for ACOA for some funding to make this sort of food hub here, and I think we should be talking to him with that too because I think he's got a great idea here where you take – he has a program out behind his centre at the farm centre and the food he grows there, he gives it to Betty. Betty distributes it back through the school breakfast program.

This is the kind of people that live on Prince Edward Island. That's what makes me so proud, that they all jump in and they all want to work. I think we have to continue to ensure that the volunteers are there. I know they are, but I think there's an opportunity here for us to really do a real good national recognition program here, and I want to put my plug in for the ADAPT council's program of a food hub.

So, when you're getting people together, I'd like the ADAPT council to be involved here.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

My question has to do with the amount of money that's spent on advertising within the department. I think this is the right section.

I was wondering – we often see, for example, the Facebook ads that are coming out, that are going across the feeds and there are ads for online advertising for on *The Guardian* website and these sorts of things, as well as Twitter ads.

I was wondering: How much money do you spend on advertising in the department, in particular, online, but also in traditional media? I was wondering if you could break it down by area.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Hon. member, we in our department don't spend money on advertising. There may be some, in terms of job ads or things like that. I can give you one example.

When we did the school site strategy, there would have been some money allocated for advertising those job ads, but we in our department don't spend money. If you're seeing ads, they might be done through Communications PEI or the Public Schools Branch or the French Language School Board. I know the FLSB, as an example, they do have programming to promote French first language education in the province and the students that they have.

**Mr. Trivers:** I just want to make sure you're very clear on this point. You're saying that your department doesn't do any online advertising? Like, if I go to the Prince Edward Island government page, there's one here – this might be outside of your department – it's about early childhood education. It says: PEI is a national leader in early childhood policy and programs and the PEI government recognizes how important high-quality childcare is to young families.

So, that ad wouldn't be coming out of your department?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Well, you're telling me about something that's on the provincial government website –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's hard for me to make a comment here one way or another. If you have a specific question on a line item, but overall I'm not aware of an advertising campaign that we have within our department that I can tell you anything about.

**Mr. Trivers:** What department would pay for these ads?

**Mr. J. Brown:** There's a budget in Communications PEI that would deal with some of that kind of stuff, but beyond that –

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Again, I want to be careful with some of this.

As an example, within early childhood there is the early childhood development association that we provide some funding to. They may have ads. As an example, the Public Schools Branch we provide funding

to, they may have ads. We do job ads all the time. I'm not saying that we don't have any of that kind of stuff in the different areas within our department, but we don't have a concerted advertising budget in the department.

**Mr. Trivers:** Maybe, Chair, you can help direct me on this one as well.

When I see a sponsored post that's from the Prince Edward Island government Facebook page that's coming through my thread, this is someone who manages the Prince Edward Island government page on Facebook. It's tied, presumably, to a government credit card. How is that funded or what department? Should I save that for the Department of Finance, do you think, Chair?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I can tell you that it's not within my department.

We would have an embedded communications office that would deal with communications coming out of our department, and that would be done through Communications PEI. Obviously any communication that comes out of our department is approved by our department, but we do not have a concerted budget-line item for advertising various different things that are going on other than, again, if there's meetings taking place or if there's job advertisements that are going out and that sort of a thing. They would be done under specific line items related to that.

**Mr. Trivers:** Chair, I don't know how you want to address this. I'm trying to find out, and I'll make it very specific so it should be easy to find, for sponsored Facebook posts from the Prince Edward Island government Facebook page.

Who pays for that? Do you want me to just ask as every department comes up? Or should we just clarify with one of the ministers now so I can talk about it when we get to that section? How do you want to approach this?

**Chair:** Thank you for the question directed to the Chair.

We're discussing the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture budget and the minister has indicated it's not

in his budget. But, I'm sure the minister would take that under advisement and maybe seek that answer for you and maybe come back with an answer. That's what I –

**Mr. Trivers:** That would be fantastic, thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I just have one very quick – and it's not even a question. It's just a – well no, it is a question.

We received these handouts when the minister sat down and they've been really useful, and I think many members have poured through them and derived our questions from them.

The next department up is justice, another department of yours, minister, and I'm wondering whether you would give us the handouts for the justice department now so that we can be better prepared for when you sit there as the justice minister.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Madam Chair, I don't have the handouts here with me now.

I am going to say this though, okay, just so everybody has a bit of a picture of how some of this stuff works. Right up until a couple of days before the Budget document was actually tabled, we were still working for and advocating for more funding for all of the department line items in our department.

Chris, who is sitting here next to me, who is a father with a couple of young children, spent a huge chunk of the weekend and nights – and when he's not here doing this, he's been doing negotiations with the PEITF over the last week, getting these schedules ready. So, firstly I'm going to commend Chris for doing that, and he's got great staff too that help to put that together. This is a – like, you look at the Budget – we have, I think, five pages in there and each line item obviously has a budget that's developed within that. It's a lot of work to get this stuff together and until you're fairly certain of

what it's going to be, you can't go and produce all of these different things.

I say that only to say it takes time and they're not always available a long time in advance of a minister on here. I know Chris and I just started to go through this stuff, I think, it was Wednesday morning at that point in time. At that point in time, he just finished it and we're looking through it to make sure we have something that's ready to go. You've got to go back and make changes to what that is, so you guys got it the same time as I did.

I just want to say we have to be patient. We have good people doing this stuff, but this is not something that's been sitting on a shelf for months waiting for this to happen.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I appreciate that.

However, education is a far larger department than justice and my guess is there are not so many moving parts in terms of budgetary line items in the justice. Maybe I'm wrong about that, but justice – education was able to provide these to us yesterday. Justice has not even been called yet, so they've had more time than education. So, just as a courtesy and in order for this process to go more smoothly and more effectively, I'd just ask that your department – and I think communities, land and environment is coming up after this – it would just be so nice to have them a day or two in advance. That's all I'm asking. I understand that this is a moving process and until the Budget is finalized, but every day that passes after the Budget has been tabled – and we're into day – well, we're a week now. I would hope that the departments have these documents ready and able and hopefully willing to share them with us. Can I ask again that you will commit to that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, Thank you, Madam Chair.

With your indulgence, Madam Chair, recognizing this is – we're talking about the justice budget in education time.

I appreciate your question. I appreciate where you're coming from and I'll tell you candidly: I met with George Mason who is the finance person that deals with justice yesterday morning, just before coming over

here, and saw for the first time the schedule that's related to the justice budget.

There was a bunch of stuff that's – it was a draft schedule. There's a bunch of stuff that, as we went through, still needed to be moved around. He was working on those. He's not here right now. I don't know whether they're finalized or not, so as of when I left him yesterday at 12:20 p.m., he still had some work to do to get the schedules ready to be produced and released. So I can't commit here today to have those to you in advance of next week, but if they're ready to go, then we'll do our best to get them out to you before we get back on. We haven't even started into our budget for education yet, so maybe a bit of time to go yet –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Brown:** – and we'll see what next week brings.

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

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I just want one final, very quick comment.

Personally speaking, I would rather have something that's 95% accurate than nothing at all.

Thanks, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

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

Quickly to follow up on the Leader of the Third Party, I remember when the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment was the minister of workforce and advanced learning and he was fantastic at that job – at getting that stuff out early to me. In fact, as the critic, he had that stuff to me weeks in advance, so there are departments that can produce that quicker than others, apparently, because I know he did a great job supplying the critic at that time, so I'd like to compliment him. He knows what it's like to be in opposition and he knows how important opposition's role is to hold people to account.

I'd also like to commend Chris on the hard work and all the extra hours and at the risk of making you miss spring hockey this weekend, I'm looking for a breakdown of the line items for finance and administration, specifically about the breakfast program per school, but also, the rest of these, if there's a breakdown of each of these line items that's probably in front of you right now, minister.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Sorry, so for the breakfast program?

**Mr. MacEwen:** The handout under finance and administration. Everything from (Indistinct) – the PEI Federation of Home and School, I'm assuming, is just a grant straight to them. The rest of this, the school milk program – is there a breakdown per school? Now with the breakfast program, there would be a breakdown per school, I'm guessing, but some of these would be broke down and some of them not?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** The breakfast program would have a per school allocation, more or less based on the number of students. The milk program, we actually just send a cheque for \$67,000 to Barbie Matheson who runs that organization.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Okay.

Maybe I'll just ask, specifically then, for the breakfast program. Can I have a breakdown of how that goes to the schools? If you could bring that back.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yes, we'll do our best to get that back to you, hon. member.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Provincial Learning Materials Distribution Centre

“Appropriations provided for purchasing and distribution of learning materials for programs.” Administration: 500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 797,200. Salaries: 170,200. Travel and Training: 1,200.

Total Provincial Learning Materials Distribution Centre: 969,100.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

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

One thing that I hear from parents almost every fall – especially the ones that are starting in to kindergarten or grade one – and from teachers, as well, is they say: How come I have to go out and spend money on buying supplies for the students, especially the kindergarten teachers? How come those materials aren't purchased by the province and made available through the provincial learning materials distribution centre? Because from what I understand, and correct me if I'm wrong on this, the teachers have to take that money out of their own pockets to buy those supplies.

**Chair:** Minister?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, hon. member for the question. A lot of teachers do help students that come from families that, perhaps, don't have the ability to –

**Mr. Trivers:** No, I'm talking about core supplies –

**Chair:** Hon. member, the minister is trying to answer a question –

**Mr. Trivers:** Sorry, Chair. I just want to clarify. I don't think he understood my question.

**Chair:** Maybe you'd give him a chance to answer.

**Mr. Trivers:** All right. It's not for (Indistinct) anyway.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So, maybe I didn't, but I'm sure you'll correct me if not.

There's a list that each school produces for each grade every year. Is that what we're talking about?

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes, exactly.

There's a list produced for each grade. In kindergarten, especially, from what I understand is the teachers are responsible for going out and getting those supplies, not for students that can't afford them. But, in some cases, across the board they say: Yeah, I'm

going out and I'm buying supplies for my class. It's August and I've been spending \$20 per student or whatever it happens to be.

**Mr. J. Brown:** What will happen, so I'm going to start from the position that the – our department does not coordinate kind of bulk purchasing of school supplies for students.

We'll start from that perspective. There are a lot of schools and teacher, classroom teachers, whether it be kindergarten or whatever that do go, on behalf of their classes, and purchase and I say their classes, their students in their class, the parents, whatever, purchase the school supplies for everybody and coordinate getting money in from the parents that do that.

I will say, and my wife is a Grade 2 teacher at Sherwood school, that it often can be the case that teachers will supplement the money required to do that particularly where there's children that are from families that may not necessarily have those resources.

Often, teachers will want to do that to ensure that everybody's got what they need and that they're not dealing with a bunch of different materials within the classroom. A lot of that depends on age. Obviously, in kindergarten, it's going to be a bit different than it's going to be in high school.

I can tell you, I personally paid for five students' supplies last fall. I know a lot of people in the community that do that. I know a lot of the home and school groups do it. As an example, my Rotary Club that I was involved over the course of time would make donations to schools that, basically the principal would have the discretion to put it for that. I know, as an example, one situation where we had a principal buy shoes for a child that had none. So, those sorts of things happen.

**Mr. Trivers:** I want to give you an example.

In September, 2017, this is an email that was sent out to parents from one of the schools in my district. It says: Please pay your school supplies fee for students in Grade K to 4 if you haven't already. Students in Grades 5 and 6 are asked to pay \$5 for the agenda. Students Grade 7 to 9 are asked to pay \$25, \$20 for industrial technology and \$5 for agenda.

This is what I'm talking about. If we have a Provincial Learning Materials Distribution Centre, I don't understand why we're not buying those materials in bulk and then distributing them out to schools? Maybe there's a very ration reason for this and maybe I'm completely missing the point.

**Mr. J. Brown:** So again, we supply textbooks in schools, hon. member. We don't get into purchasing individual student's school supplies for them. That has never been the case. You won't see a budget line item for that.

**Mr. Trivers:** When a school asks, or sets a school supply fee that's a decision of that individual school?

**Mr. J. Brown:** Yes.

**Mr. Trivers:** Have you ever had an administration of schools come back to the department and say: Look, we would really like some extra money so that we can purchase core school supplies for our students instead of passing on that cost directly to parents?

**Mr. J. Brown:** To my knowledge, again, the relationship there would be school, Public Schools Branch, department.

I have never heard of that request being made of the department. I couldn't tell you whether it has ever been made to the Public Schools Branch or not.

Chris wants to –

**Chris DesRoche Director:** I do know that at the Public Schools Branch there is an equal chances at learning budget that they have there, so they could have applied there, perhaps, but not at the department level.

**Mr. Trivers:** Maybe I'm just confused how this works.

When you guys got rid of elected school boards, you brought the Public Schools Branch into the department of education, is that not correct?

**Mr. J. Brown:** No. They're a Crown corporation that deals with the operation of schools. They're a Crown corporation.

**Chair:** Hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, do you have something related to this section?

**Mr. Trivers:** I'm trying to figure out why parents are being asked to pay school supply fees when there's a Provincial Learning Materials Distribution Centre that could, potentially, negotiate better value and help students go to school with the supplies they need.

The minister has said: that's not our responsibility, that's the Public Schools Branch, they're a Crown corporation. Even though we give them \$229 million a year. We just – we're washing our hands of that. I'm just trying to figure out the reporting structure for the Public Schools Branch.

Who does that Crown corp. report to?

**Mr. J. Brown:** The Public Schools Branch?

They report back into the department and they report publicly as a Crown corporation.

**Mr. Trivers:** Will you commit, as minister, who is responsible for the Public Schools Branch, to going to them and asking them about school supplies and the conversations they've had with school administration across the province to find out if this is an issue.

Maybe, I'm making a mountain out of a molehill here, but will you commit to doing that?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'll take it under advisement hon. member and I'll tell you that you can do that same at any of their public meetings.

**Chair:** The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

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

Could you guest or the minister speak to why there was a – this section was \$250,000 over budget last year?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** Yeah, we were in a unique opportunity where there was some curriculum that was ready to roll out in advance of what we expected, ahead of schedule. We had a grade 9 science

curriculum, an oceanography course and three English courses, in addition to some classroom libraries that needed some assistance this year.

**Ms. Bell:** A significant purchase of those supplies in advance?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** Yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** My follow-up question, then why would the budget be the same again this year? Do you plan, how far in advance do you plan for roll-outs, though because your budget now is back to the same numbers, again?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** Our annual budget is approximately \$800,000 and curriculum is rolled out over a few years. This year more curriculum was ready to go and we didn't want to wait until next year when it was scheduled. We purchased the textbooks for that new curriculum.

**Ms. Bell:** Where you've talked earlier about some new initiatives and things that are coming forward, would those, not also, be reflected in your planning for curriculum roll out, or does it – it is longer than a year that it normally takes a curriculum to roll out?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** Which specific –

**Ms. Bell:** You talked about some things, like we talked about computer Makercarts in schools; about STEAM programming. I know there's some new entrepreneurial training coming out in high schools. I'm just wondering about –

**Chris DesRoche Director:** The Makercarts funding was in the previous section –

**Ms. Bell:** So, there's no curriculum for that

**Chris DesRoche Director:** What's that?

**Ms. Bell:** There's no curriculum support for that?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** There's going to be a curriculum position in a future section that's going to support the teachers for that.

**Ms. Bell:** Following on from the Member from Rustico-Emerald, so this is purely for curriculum-based textbooks?

**Chris DesRoche Director:** This is for the textbooks, yes –

**Ms. Bell:** Textbooks only.

**Chris DesRoche Director:** – English programs also has a budget for pilots and new initiatives.

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

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

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

Just a question, following up on the Member from Rustico-Emerald: Do we ever do an analysis or collect information from teachers or ask the teachers to provide to the Public Schools Branch just how much supplies they are providing to kids?

**Mr. J. Brown:** I'm not sure –

**Mr. Fox:** I'll clarify –

**Mr. J. Brown:** – you mean –

**Mr. Fox:** – I'll clarify. So, we have your wife, or a teacher who says, well, this child needs whatever because of whatever reason. She goes out and buys it. She passes it to the child, right? Maybe we should look at actually how much that is done across the Island.

How many times –

**Mr. Myers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Fox:** – teachers are actually having to buy supplies for whatever reason, that a family can't provide –

**Mr. Myers:** Every one of them.

**Mr. Fox:** – that might be something the Public Schools Branch should consider. Maybe we need to know exactly how much supplies are being put in there to these families, or these kids, to make sure that they have the education by teachers.

Put that suggestion forward.

**Mr. J. Brown:** It's an interesting point, hon. member. The other piece of it is, again, it's not just teachers, but again there are plenty of community organizations, as I indicated, that would also do the same thing.

I don't know whether that's ever been done or not, to answer your question.

**Chris DesRoche Director:** I don't think it has ever been done, no.

**Mr. Fox:** It has never been done.

**Chris DesRoche Director:** There would also be school fundraising initiatives, as well, right?

**Mr. Roach:** Call the hour.

**Chair:** Hon. members –

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

**Chair:** – the hour has been called.

**Mr. J. Brown:** Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair, and the Chair report progress and beg leave to sit again.

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

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

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

Hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

**Mr. McIsaac:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that this House adjourn until Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.

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

Have a good weekend.

The Legislature adjourned until Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m.