

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker's Ruling

Speaker: Hon. members, I wish to address two points of order that were raised yesterday.

First, the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir rose and objected to the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid using the words 'false pretense' in his response to a ministerial statement from the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid used the following words, "...we don't want to give false pretense there about what is actually expected..."

Hon. members, while I understand the point of order raised by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir in that the term 'false pretenses' is a criminal act, but it is my opinion that this was not the context in which the words were used by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid in this sentence, because if it were, I'd be making a different ruling. In fact, I don't think that the Member from Morell-Mermaid was indicating that there was criminal intent.

On the point of order raised by the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, I find that the intervention was a clarification on his ministerial statement and not a point of order and should not have been raised as a point of order.

Thank you, hon. members.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, welcome to everyone here in the House – those joining us in the gallery, those viewing online or television. I might give a particular welcome to two of our guests in the bench opposite: William McGuigan and Emma Drake, who are the president and vice-president external at the University of Prince Edward Island.

[Applause]

Premier MacLauchlan: It's great to have you with us, William and Emma. We have two journalism students from the Holland College journalism program, Semi and Nakeesa. It's great to have you with us. Welcome.

And we have some folks on this side who are, I'd say, regulars: Lorne Yeo is back and he indicated last night that given the opportunity should we get back to the floor with the bill that was on last night, we might even get to hear some professional duck calling.

Ms. Biggar: Real ducks.

Premier MacLauchlan: Alan Malone, Ken Murnaghan.

I wasn't sure with our new recognition approach whether I should say something, but I appreciate that many others did yesterday – about the Bearded Skipper, Norman Peters. I would certainly say I appreciate what everyone said yesterday and would only want to second those sentiments. He's been someone that we've known well in a neighboring harbour and, in fact, I got to spend some time with the family on Monday.

Today is National Canadian Film Day – April 18th – the fifth time that we've had this annual day. It's quite an extensive and far-reaching coast-to-coast celebration of Canadian cinema and in our province today there will be events in Murray River, Montague, St. Peters, Charlottetown, Kensington, and Summerside and a great opportunity to recognize filmmaking in Canada and, indeed, here in our province.

One further note and it's one that I'm sure all Islanders are following and saluting and that is the success of the coaching team of Gerard Gallant and Mike Kelly with the Las Vegas Golden Knights proceeding to the next round of the playoffs with a clean sweep in their first go at it and it's a great story – it may be one that goes down in the annals of sports history for a long time – to have a new team doing as well as they are and led by Prince Edward Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's also an honour for me to rise today in the Legislative Assembly and welcome some of the guests that we have here today. Kenneth Murnaghan, of course, who – we all know the wonderful advocacy work that Kenneth has done for Islanders for quite a few number of years.

I'd also like to recognize both, William and Emma who have joined us here today and I've had the opportunity to meet with them on several occasions and as a matter of fact, we've also brought some of their concerns and some of the advocacy that they're doing within their roles in the student union at UPEI. So, we've had an opportunity to bring some of their issues here to the floor for debate and try to work with the government to make some of the work that they're doing come to fruition, such as making sure that post-secondary education facilities here on PEI fall under the FOIPP Act.

Also, I'd like to recognize Mr. Lorne Yeo. Last night he was introduced as a stranger on the floor, but certainly Lorne is no stranger to us especially after his performance last night. I look forward to the opportunity of you coming on again and showing members in this House how to actually perform proper duck calls.

I'd also like to echo the sentiments that the Premier spoke about with regards to the Vegas Knights. It was wonderful to get home last evening and watch some of that game and the end results – as the Premier said: a clean sweep – four games in a row. Congratulations to Gerard 'Turk' Gallant and Mike Kelly on that. Wonderful, wonderful coaching team and certainly, if they're looking for another individual to join their front office, I believe Dave Cameron is also now available and I believe he would also love to be part of that winning team.

Mr. Speaker, for that, I thank you for your time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, would welcome the guests in the room today. I'd like to start with Emma and Will, of course, at the back and I'm looking forward to meeting with them later this week. Also, Renee Laprise and Emma Fugate who are here from Film PEI, welcome to you. To Ken Murnaghan, of course, and to my friend and neighbor, Lorne Yeo. Welcome to you all. I hope you enjoy the proceedings today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today. It's good to see Kenny, a good advocacy and I have a constituent, Al Malone is with us here today and Emma, it's good to see you. I see you a lot at the Rotary club. I want to compliment our stranger on the floor there, Lorne Yeo – last night he did a great job. He's just getting wound up. I'd also like to thank the Member from Borden-Kinkora for his kindness in inviting Lorne onto the floor last night. I really appreciate that. I thought was really a fair deal. Thank you, Sir.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to rise to recognize Renee Laprise, who's with us in the gallery today. Renee is executive director of Film PEI and they've just moved into the West Royalty Business Park. She's joined by Emma Fugate from the organization. Film PEI's one of the greatest assets available in our film community and I'll be making a minister's statement on that a little bit later on.

I also wanted to recognize Joey Blacquiere in the press gallery. Joey – as I don't know if everyone will recall this, but I had recognized him about a year and a half ago as one of the first people to forecast that Turk would be in Vegas and that we'd have the success that we're having there.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

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

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

I, too, would like to welcome everyone to the gallery and a special welcome to William McGuigan, the president of the student union at UPEI and Emma Drake, incoming VP academic external. I certainly enjoyed our meeting this morning and it's always wonderful to meet with the UPEI student union and talk about concerns you have and very happy as a government to be able to fund \$3.3 million. It's the highest ever amount of money we've ever given to post-secondary institutions to help students get an education for un-repayable funds.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'd like to welcome two of my constituents to the gallery here today. They've been welcomed already, but Emma Fugate and Renee Laprise and congratulate them on the fruition of a lot of labour that's taken place over the last little bit.

Also, Officer Bowness, whose wife is my son's early years educator, to the gallery. He's an officer with the Charlottetown Police Service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Eugene's General Store

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, in my district there has been an ownership change to one of the longest running general stores here on Prince Edward Island.

Eugene's General Store, has been in business since 1939, and since 1986 has been owned by Tommy and Joanne Perry.

Tommy and Joanne's store has been a staple in the community and for the past 32 years they've been operating the store as a community-minded business. Before then, Tommy's parents, Eugene and Anne Marie Perry, owned and operated the store since the late 1940s.

I want to congratulate Tommy and Joanne for their years of hard work and dedication. As well as, thanking them for encompassing what doing business in rural communities is all about.

As of February 2nd, Tommy handed over the reins to Carter Morrissey as the new owner of Eugene's General Store. Before the official date, Carter spent about a month learning all aspects of the operation of the store from Tommy so that he could continue to do what they have done for years.

Although, he may have taken over, Carter has no plans to change the name of the store, and hopes to thrive off the history surrounding it and the importance to the community.

I wish the very best of luck to Tommy and Joanne, as they tackle new adventures; and also to Carter, as he begins a new journey for himself.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Way to go.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Kent Scales

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today and recognize Kent Scales, who is presented the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers by the Governor General on Tuesday.

Kent, was among 41 volunteers, who were honoured by Governor General, Julie Payette, who specifically noted the work that Kent has done as a member of the Advisory Board of the Children's Wish

Foundation of Canada, PEI chapter, since 2008. Kent is also chairman of the More Wishes, More Wonders campaign, and co-chair person of the annual Exile Island fundraiser.

Mr. Scales' volunteer work runs deep throughout our Island community, which includes: lead of the fundraising campaign for the new Canadian Red Cross provincial headquarters; past vice-chair Holland College Board of Governors; he was named the 2014 entrepreneur of the year by the Greater Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce; past commodore of the Charlottetown Yacht Club, and currently sits on the board of the Charlottetown Airport Authority. This is just a small sampling of Kent's involvement through his volunteerism and philanthropy work.

When Kent isn't giving back to the community, he's operating one of his many businesses as a successful entrepreneur. He is the CEO of Scales Group of Companies, and operates a wide ranging group of PEI businesses including; ServiceMaster of P.E.I., Kensington Agriculture Services Ltd., Landfest Inc., Robins Donuts and Advantage Communications Inc.

Kent is a very unassuming individual and would never look for such recognition, which actually exhibits why he is a very deserving recipient of this award. I think we owe him a debt of gratitude for the tremendous volunteer work he has done for different non-profit organizations. He serves his community well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Matthew Murphy

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

Life is full of joys and challenges, large and small, and while we can all strive to lead lives of contentment, pain and sadness are inevitable parts of the human existence. When faced with these unavoidable trials, as we emerge from the anguish, some of us, for whatever reason, through time and with strength, are able to transform that pain into something positive and constructive.

We see such inspiring acts of positivity flowing from the Humboldt earlier this month. But, we don't have to look beyond our own borders for examples of community building borne of calamity.

Surely, there is no depth of pain more severe than that experienced when you lose your child. Add to that, the knowledge that your son took his own life in response to bullying, and the intensity of agony becomes almost unimaginable. Penny and Ronnie Murphy from Riverdale in District 17, experienced exactly this when their 19-year-old son, Matthew, took his own life in October, 2014.

On Sunday morning of last weekend at the Bonshaw community hall, they hosted the 4th annual Matthew Murphy Memorial Fishermans Breakfast. After decades of the community hosting this Island tradition on the opening day of fishing season each spring, the Murphy family took over the breakfast, transforming it into a fundraising event, initially to raise money and awareness about bullying, and depression and teen suicide on PEI, and starting this year, some of the money raised will be used to support two scholarships for grade 6 students from Eliot River school who display exceptional kindness, and have a love of the outdoors; two of Matthew's defining characteristics.

The breakfast is always a poignant event to attend, and I never fail to be touched by Matthew's family's resilience and their generosity, and their determination to see that their son's legacy is proud, and fitting of the gentle and kind soul that he was.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, I was asked questions from the Member from West Royalty-Springvale, as well as the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, regarding our capital provincial paving program also known as recap.

We maintain 5,375 kilometres of roads right across PEI. I would like to inform the House

that, in fact, 18 districts received additional paving last fall out of that program. Of those, 10 are districts currently held by opposition parties including; District 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

Each year, my department uses tools such as traffic counts, pavement condition and spring pavement breakup to prioritize our paving program.

I'd also like to point out, our most recent tender from last Thursday, of the nine projects, six are in opposition districts. The total cost of those projects is \$3 million.

I think it's very unfortunate that some of the accusations coming from the member from West Royalty seem to be a case of sour grapes.

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

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

I should be clear that I'm rising in my capacity as the minister of justice further to the questions from the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, yesterday to advise and to clarify that legal aid rates were actually reviewed last year. A subsequent raise of between 10% and 25% depending on the grouping that you would fall within was made.

The maximum amount would now be \$30,000. Again, there's a needs test depending on the seriousness of the matter that's applied beyond that.

I can report, in addition to that, that there was 395 family and civil applications approved last year. Forty-six related to child protection litigation and 47 involved serious domestic violence concerns. And 859 criminal applications, including youth matters.

I hope that clarifies things, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

West Prince currently is in a crisis over the lack of access for family physicians. I might add that this is a completely unacceptable situation.

Family doctor vacancies in West Prince

Question to the minister of health: How many family doctor vacancies currently exist in West Prince?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure you and the hon. member that when it comes to health care in West Prince, my feet are held firmly to the fire by the minister of transportation, the minister of agriculture and the Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, and the minister of rural development.

Certainly, this is an issue that's been ongoing for some time in the West Prince area. We have developed a plan where we can work with the doctors in the area to aid in our in-patient care within the Alberton hospital system.

We do have two doctors that recently retired. I believe they both retired from the West Prince area. We are out diligently trying to recruit doctors and locums to come to that area to help in needs where highly trained skill professionals are dealing with the health care needs of those in the West Prince area of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There's currently three family doctors missing, vacant positions in West Prince. Some of these, dating back well over a year. There's also a limited access to walk-in clinics in the area.

Impact on patients re: doctor shortage

Question to the minister: How many patients are directly impacted by this shortage of family doctors in West Prince?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, the physicians from that area are very proud of the work they do and are stepping up to fill gaps in the needs that do exist until we find those doctors that may come from anywhere in Canada or the world for that matter.

We are diligently working on trying to recruit doctors for that area. Yes, there is a shortfall and doctors are even filling in, in areas, you know, as I said earlier, in-patient care in Alberton hospital. They are actually filling in on walk-in clinics and things of that nature.

Doctors from East Prince are actually going up to fill when they are available to do so. We are fully aware of the situation there and are working double time to try to solve it, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Last week, we were talking about the Kings County Memorial Hospital and what the doctors were being put under there and the workload they're experiencing and the eventual burnout that they're going to experience.

Now, we're talking about West Prince today and we're having the doctors under the same pressure up there.

The minister was asked: How many patients this affects. He didn't give an answer, so I'll answer it. There are 3,000 residents of West Prince that have no family doctor. Again, some of these individuals have had no access to a family doctor for well over a year.

Names of residents on patient registry

Question to the minister of health: Why are these residents being told by your government not to put their names on the patient registry?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, when a physician retires or leaves, their panel becomes available and they do have that option of going under the patient registry.

Currently, the hon. member referenced 3,000 in the West Prince area. Currently, there's about 9,000 province-wide. We had the opportunity to come to standing committee just a few short weeks ago to talk about this issue. And to the fact that when a doctor retires, it's often the best to kind of keep their panel together, so that when we do find a new doctor or a new doctor comes or even a locum, in that matter, that will take on these patients, they transition as a group of a panel. That's very important.

However, some patients do decide to go on the registry, and that's why this number exists from this area, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

According to the province there are currently 7,500 Islanders without a family doctor, but we know that number to be closer to about 18,000.

Only 567 West Prince residents are on the patient registry.

Question to the minister of health: Why did you create the patient registry if government is telling thousands of Islanders not to put their name on it?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, when we're out trying to recruit doctors, rural areas of anywhere in Canada are a little bit harder to attract doctors to. You have to get somebody from the rural area, and in particular, if it's somebody from the particular area, makes it that much simpler.

We do know that it's easier to transition full panel sizes to new doctors. We'll continue to work on that. We know this has been the case in that area for some time. We are trying to recruit. It is difficult to recruit to rural areas, but we have a major focus on this and we'll continue to work on it, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's quite clear and quite evident that the patient registry is not working. In fact, I would have to say that it's actually broken. Government has toyed with the idea of using private sector recruitment to fill these vacancies.

Private sector recruiting and doctor vacancies

Question to the minister of health: Isn't it time that we look at new ideas like private sector recruiting to solve problems like doctor vacancies?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly in the department we have a very valuable recruitment team that goes out, identifies – work hard to go out and capture physicians to come to work on Prince Edward Island.

Currently we have, I believe it's the largest compliment of doctors or physicians on Prince Edward Island – currently over 225 province-wide. This is a group of individuals who work diligently in this area, have a major focus and vision of what we need in all areas of our doctor recruitment and they go out to continue to work that. I'm

sure there's all kinds of networking that is done and some of it may be privately, I'm not sure, but certainly this is a team that has this focus of health care on Prince Edward Island, has a focus of recruiting doctors and go out and work at it every day.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister and his recruiting department came to standing committee a little while ago to talk about the struggles with recruitment and a few successes as well. At that time, they felt that they could do a much better job of recruiting, rather than private sector.

Minister: Do you think we should put that to the test again?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my discussions with our recruitment team and in discussions they have with other recruitment officers across Canada, they all suffer the same challenges. They're all out trying to recruit the same individual to come to their jurisdictions to do work in their healthcare systems. This is not new, Mr. Speaker. This has been going on for a number of years as physicians try to establish their own work-life balance situations. They want to be in larger, urban areas. These are challenges that all jurisdictions face across Canada and we try to make that point very clear at standing committee –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct).

Mr. Mitchell: – and I try to make that point very clear again today.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member from Souris-Elmira is right. Let's be leaders. Let's not just say that we're

all on the same boat. I don't see what the harm is in having a recruitment department doing what they do in your department, and then we have private sector recruiters doing the same thing. I don't understand. Why don't we have multiple people doing this?

Mr. LaVie: Your system's not working.

Mr. MacEwen: I see many members over there nodding their heads when the Leader of the Opposition raised the idea. Like: Yes, that makes a lot of sense. If you go down to Tim Horton's and you pitch that idea, they're going to say: That makes a lot of sense. What's the holdback? Why don't we just get the private recruiters going at the same time as your department?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I tried to allude to a little bit earlier, I do believe our recruitment team – they do go out, they reach out to other networks including, I guess you'd call them private companies that go – the term is called headhunters.

Our recruiters do go out and talk to headhunters to determine who's in the area; who's available; who might come to Prince Edward Island; who, in particular, might come to a rural area of Prince Edward Island and they do that on a regular basis. This is not a closed door for them. They don't sit in their office and make calls from their telephones. They're out, they're working with others, and they're trying to attract the best health professionals to our province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Return of doctor to Tyne Valley medical centre

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When can the residents of Tyne Valley expect their doctor back to the medical centre there?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I alluded to earlier as well, the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy has kept me well-abreast of the concerns of the area from the Tyne Valley residents. Dr. Montgomery will be returning, I believe, in the very near future. Dr. Montgomery did a very valuable service for us at the Province of Prince Edward Island – stepping up to handle in-care patients at Alberton Hospital; so that hospital remained sustainable and open for those patients and clients that need this care. Obviously, there are a couple other doctors there that were willing to take on their patients, but that still left a significant gap. Dr. Montgomery stepped up, helped us out in that area, and allowed that very excellent health care transition from when they would come into the hospital, until they left.

So we are very, very thankful and very fortunate to have Dr. Montgomery in that area, providing that very valuable service.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At the first of March, people were trying to book appointments for their medical needs with nurse practitioners. They couldn't get appointments. April was booked up – the entire month was booked up. This was at the first of March.

What do you say to the people of Tyne Valley that are trying to get an appointment and are told: No, sorry, you've got to wait six weeks?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

What I neglected to indicate a little bit earlier that to the best of my knowledge there is a locum now in the Tyne Valley area that is assisting as well a nurse practitioner and soon there'll be two new nurse practitioners heading up to that area once they begin their working contracts. We know full-well that Islanders expect very high-quality, professional healthcare

professionals taking care of their needs on Prince Edward Island and we work towards making sure that that is the case, not only in Tyne Valley, Alberton, O'Leary, but in all regions of Prince Edward Island and we'll continue to work on that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition alluded to the problems that are happening down at the Kings County Memorial Hospital – about sending people to ER. That's what these patients are being told: Go to the ERs.

Is this not going to just exasperate the problem that's going on in Summerside and Alberton at the ERs if we just keep telling them to go? Are we going to go down the same road as Kings County?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

When it comes to the situation in Kings County Memorial Hospital, we find ourselves in a situation that we haven't been into for a number of – I'll say years. We now have a full complement of doctors in the Kings County region, so we do have the complement now to provide that ER service and other services: acute care, primary care, all those other aspects of service that we were not fully able to provide in that region for some time.

This is very beneficial for the region of Kings County Memorial Hospital and we will continue to work in other areas of Prince Edward Island to try to provide that same and equal, sustainable service in all regions of our province.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reason that we're asking these questions today is because we've had a number of people coming to us from the West Prince area wondering. They're just finding this

information out. When we have ER closures in other places, we get it out to the public. It seems to be with this government that: We've got to shelter that. We've got to hide that. Let's be a lot more open with the people when this stuff happens again. Yes, we're going to have shortages. Yes, we're going to have some problems. You talk about retirements, but why do we need to – when we call for an appointment, that's when you find out that it's not going to be for six weeks.

Communication strategy for West Prince

What's going to be the communication strategy for the good people of West Prince the next time this happens?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to ERs at all hospitals across Prince Edward Island, we do, I'll say, a very wonderful job of getting that word out to those residents in that area that a situation has occurred, it's out of our control, and the remedy will be for you to go to a different ER. The problem in West Prince, it's not the ER, hon. member; the ER functions fully and wonderfully in that area. This is about inpatient care in Alberton hospital – which we do have a gap there that we're trying to mitigate and actually, through the help of the members that I alluded to earlier with other medical professionals there, we're looking to resolve. Actually, if it takes stepping out of the box and looking at the big picture, that's what's going on today and will continue to.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Island pharmacies are a big partner in the frontline delivery of our health care here on Prince Edward Island.

Pharmacists working to full scope of practice

Question to the minister of health: Do you support letting pharmacists work to their full scope of practice?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly taking my chair a few short months ago, I've had opportunities to talk to pharmacists from one end of the province to the other. I do understand that they have wishes that they could practice full scope and over the last number of years, they have been added scopes of work, whether it's immunization, whether it's allowing to fill drugs – re-prescribe for individuals. We've done a lot of work in that area.

It's an area that we will continue to work on and have discussions with pharmacists to say: What do you think would best suit your needs. These pharmacists are all across Prince Edward Island in, I'll say, rural areas that provide wonderful service when the customer comes in through the door – where that pharmacist can help them to figure out the best medications so that they get their sickness taken care of very efficiently, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, thousands of Islanders don't have a doctor; thousands of Islanders. Islanders are forced to go to the emergency rooms. We're forcing them to go to the emergency rooms just to get prescriptions filled, just to get prescriptions filled. Pharmacies are the most reliable contact point in the healthcare system.

Question to the health minister: Doesn't that make our pharmacists even more important?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These pharmacists do play a very viable role in healthcare in Prince Edward Island. As well do physicians in walk-in clinics, and I do know from my experience, walk-in clinics, even if it's in this area, there are people from the hon. member's area that come in to walk-in clinics in the Charlottetown area, or other areas surrounding the Charlottetown area.

They do provide a very vital service as well, but as far as full scope for pharmacists, we're looking into that. We're talking to them about that, and we'll continue to work on that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Island pharmacies provide an important continuity of care to Islanders.

Impacts of generic drug pricing

Question to the minister of health: Have you heard any concerns about negative impact on our pharmacies from generic drug pricing?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

We have all kinds of great discussions with pharmacists and pharmacy owners all across the Province of Prince Edward Island. From time to time, we do get into those discussions of generic drugs, high-cost drugs; drugs that need to be added to the formulary.

Pharmacists play a very important role in those discussions as well, and I expect that those will continue on as changes are made, both at the provincial formulary level and with our pharmacy level, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, with more generic drugs two things are happening. Two things are happening. Government drug costs are falling. Revenue to pharmacies are falling, and that could impact the service they provide to Islanders.

Reduced services at pharmacies

Question to the health minister: What are you doing to make sure that our Islanders don't end up paying the price with reduced services from the pharmacies?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the member across the floor is very in tune with his constituents. The cost of drug reduction when generic drugs are put into place saved his constituents, his residents a lot of money so that they are able to stay in their own homes. They are able to provide very workable lives with low-cost drugs.

This is not about pharmacies' bottom lines; this is about constituents of his and mine, and all members of this floor, and all Islanders, being able to afford drug programs on Prince Edward Island and the generic program was a very valuable program that provided low-cost drugs to families, seniors, and those that cannot afford them.

Some Hon. Members: Affordable.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pharmacies give flu shots. They verify prescriptions. They advise patients of a better management of health to their system. A lot of these value-added services for Islanders are being provided now out of the pockets of pharmacies. They're paying for it out of their own pocket. The pharmacies are no longer able to provide these extra health services.

Providing of extra health services

Who is going to be there for these patients?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member when it comes to affordable drug programs for our children, our youth, our families and our seniors, this government will be there for your constituents, hon. member.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. There has been a lot of discussion in this House recently about rural governance and amalgamation, and rightly so, as it is a complicated issue that has provoked strong feelings and much debate all across the Island.

Oftentimes, the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment has, in response to questions on the process, referred to the fact that the Three Rivers proposal is currently in the hands of IRAC and that we all need to wait until their deliberations are complete before we pre-suppose what the next steps will be.

Public consultations and IRAC

Question to the minister: Has IRAC any experience in handling an issue as complex as this, and do you feel that they have the capacity to carry out the public consultations which are mandated in the act?

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

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

IRAC provides an excellent service to Islanders from one end to the other. IRAC handles all the land-use permits that are going through their authority, so they know rural communities because they see the land transactions going through for non-residents, corporations and things like that. I think that IRAC has the capacity and the expertise to adjudicate this procedure, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

Some people have also expressed concerns about the degree of independence of IRAC in such a politically-charged environment as we find ourselves with this debate on amalgamation.

IRAC and rural amalgamation

Minister: Do you have confidence that IRAC will act in an independent manner when it comes to rural amalgamation?

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

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

This government believes in strong communities from one end of Prince Edward Island to the other end. We believe that strong communities make a strong province, and that's why Prince Edward Island's population is growing. That's why Prince Edward Island's economy is growing, because we have strong communities from one end of Prince Edward Island to the other.

We'll continue to work to make strong communities. Does IRAC have the independence? Yes, sir.

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

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

The chair and CEO of IRAC is apparently a good Liberal, having donated \$6,690 to the party between 2007 and 2013, prior to his appointment in 2014.

Influence of Liberal party on IRAC

Can the minister reassure this House that the Liberal Party of PEI will not have any influence over the IRAC proceedings?

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that IRAC would work as an independent to adjudicate the procedures that are happening.

The people at IRAC – what is the Leader of the Third Party saying? Anybody that contributes to a political party any time in their history is not allowed a job? Is he going to fire all the judges down at the court house? Is he going to fire everybody that ever made a contribution to a political party in Prince Edward Island? If that's the system we're in, thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Montague Consolidated School is a very important institution to all residents in my area. This school is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, school in the Province of Prince Edward Island. Given the design of recent new schools, schools that have been recently finished and schools that are currently under construction, it is acknowledged that this school is way out of date, and that this school needs to be replaced.

Replacement of Montague Consolidated School

Can the minister tell us here today what his plans are for a replacement of the Montague Consolidated School, and does he have the dollars budgeted in his management plan going forward?

Mr. LaVie: Election coming?

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

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

Thank you to the hon. member for the question.

We've had a number of questions of late in relation to the procedure for capital repairs to schools and like any other capital repair procedure, the Public Schools Branch is charged with making a determination as to the state of that infrastructure, and it's readiness to provide the education we need to Prince Edward Island students.

I am aware that they are aware that Montague school is aging infrastructure and needs to be looked at in the medium-term with an eye to its ability to continue on in that capacity.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the minister for that.

Can the minister advise us if he has visited

Montague Consolidated School and had a firsthand look at the school and the dated layout that is needed to be replaced as has been the case across the Island in other communities?

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

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

As the hon. member would be aware, it's a couple of years since I've been to that school. We have made attempts to get together, actually, and go down and take a look at that school of late. For one conflict or another, haven't been able to do that immediately. I do have some level of awareness of it.

I will reiterate –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – again, that it doesn't matter what level of awareness I have. It's up to the Public Schools Branch to determine what they feel is appropriate in relation –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – to that school and to put a recommendation forward to our office.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister work with the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy to complete a replacement assessment for the Montague Consolidated School this spring, and direct staff in both departments to complete a replacement assessment of this school that accommodate current and future students' needs and confirm this replacement is included and funded in the fall budget of 2018 for immediate replacement?

Mr. LaVie: I can guarantee you (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: You got your two news schools. Be quiet.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

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

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

That does demonstrate just why we need to have an organization like the Public Schools Branch that is charged with this. What I will commit to do is go back to the Public Schools Branch and to ensure, as I know that they are, as I have had this conversation with them already, that they are aware of the reported state of Montague Consolidated School –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – their facility staff do have an eye on that school.

I'm sure that they are looking at that as they are with many of our schools, which are beginning to show their age with an eye to determining when they may need some capital investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

My question is for the minister of transportation. As everyone in the House remembers, a few years ago, we had a major problem with bridges on the Island. And responsibly, the department looked and did a serious review of all the bridges across the province.

Unfortunately, at that time, there were a number of bridges that were deemed to be not going to be opened again. Since that time though, very fortunately, we have had three successive balanced budgets and we've had money put into bridges.

Budget for updating bridges

Can the minister tell us she has had a change a heart and is looking at –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: – fixing those bridges?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I've got two.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the member mentioned, we had some challenges. We implemented a structure that we would ensure that bridges were inspected on a regular basis because the safety of the travelling public is paramount to us.

Since 2015, we've invested \$120 million in capital road and bridge projects, including the construction and rehabilitation of 16 bridge structures alone. There were 10 bridge structures closed, as was mentioned. When we do that, though, we don't do it lightly. We take into consideration; the traffic, what is the radius of a detour, and we'll continue to prioritize and inspect those bridges.

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

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the territory of Nunavut, they have a very famous road that's called the Road to Nowhere. In the district of Lyndale there's a Settlement road, which is soon going to take on that name, as well.

We are very interested in having that bridge repaired. Is it possible that we could, now that there are the extra dollars, look at that one, start with that one of the 10 and come back with a review as to what, possibly, it might take to get that bridge open?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our capital budget that we tabled in 2018-2019 included \$53 million for roads and bridges, new equipment and buildings. That did include \$5 million for bridges. We have an unexpected expenditure with the Murray Harbour bridge for that community.

I mentioned though, that we do a thorough bridge inspection program with our capital projects. We have six bridge replacements planned this year for eastern PEI along. That is paramount, as well. To those are major travelling areas for the public. That project for Murray Harbour, as I mentioned, is going to be a \$3 million project on its own. We have to look at priority where the largest traffic flows are –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – and we do not have any plans to reopen those 10 bridges.

Mr. Roach: You've got your bridge. Be quiet.

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

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

I mentioned earlier that we did have three successive balanced budgets. A lot of that due to the agriculture community in this province. They put a lot of dollars into the coffers. This Settlement road, the bridge that attaches it through to the district of Lyndale, has a lot of farmers on that road.

Even if we could get the bridge repaired to the point where we could get cars and trucks to follow it, and we would agree to keep the heavy equipment off it.

Settlement Road in Lyndale

Could the minister report back that that might be a possibility to get that passage open, at least to that extent ASAP?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you –

Mr. LaVie: A walking bridge.

Ms. Biggar: – Mr. Speaker.

Our infrastructure program is investing in connectors for Island farmers, Island fishers right across PEI. We were able to open up new criteria for road construction. We've invested over \$218 million in road construction, including bridges right across PEI, for those farmers in that member's district to get their products to market. We will continue to work on that objective.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recently, Facebook has been in the news because of personal data being shared for political purposes without those people's consent.

A number of Islanders have approached us from District 11 and told us that during the Charlottetown-Parkdale election Green Party staff and volunteers who were out campaigning door-to-door began the conversation by saying that someone in the household supported proportional representation.

PR coalition campaign data

Does the minister of justice know how the Green Party of PEI would have been in possession of this PR coalition campaign data?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Mr. J. Brown: No, Mr. Speaker, I don't nor would I know how that might happen, I guess.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Green Party President, Anna Keenan, serves as campaign director for the PR coalition. She registered and administers the database website for the PR coalition campaign. This website that she administers contains the data on collected donations and

stored personal information on thousands of Islanders. It appears this data is now in the possession of the Green Party.

Personal information in possession of third party

Minister, are you concerned with the passing of personal information, collected under different pretenses to the Green Party of PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, yes, is the answer to that question. This is a very serious allegation –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – it is the reason why we would have freedom of information and protection of privacy. We'd focus on the first part of that more frequently than the second.

Information in this province, and as the hon. member indicated, it has more recently come to light in the context of US political goings on and certainly I would hope that it's not appearing here in the province.

Be that as it is, I take the hon. member's indications very seriously, and would commit to working with you to looking further into them.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, minister.

I have a copy of the registry information for the domain name pronpei.com. The registrant contact and the administration contact is Ms. Anna Keenan. I'll be tabling that.

Jordan Barbour, the Green Party fundraising chair, serves as the digital campaigner for the PR coalition, soliciting voter information and donations. He also served as the campaign manager for the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale during the District 11 by-election.

Third party targeting votes in by-election

Minister: Do you suppose it's a coincidence that the Green Party was targeting voters in the by-election using data, their party president and by-election campaign manager were collecting under other pretenses?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

I should state that I would not be too quick to suppose anything, but as I indicated, this is of a great concern, particularly when we have municipal elections that are essentially upon us. Certainly I would, as I indicated, commit to taking this back to my department to see what we may be able to do to assist in an investigation in relation to this matter and I would encourage the hon. member as well to – if she's not already – to report this to the Chief Electoral Officer's office as they would typically be charged with the handling of any information collected during – or utilized, I guess – during a campaign insofar as I'm aware at this point, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The personal data on thousands of Islanders that was collected under the guise of the PR coalition appears to have been given to the Green Party of PEI. This could include names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, credit card numbers and financial information, political party affiliation, and many other data points. Minister, the deliberate leaking of information to other organizations without knowledge or consent of the person is a serious matter.

Sharing and usage of personal information

How will this government address the sharing and usage of personal information by senior Green Party officials and their political party?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

Again, I would take this as a very serious allegation. It's one that there are two offices set up within this province to deal with – being the Privacy and Information Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer. As I indicated, I will take this back to my department and see what further we can do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Protection of Islanders under FOIPP Act

Minister: What legal protection do these Islanders have whose information has been deliberately shared with the Green Party? What do they have under the provincial FOIPP Act, or the federal *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

I don't propose to get into providing a legal opinion here on the floor of the Legislature today, but as I indicated, I do – this sounds like a very serious offence if the allegations that have been leveled are, in fact, true and certainly as I have committed already, I will reinforce my commitment to the hon. member and to this House to take this back to my department and to look further into it. I will be back here to provide an update as to what I've been able to find out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Senior Green Party officials are still soliciting donations and information from Islanders through their PR website front. They are pushing monthly donations through this database website and I will table a screenshot of that in the House later.

I'm calling for these actions to be suspended until a further investigation can be completed.

Government action and sharing of data

What action will government take to stop the data collection, the soliciting of donations, and the sharing of data with the Green Party of PEI, and to investigate what has already taken place?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

Again as I had indicated previously and will reiterate, I would encourage the hon. member to report this to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Information and Privacy Commissioner and certainly I'll take this back to my department and commit to determining what, if any, help we might be able to provide in relation to this – what seems to be a very serious complaint.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, your final question.

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The only organized lobby group active during the recent plebiscite, who had the president of the Green Party of PEI serving as campaign director, finally admitted publicly to receiving approximately \$75,000 in funding support. Of this, \$30,000 came from unions and \$20,000 came from political parties.

Minister of justice: Are you concerned about these revelations, and does government have any answers as to how this conflict will be dealt with?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and the Attorney General.

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

As I indicated yesterday when I was on my feet speaking to a motion, I originally had some level of concern particularly with the union donations and perhaps in this context I

maybe should have had more concern in relation to the personal donations that were being made.

But, as I indicated, we would take all of this very seriously. They are very serious allegations and again, we would encourage the hon. member to report them to the Chief Electoral Officer and to report them to the freedom of information and privacy commissioner, and I'll take them back to my department and I will commit to connecting with the hon. member if she's interested and available to participate in seeing what we can do to further an investigation in relation to this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Recognition of Guests (II)

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to take this opportunity to recognize a couple of constituents that entered the gallery a little later during Question Period. Ronnie and Claretta MacWilliams are constituents of mine in the great area of West Cape and both of them are very community-minded citizens. In fact, Ronnie is quite active involved in the O'Leary seniors community care facility co-operative and he's doing great work on that. He's also, from an agricultural perspective, a former farmer but he's also the chair of the Farm Practices Review Board and they're doing some really good work on behalf of Islanders, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to take this moment to recognize Mait McIsaac who is in the gallery as well. Mait is always in my ear and giving me advice on seniors' issues as well as family issues, and actually he's been very instrumental in helping me with the grandparents and care providers program.

When I say to Mait, I say: My goodness, Mait, aren't you retired? I thought you retired. He says: No, minister, I'm just rewired.

Statements by Ministers

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

Island Advantage-Low and Middle Income

Mr. Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday I spoke about the Island Advantage George Coles Bursary which provides extra financial support for all Island students.

Today, I would like to get into the specifics of government's support for low-and-middle-income students.

We've heard from the UPEI Student Union, the Youth Futures Council and YDAY participants that needs-based help with tuition is a priority. We appreciate their advice. We've taken that advice seriously. That is why the Island Advantage includes extra support specifically for PEI low-and-middle-income students.

The dream of going to college or university is fully within reach of every Island student now more than ever because of government investments of \$3.3 million per year; the largest single investment in non-repayable assistance for students in the history of PEI. Through the Island Advantage, 1,000 Island students will receive financial help that equals the cost of their tuition, providing free tuition to these students that need it most.

Under the Canada Student Grant, students who have the greatest need can receive up to \$3,000 per year from the federal government. On top of the Island Advantage George Coles, the low-and-middle-income grant will provide up to an additional \$2,000. When combined these bursaries and grants will give approximately 1,000 PEI students the equivalent of free tuition. This is a needs-based program, so the amount of tuition support will depend on the income of the student.

For example, a student from a family of four that has a family income of \$77,000 would receive enough supports to cover the cost of tuition at UPEI. When combined with the Canada Student Grant of \$2,000 and the Island Advantage George Coles, and the low-and-middle-income grant, they would receive \$6,200 in total each year.

To access this financial help, students simply need to apply for a student loan. Through that process, my department will assess the student's income and eligibility. Student loan applications can go online in June, and students should apply by July 15th to ensure financial help is in place in September.

More information for students and parents is available at princeedwardisland.ca/studentloans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Numerous times I have met with the Student Union at UPEI and what I continue to hear from them is that the means testing that government puts on top of them is a limiting factor; that they shouldn't be tied to anybody else but themselves. They're young adults and they're in charge of their own education, that it shouldn't matter what their parents' income are when it comes to matching up for any of their programs or any of their student loans.

One of these days, I'd love for government to stand up in the House and say we're going to change the student loan program so that students can apply on their own merit, as themselves. Ultimately, they're the ones that end up with the debt. If you have – what you're basically saying is that if you have students whose parents can't pay you're saddling them all with the debt, but if you have students who parents can pay, you're going to make them pay instead, and they get to come out of the other end scot-free.

There has to be a better way so that we cannot overburden everyone with high levels of student debt, but make it so it's accessible by everyone, so people can be

mature and independent and make their own financial future decisions based on how they use their money, and how they borrow money.

One of these days, I'd love for government to get up and say we're going to help students by making student loans fair and accessible to everyone, regardless of parental income. You're making an awful lot of assumptions that people who have a higher level of income actually have any money. As you guys would know, because you are taxing them death; they're taxed to death. They don't have – that money is not kicking around. They don't have 10 grand in cash to send – some of you might, but they just don't have 10 grand in cash kicking around every year to make that happen.

It puts an unfair burden into parents, particularly, in the lower middle class that are just above your threshold line. It makes for tough decisions. I think that government knows this. Government has heard it. It's a loan. I've heard a lot of you guys say in here, recently, how great you're doing on your loan portfolio. Here's where you could actually do something great with your loan portfolio.

It's not the Murphys asking, I know. It's not a failed Liberal candidate asking, I know. This is a wide-spread issue right across Prince Edward Island. We need to do as much as we can for students. I'm dying for the day that government stands up and says look, we're going to be fair to everyone regardless of what their parents make.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Of course, this is great news. This is a significant expansion of an already successful program offering educational supports to Islanders, who are starting in post-secondary education, and who are going to stay here on Prince Edward Island.

Post-secondary education, keeping Islanders here at home, both incredibly important things to do, in terms of the economic and

social well-being of Prince Edward Island into the future. I welcome this with unqualified support today, minister. Thank you for this.

When you take together the George Coles Bursary, the Canada Student Grant and the Island advance loan and middle-income bursary, it can, it doesn't necessarily, but it can mean the equivalent of free tuition for hundreds if not thousands of Islanders. Again, that's an enormously important thing for, not only for those individuals, but for the collective well-being of this province.

Thank you for the announcement, minister. It has my unqualified support.

Thank you.

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

Supporting Youth Aging Out of the Permanent Care of the Province

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our provincial government's new 2018-2019 operating Budget provides many significant investments to help our youth build a brighter future.

We are also committed to supporting youth in the permanent care of the province as they transition from Child Protection Services to independent living at age 18. I'm happy to highlight some of the supports in place to help Island youth who have aged out of the province's Child Protection Services.

Most young people today have help from their parents as they transition from childhood to adulthood. Youth in child protection also need and deserve to have that assistance when they turn 18. That is why we provide them with help through what is called extended services for youth aged 18-21.

These services include various supports such as; ensuring that youth have a social worker to help them with continuing their education, or connecting them to the workforce or helping them find suitable living arrangements.

Fifteen youth benefitted from extended services in 2017 and 2018 through a government investment of nearly \$90,000. I'm also very pleased that government recently issued a request for proposal to build at least five new transitional units for youth aging out of the guardianship of the province. This investment will provide them with access to housing and supports, giving them the best possible start to their adult lives.

As evident by the supports in our new 2018-2019 Budget, our government is committed to helping those who need it most. These include support for the new Grandparent and Care Providers Program, new frontline social workers for child protection, and increased, again, to food allowance, and new low-income housing units and rent supplements.

We continue to support our youth and all Islanders to make Prince Edward Island even a better place for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for her statement. We hear, each one of us on this side of the rail, hear all the time from parents who are put in a position of stress, both financially and emotionally when their children are aging out, aging out of any of the systems. I might send a message to the minister of education that we should look at the autism spectrum children, as well, who are graduating high school and what happens next.

I think the more we continue to support young people, who need our help, it's a wonderful thing. It puts families in a better position. It gives those young people a sense of integrity and a sense of value and worth because they're helped with workforce, and an independent living arrangement, which is really good for them. I think it also gives more of a hand-up than a handout.

I support the announcement by the minister and we need to keep doing more.

Thank you.

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

Film PEI

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cultural industries across Prince Edward Island see an incredibly bright future ahead. Our culture is unique and the artists and artisans, who deliver our culture to the world, deserve to be supported in their efforts.

Under this government's recently announced Culture Action Plan, which is part of our third consecutive balanced budget, we pledged \$3.5 million to grow our cultural industries over the next five years.

We are taking steps to support a wide variety of sectors within our cultural industries, including new support and new space for craftspeople, whose handmade goods are in high demand. We have announced grants for artists that will help them make their creativity ideas reality.

We've made other investments, as well, including one I'd like to focus on today. Film PEI is the province's most important resource for filmmakers across the province. The organization provides filmmakers with equipment, editing capabilities, professional development and other services that help these artists' dreams become reality.

Today, we are announcing funding to support Film PEI's move to a new space that will help the organization grow and will better serve the film community on the Island. Under the Culture Action Plan, my department and the Department of Rural and Regional Development, will provide almost \$65,000 to support this move and to support Island filmmakers.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: This is combined with other highlights from our recent 2018-2019 operating Budget, including the elimination of the province's portion of HST on

electricity and other forms of home heating. There's also a tax cut for small business, and an increase in the basic personal amount to put more money in the pockets of Island entrepreneurs.

These measures will put these artists in a better position to succeed than ever before. Many Island filmmakers, include people like Harmony Wagner, Jeremy Larter, John Hopkins, Adam Perry, and many others, have done a tremendous job brining their vision to reality through film.

I am confident Film PEI will continue to serve as a vital resource to many talented filmmakers who call our province home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, certainly a great announcement. I was really hoping you were going to stand up and talk about a tax credit for the film industry. Even though it was such a great announcement you just made, that's what I'm hearing from people in the film industry. The first time I knew anything about it was when I had a young man come into my office about three years ago who travels to Nova Scotia for work. So he leaves his family five days a week and comes home on the weekend because he can't find work here in the film industry. We seen what took place in Nova Scotia when they clawed back the tax credit. They weren't long returning because it provided \$100 million in revenue in the Province of Nova Scotia.

So, even though you had a great announcement today, Minister, I really hope in the future the government takes a hard look at the tax credit for film industry here in PEI. We have about 200 people in the film industry right now that come from this little Island alone and they're all great-paying jobs. A low wage is \$20 an hour in that industry. We have great potential for growth and I really hope there's a long-term plan that will help the film industry out in the form of a tax credit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pleased again to be able to rise and recognize the impact, the value of the creative industries as a strategic sector in PEI. It's been a long time coming for us to be able to speak to this as a sector and it's great to see my friends Emma and Renee here today after many, many, many long years and hard work with IMAC, the new version of the of the – phoenix in the ashes with Film PEI. It's an amazing achievement.

This funding and support – and perhaps to add to the minister's statement about – I'm also looking forward to the new pilot media incentive fund, the boot camp support, and the incubator program coming this summer, which I think would be really exciting. So, that overall funding support allows us to see an investment in building capacity and developing the industry because we know that there's been a lot of volunteer time and passion put into this, but we need to actually invest in developing industry if we wanted the industry to have an impact here on a long-term basis. This is really the beginning of something that can have great roots and foundations coming from some really dedicated people who have not let go of their dream of seeing this come through.

I look forward too, as well, for our government – particularly with the economic development and tourism industry – to consider that PEI procurement first strategy of first right of refusal for PEI products, especially for things like tourism products in that creative space. The commercial industry, for example, would very much benefit from that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker for the opportunity to speak to this today and congratulations again to Film PEI.

Thank you.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table documents I referred today in Question Period. The first one is registry information for the domain name pronpei.com with the registrant contact and administrative contact name Anna Keenan; a bio from the Green Party website for Jordan Bober stating that he is the digital campaigner for the PEI PR Coalition and was the campaign manager for District 11 by-election; and a snapshot of the website for proportional representation and the fact that they are still looking for donations and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Borden-Kinkora, 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 hon. Minister of Finance, that the 1st order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

Hon. members, we are continuing with the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture budget. We're on page 57. The section achievement and accountability has been read, but hasn't been carried. So, that's where we'll be.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you. We'll allow him to set up and be introduced.

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

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

Chair: Welcome back.

Chris DesRoche Director: Thank you.

Chair: Hon. members,

Shall the section carry?

We have a question from the Member from Rustico-Emerald – and again, hon. members, before we get started – friendly reminder to focus your questions on the section that we're discussing.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, thank you.

I just wanted to clarify: This is where the various student assessment initiatives are done by the province?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: And there are seven and a half full-time equivalents in this area. Is that correct?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: How many of those could be redeployed to the frontline in the classroom if the assessments initiatives were stopped?

Chris DesRoche Director: Six of the seven and a half.

Mr. Trivers: What I'm hearing from some people is that embedded coaching for teachers who are best positioned to assess students would be another good use of resources and possibly better than holding these assessments. I was wondering how many of these resources might be able to act as embedded coaches on the frontline.

Mr. J. Brown: The question is basically how many of these are teachers that are seconded to the department to do this work. Any teacher, if they were sent back to their position in the department – and I should say that the secondment question is not as simple, perhaps, as just saying: Well, we're going to do this tonight or tomorrow. Some of the secondments are of a more significant duration than one year. But, theoretically, at least they could then be seconded to the leadership and learning department or a portion of our department which deals then with – they would have embedded coaches within their group.

Mr. Trivers: How do teachers use the results from the assessments? Or do the teachers even use the results from the assessments?

Mr. J. Brown: I should just clarify, too, there are embedded coaches that are actually in the schools that the principal of a school would often have the ability to decide: Rather than use somebody as a teacher on the frontline, I'll use them as a point whatever embedded coach or a full-time embedded coach and a resource. That often would go along with the progress monitoring program that you had mentioned last week too.

To get back to this – I think you asked me this question. I think I answered it the other day. I stand to be corrected in that, but maybe if you want to –

Mr. Trivers: My question is: Do teachers use the results of the assessments; and if so, how?

Mr. J. Brown: I gave a long answer to this question the other day.

Mr. Trivers: In response to one of my questions?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: I don't recall that.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: It could have been the third party.

Mr. Trivers: It sure could have been my question. It would have been shut down being in the wrong section.

Mr. J. Brown: Okay, so the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale is indicating that it was she that had asked the question, so anyway, my apologies.

Maybe I'll try and shorten it up, but the assessment information is used in a number of different ways, to try and keep it as short as I can; teachers are actually used in marking boards to mark them. That is a great PD exercise for teachers in and of itself. But, that information is also taken and feeds back into PD for the teachers as to areas of weakness.

The example I used the other day was you might have a math problem, and the teacher might think that there's a level of competency, and so this will kind of inform the question you asked me two or three questions ago about teachers in the classroom knowing what their students think. I will tell you that there's a lot of data to say that that may not come out as accurately as what we think it might be.

In other words, there are certain – and this is not taking anything away from teachers – but there are always certain biases that are built into that kind of thinking, that have been borne out through data over the course of time.

In any event, a student might get so far down through a math problem, as an example, on one of the assessments and you would recognize that the student has skills to do X, Y, and Z, but not A and B. So, that might trigger the teacher back or trigger PD to amplify the teachings in that A and B portion of that sequencing of math events.

That ranges all the way from that specific piece to broad programming, to overall performance. So in other words, cohort or grade level performance, or performance of a number of grades if we're talking about PISA testing that goes on with focuses on different areas at intervals.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

I do understand that approach. Do the assessments then use professional development to go back and sort of help the teachers improve in areas where they're identified in the assessments?

Just for the record, the feedback that I'm receiving is that progress monitoring with embedded coaches is the preferable method, from the people that I'm talking to, and they think it works better than that and it's more effective, and it helps improve the education of the students better and puts teachers right on the floor. I just wanted to give you that feedback.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I had some questions yesterday just on the early years evaluation and there were two questions I forgot to ask. As far the facilitators that do the evaluation itself, how many of them are there in the province?

Chris DesRoche Director: I'm not 100% sure on that. There's one that leads the project, but I'd have to check on that for facilitators.

Mr. MacKay: So are they full-time staffers through the department or –

Chris DesRoche Director: No.

Mr. MacKay: So, it's like a contract, is it?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, the leader is a temporary contract and the facilitators would be as well.

Mr. MacKay: What's the cost of that contract?

Chris DesRoche Director: The leader?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah.

Chris DesRoche Director: I'd have to get back – it's about three months of a teacher's salary. It's a teacher (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: Right, okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. J. Brown: I could just add to that, Madam Chair.

They're typically retired teachers that would do them. I actually had mine with my son this morning, but they would typically be a teacher that would have taught in the system for a period of time. They are given a program from the company that's got an expertise in setting up to evaluate these things. They utilize that queuing or that program and then it results in a data set that goes back to be analyzed by the contractor.

Mr. MacKay: One question to follow up on that; I guess this probably stems back to some concerns I had from a parent last fall. As far as – the question I guess – we've got retired teachers doing the review.

Why aren't the kindergarten teachers involved if these kids are going into their classroom; why are they not involved with the process itself?

Mr. J. Brown: As I indicated, I went with my son today. This occurs during school time, typically, so it's something that would lead into that and it's not meant to – again, we could probably be here all day and talk about this – but there are a number of different things that would feed into that. A, you don't know what class your student is going to end up in after. Some of this information is actually utilized in trying to determine class composition and that kind of thing going forward and some would say it would be inappropriate to have the actual teacher of the student doing this evaluation on an ongoing basis.

The model is currently under review with an eye to being changed going forward from what it is, what it had been.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

English/French as an Additional Language

“Appropriations provided for the delivery of English/French as an additional language programs within the public education system.” Administration: 11,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 30,000. Professional Services: 176,000. Salaries: 342,800. Travel and Training: 16,000.

Total English/French as an Additional Language: 575,800.

Total External Relations and Educational Services: 2,616,800.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

The budget for this section has increased significantly. There are a couple of line items in the professional services and then in salaries. Could you speak to what’s driving that increase?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, sure.

This area is growing significantly, so there are two positions that are added to this section. Also on the professional services we receive revenue for international students that come here for a semester or two, and at times there are agents that bring in those students and when there is an agent in place, there’s a commission paid to that agent.

We have revenues from international students attending and offset we have to pay a commission when they’re found for us.

Ms. Bell: Are all of those international students French-speaking students? Why is that professional service showing up in the – English as a second language, EAL is what you’re referring to.

Chris DesRoche Director: Yes.

Ms. Bell: Okay, thank you.

Mr. J. Brown: EAL and FAL.

Ms. Bell: And FAL? Right.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, so there are, I think, it’s 32 students in the French –

Ms. Bell: In French?

Mr. J. Brown: –if I recall that correctly.

Ms. Bell: The professional services are consultancy fees for that student recruitment?

Chris DesRoche Director: Exactly. Our revenues are increasing, so do our fees to those agents.

Ms. Bell: Can I just clarify where the costs for those – are all those costs covered underneath this section in terms of the program delivery? Where’s the revenue for that line showing up?

Chris DesRoche Director: In our revenues.

Ms. Bell: In the revenue, just in general revenue?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, our department revenues (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: Just in department general revenue? Okay.

That’s it, thank you.

Mr. J. Brown: We can say – I think the revenue for that grouping is roughly \$2 million –

Ms. Bell: \$2 million?

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: So balancing – offsetting significant the cost is much less than the revenue?

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) well and it’s really, I mean, you hear all sorts of different arguments about this, but you look at it where there’s a fixed cost, and an incremental cost and the theory is the students are coming in without adding a whole lot of extra work on top of what’s there. They do bring a lot to, in terms of perspective and that, to the classroom. It’s, kind of, a win-win relationship, I guess, at this point.

Ms. Bell: Are any of those additional requirements for English as a second language being driven by immigration? So, through, sort of, our PNP immigrants, or immigrants coming in here through more regular streams?

Mr. J. Brown: I would say yes. Often, what you would see would be a family that would have an idea that they're going to move to Prince Edward Island. They would send their child to a Prince Edward Island school through this program so that they're there on the ground getting a head start on their education in English, and in a system that they see to be a very high-quality system. They are doing that with a view to moving here eventually.

Ms. Bell: But then, this doesn't include English as a second language support in regular classrooms for students who are children of immigrants that are moving into our system?

Is there a difference between immigrant, people who are coming for English as a second language, who are coming because they paid to come, versus those who are coming here as newcomers to our province?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, the newcomers would not be paying a tuition.

Ms. Bell: Right. So, this is a separate program then?

Chris DesRoche Director: That's right.

Mr. J. Brown: They're landed immigrants –

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: – and have their residency status. They're no longer paying at that point in time, I think that's what you're asking.

Ms. Bell: Yes. There's a qualification of this is a paid program –

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: – versus the pressure that's happening in some classrooms where there are many children speaking many different languages –

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: – and we need to provide English language support in those schools.

Mr. J. Brown: We should be very careful to note, as well, that there's an additional – we've been very fortunate through our relationships with EDT to be able to access additional funding through our growth plan to supplement what we've been able to provide for those students when they do arrive and through the course of the monies that comes in through that.

Ms. Bell: My last question is, and then there are funds that come in transfers from the department of immigration to cover that other requirement. Where would that appear in the budget?

Chris DesRoche Director: Do you mean the support we receive from economic development and tourism?

Ms. Bell: Yeah.

Chris DesRoche Director: It's offset, our costs so, it would actually be at the Public Schools Branch because they're frontline EAs and teachers.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Chris DesRoche Director: We pay the EAs and teachers and we're reimbursed.

Ms. Bell: Okay, so it's not quite as clearly defined, that.

Chris DesRoche Director: No.

Ms. Bell: Right.

All right, thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Top of page 58.

Innovation, Education and Programs

English Innovation, Education and Programs

“Appropriations provided for divisional management and for various grants relating to the delivery of English elementary and secondary programs.” Administration:

3,900. Equipment: 31,600. Materials, Supplies and Services: 467,400. Salaries: 1,737,500. Travel and Training: 32,800. Grants: 122,500.

Total English Innovation, Education and Programs: 2,395,700.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

French Innovation, Education and Programs

“Appropriations provided for the development, implementation and maintenance of all programs of study in French First Language, Early and Late French Immersion, Core French, and the purchase of texts and materials. Appropriations are also provided for cost-shared programs under the Official Languages in Education Agreement and for a variety of services to schools and school authorities in relation to the administration of French programs.” Administration: 8,700. Equipment: 27,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 413,000. Professional Services: 33,000. Salaries: 2,363,600. Travel and Training: 41,200. Grants: 198,600.

Total French Innovation, Education and Programs: 3,085,100.

Total Innovation, Education and Programs: 5,480,800.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

My question is about the French innovation and education programs, that total. I was wondering, is this where the money that comes in from the federal government for French programs is shown?

Mr. J. Brown: Not specifically in our Budget, I guess. There is an agreement with the federal government that is leveraged through this section.

Mr. Trivers: Do you lobby the federal government on behalf of the French Language School Board and French speaking constituents for that federal funding?

Mr. J. Brown: We do, like, through a group of ministers, yes.

Mr. Trivers: The reason I asked that is I've been told that there hasn't been an increase in the amount that's transferred for the last 11 years, which translates to being down around 25% because of inflation and that sort of thing.

I was wondering what sort of steps are you taking to try and lobby the federal government to get an increase in funding, so it, at least, matches inflation for the French transfers.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you. It's a good question, hon. member.

As I indicated, this is a negotiation that's undertaken by the grouping of ministers of education. There was a long-term contract – a three-year contract had been in place and it expired, I think, in –

Chris DesRoche Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – March of 2018. We're in the process of renegotiating it, currently. Obviously, it's a very, kind of, detailed negotiation process. There is a lot that goes into this. It's something that the federal government has indicated is a priority for them. You can imagine when you have a number of different provinces and territories that are signatories to the same agreement that it becomes very complex to ensure that everybody, kind of, gets what they want. There's a process that's set-up to do that. Generally, it's not a quick negotiation process.

Mr. Trivers: Is it your intention to get, at least, a 25% increase. Then, lobby the government, as well so that it increases every year with, at least, with inflation?

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not going to state the intention that way.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: Certainly, I don't think if you talk to the French Language School Board, or any of the underlying community organizations. I don't think they would, kind of, state the objective that they would wish to see achieved that way, either.

This is a very complex agreement. There are a number of different sections to this

agreement. Through different parts of it, the community always wants to see different levels of investment in different areas. Of course, you can probably argue there are a few different Acadian communities here on Prince Edward Island that would have different desires themselves. Take that and multiply it by all of the French speaking, French first language communities across the country and it gets to be a much more, kind of – a much larger scope in terms of the basket of desires that the communities would have and would see be fulfilled through this agreement.

The agreement goes right from programming right on through to the makeup of schools. There is a lot that's tied up in this –

Chris DesRoche Director: Post-secondary, too.

Mr. J. Brown: – yeah, post-secondary. There's cultural applications to it.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I just want to make sure I don't miss this, but is this the section where the French language early learning centres would be, or is that in the early learning?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah –

Chair: It's in the early learning –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's later on? Okay, I'll save my questions until then.

Chair: Great. Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Leadership and Learning

“Appropriations provided for instructional development and leadership training.”
Administration: 45,200. Equipment: 22,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 229,000. Professional Services: 25,000. Salaries: 3,507,700. Travel and Training: 135,700. Grants: 119,000.

Total Leadership and Learning: 4,084,100.

Total Leadership and Learning: 4,084,100.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I see there's quite a significant increase in the salary line there and I'm just wondering how many positions that reflects and what those new staff are being hired to do?

Mr. J. Brown: We've added through the budget this year eight coaches and that was in addition to – there were two assistive technology facilitators that had already been announced, so part of the psychology strategy and then part of the early years literacy plan that we have developed in response to assessment results. Again, I'll go back to the importance of assessments in developing curriculum and then having it implemented through leadership and learning. That truly is a circle that – I think if you take any of the parts out of it, it doesn't function as well. There are eight coaches that will be added to the compliment that are already there and the primary focus of that new investment will be to implement the early years literacy curriculum that is being rolled out.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Just a quick follow-up on that. So, these are new positions? They're not being moved from some other department into here? These are new positions?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: New positions, yes.

They will be teachers that will be seconded from the classroom and then their new positions they'll be seconded into, new teachers will be hired on in those positions.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Got it.

Mr. J. Brown: So everybody's 100% on that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Minister.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: These coaches, they're assessment coaches and some of them are literacy coaches, but the assessment coaches – are these the embedded coaches that you see as part of progress monitoring, or are these people who review the assessments and then on PD days go and help train the teachers based on the assessment findings? What is the role these people play? Are they on the frontline, or are they just going out on PD days?

Mr. J. Brown: I'm going to say either none of the above or all of the above. The embedded coaches are typically a teacher within a school that's set aside so part of their purpose is to – their roles are different in different schools, but these are coaches that – they would go to the department office, probably, most days and pick up their stuff. We're talking about a theory, I guess, at least, but they would start, theoretically, from the department office and go to a school on most days and at the school they would be helping a classroom-level teacher deliver curriculum. But that may not be all that they would do. They might drive PD related to that. We do a lot of PD now within schools. They might need that. There are all different kinds of things that they might do and it may depend, honestly, on what school they would be in in terms of what it would look like as to what they would do.

Mr. Trivers: Are they the people that directly use the results of the assessments – the provincial assessments? Is that the primary tool they use to drive their activity?

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not going to say – it would be a large factor I would say, yes. Again, just to bring this back up a level, I guess, to try and explain it to you: The assessments are done. The results are analyzed by the group that we talked about here a few sections back.

Mr. Trivers: Right.

Mr. J. Brown: They would then connect with the leadership and learning group at kind of a high level and with the curriculum group. Out of that, they might look at the assessment results and say, as they have in this case: We may need to look at early

years literacy and determine – or writing, and the two of them are connected fairly closely together – determine what they may need to improve results or increase a focus on that. In this case, they've done that and what they have come to find is that we could use a curriculum intervention to help and we could use a coaching intervention – probably both in terms of what needs to be taught and how it's taught and also in terms of the rollout of that new curriculum.

Mr. Trivers: I was wondering: Those sorts of decisions – and I realize we're getting into a lot of details and thank you for that very detailed answer. Do the learning advisory councils or the advisory councils that are set up have direct input at this sort of level?

Mr. J. Brown: Are we talking district advisory councils or learning –

Mr. Trivers: District advisory councils.

Mr. J. Brown: The district advisory councils would report to our deputy minister. Basically, it might just depend. If we were starting to hear, as an example, there was an area of weakness at a particular school, whether perceived or real, you could look at – take a hypothetical example, okay?

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: There's an area of weakness in reading at XYZ school –

Mr. Trivers: Sure.

Mr. J. Brown: – and the district advisory council related to that, school reports that back into the deputy minister. The deputy minister can then say to the person who's in charge of assessment: Go look at the assessment data for that school. Okay, great, go look at the assessment data. They determine, yes, there is an issue and then they go back and together with the leadership and learning people, determine: Okay, what do we think we need to do to sort this out. If it involves curriculum, they would involve curriculum. They'd develop a plan to move forward with that particular school, or an approach to move forward with that particular school, and hopefully that would improve the overall results for the school.

District advisory councils are a pretty – they have a pretty broad mandate to advise as to local issues in relation to education.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Early Childhood Development

“Appropriations provided for early childhood learning, including grants for Early Years Centres, child care centres, funds for the purchase of learning materials, and curriculum maintenance and support.” Administration: 4,600. Materials, Supplies and Services: 24,100. Professional Services: 143,000. Salaries: 855,900. Travel and Training: 34,800. Grants: 16,120,100.

Total Early Childhood Development: 17,182,500.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I believe these may be similar questions to what the Leader of the Third Party might have. I hope I’m not stealing his thunder. One concern that’s been raised to me by leadership within the francophone community is that they’re having trouble finding enough teachers – like early learning teachers – for the francophone daycare centres. Of course, that was born out recently when a donor from France actually donated \$25,000, I believe was the amount, to help give bonuses so they can get more of these early learning specialists into francophone daycare centres. I was wondering what you’re doing to help address this shortage of early learning specialists at les centres de la petite enfance francophone?

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

This is a good question and it’s actually a broader issue than exists just in the early years system on the French side. Overall, we need to take a look at – and when I say we, it’s province-wide. It’s in our own government regulated centres. It’s also in

the licenced and unlicenced centres that we have. Particularly, because if you focus more on one they will inevitably pull from the others.

We would recognize that there is a need to develop some plan around staffing. Particularly, as we ramp up this model that we’ve heard has done so well, and start to make it a more broadly available model, we will need to have the staff to do that. We’ll need to have quality staff is we are to maintain the level of education that we have historically provided to children between the ages of zero and five.

We have, as of recently, met with the ECDA, Early Childhood Development Association. We’ve had a long discussion about this. I’ve met with my colleague, the Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, and his deputy, and his deputy and my deputy have been working together to see what we can do to start to build a framework that would lead us toward some sort of an evaluation of what we may need to do in this sector.

I think he may be able to speak more to the possibility of particular projects relating to the French side. I certainly am aware of the concern. It’s something that has existed for quite some time, actually. There has been a partnership with, I’m going to say, France and Belgium, but, overall, at a lower level than with the federal government where we’ve seen French teachers come over here on exchanges to teach in our system.

Mr. Trivers: One other thing that I hear, and I believe, is that early childhood educators are potentially quite underpaid for the value they add. Do you think that is one of the key factors that you could address to help solve this problem?

Mr. J. Brown: I appreciate the question and I certainly don’t disagree with you. I would say this, I don’t think it can be just a government response to this. That links back to what I had said a few minutes ago about how this sector is structured. Really, when I’m saying that, what I mean is, we basically regulate early years centres. We say to early years centres: you have to pay your employees pursuant to a wage grade – you have to offer government mandated curriculum. You have to provide for certain

staff. The staff have to be qualified at certain levels. You have to be open certain hours of the day. You have to take students with special needs or autism. All these have-to-do things.

There are licenced centres that wouldn't have nearly those requirements. One of the big have-to-do things is, have to only charge a certain amount for students to go there every year. You start to see how you filter down to that in a licenced centre.

Then, there are unlicenced centres. Of course, the issue gets to be, if we said tomorrow, we're going to increase the pay for all of our early years educators that we have a direct connection to – like, in other words, that we mandate that a certain wage be paid to, you can imagine what's going to happen if the other groups aren't able to keep up with that.

Really, we see here, we have a 2% increase that's been inserted into the Budget for early years educators. I would say that we would recognize that we'd love to do more. We'd love to see their wages go up by more than 2%. But the practical reality is that we'll need to start to have a conversation that recognizes that, with that, there are still a large number of children in this province, probably well more than half the children in the province, that would see a fee increase to keep up with those wages if we were to raise the wages for our early years centres.

I will say, I don't think that's an unreasonable thing for those businesses. We want to see quality early years education and that's the reality is, they offer a service and we need to pay for it, but there's a balance that needs to be achieved there. That's what we really need to sort out and to ensure that this industry is sustainable. We need to be very vigilant about how that happens. We need to be very vigilant about retaining the great instructors that we have and adding to that complement.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Chair, the quality enhancement grant. And it shows up in the grant line is, were talking

about, is that the allocation of the funds to cover that, sorry (Indistinct) question –

The first grant that's in this section, which is the licenced early childhood programs quality enhancement grant, which has gone up significantly –

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: What does that cover?

Mr. J. Brown: The quality enhancement grant supports the licenced so, again –

Ms. Bell: Yeah. Licenced, unlicenced.

Mr. J. Brown: Well, no, early years centres, which are provincial curriculum and all those different mandated things that we discussed. They are the centres, really, when you talk about the federal bilateral –

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: – that's, kind of, that focus where you have to take certain types of children, you look at extended hours; a bunch of different things that are really going to be value-adds – think early years centres.

Licenced centres have a lot more freedom to operate. This quality enhancement grant was a grant that was set-up dating back to the implementation of this system. It was set-up so that these centres could enable their employees to increase the level of education or certification that they had within the centre. It's basically an improvement – a grant to help the centre improve the quality of the education that they would deliver. And, so, it's administered exclusively to those licenced centres at this point in time. Where we hope to have more spaces come on and to improve the quality of the programming, we have increased that this year.

Ms. Bell: That's a significant increase, that's great.

In the same context, then, what was the rationale for the decrease in the funding to the Early Childhood Development Association?

Chris DesRoche Director: The actual – the core funding hasn't changed. That would be the forecast for this year. Their budget for 2017-2018 would have been \$160,000. We provided an extra \$60,000 to modernize the early childhood registry.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Chris DesRoche Director: It's a one-time bump this year.

Ms. Bell: Is that modernization of the registry project complete, or is it still ongoing?

Mr. J. Brown: It's still ongoing. I think the earliest they had anticipated that being complete would be towards the end of next month.

I last spoke with them about it probably a month ago. I think they were still quite a distance from completion, at that time. It's something we're looking forward to. It's a very complex piece of work, as you might imagine.

I'll give you, just kind of examples; if you had a family of a couple of children that were French first language, most likely you're going to be looking for early years education in French, which is hard to come by, we know. So, you're going to try your best, but you may settle, at least initially, for early years education in English. You may have to try to have to get each of your kids into a different spot.

Once a child gets in, often there will be a priority for a second child of the same family to come into that same centre. There are a lot of variables and perimeters that would be installed in this listing. That's being guided by ECDA, happily.

I should say, we've been thankful for industry cooperation in the development of the early childhood development sector. They really are to be credited for the guidance, in terms, of where we are today.

It's been a long – in 10 years, we've come a long way in this province.

Ms. Bell: I can tell you that I'm aware that work has been happening. I just got an email from that registry asking me if I still needed

the space for my daughter that I registered for. She's 10 this year. It'll give you an idea. So, perhaps, yeah, it did need a little bit of help.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: I also – the significant grants line there, there's the early years education training grant, which is a new grant. Then, the other one, which obviously has a significant increase to it, is the early learning centres grants themselves.

Are those grants to actually increase the number of early learning centres, or to increase capacity in the existing, or both?

Chris DesRoche Director: Are you on the last line or the –

Ms. Bell: The last line, yeah. Then, the education and training, I'm presuming is what you've spoken about already –

Chair: Hon. members, we're having trouble hearing the questions and the answers.

Thank you.

You have the floor, minister.

Ms. Bell: So, there are two grant lines there. One of them, I think, you may have spoken about already which was the education and training grants to increase capacity in existing workers, and then the other one is much larger which is the last line item, which was the grants to the centres themselves.

Chris DesRoche Director: Actually, that was the quality enhancement grant earlier, but the bursary one is a brand new program through the federal funding. So, that would be staff in licensed centres that can apply for funding to go back to school and upgrade their certifications. The maximum for tuition is \$2,400 per year and \$1,500 for textbooks. That application is online.

Ms. Bell: That's excellent.

Chris DesRoche Director: And the other line you're asking about that went to \$12.7 million; that is where things like – the early years 2% raise would be in there. You would see we have a child care subsidy.

We're contributing to the child care subsidy for approximately \$700,000 –

Mr. J. Brown: Which is up significantly, I will note.

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah.

We're looking into a program for alternative hours, and actually we've had some uptake on that already where we have five different centres that have applied to extend their hours, or accept more children in seasonal times. That would be part of that as well, and also the new spaces in new early years centres.

Mr. J. Brown: A lot of this grant – just to kind of sum that up – is tied back to our bilateral agreement with the federal government –

Ms. Bell: Federally.

Mr. J. Brown: Well, it's a leveraging amount on a lot of that, and then there's some additional stuff like the early child care subsidy that we have beefed up fairly significantly to add to what we've been able to do with the federal bilateral.

Chris DesRoche Director: Most of it's federal. The raises and an investment in spaces at the provincial level is included in there as well.

Ms. Bell: I'm great.

Thank you very much.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm going to follow up on some of the questions asked by Rustico-Emerald around the French early learning centres, and just a general sort of statement first.

We all know that the early childhood educators are not paid in sort of correlation to the importance of their job. We always say how important it is that young people get a great start, and yet we're paying our early childhood educators not much over minimum wage. There's an added problem.

I think the member alluded to this, that in the French system you need to have an extra skill set. You also have to be able to speak French. For the Acadian culture here on Prince Edward Island that steady stream of new francophone speakers coming into their community is absolutely critical, and without that, the Acadian culture itself becomes jeopardized.

Given the fact that the early childhood educators have only in the last 10 years received two 2% raises, it's just so – maybe not 10 years, but in the last number of years, only received two 2% raises. In essence, their salaries have gone down because the costs of living in that time has gone up by far more than 4%.

I'm wondering whether it's time, not just in the French community, but in early learning centres all over the Island, to have a public service commission review of early childhood educator salaries. Is that something your department has considered or would consider?

Mr. J. Brown: I'll go back to what I had – and the first thing I can do is indicate what we'd be looking at.

There is a grid that sets out, based on level of certification, a wage that we would require be paid to early years educators for those programs that fall within our early years designations. We have 49 centres that are under that designation right now. That wouldn't be half of the early years' educators on Prince Edward Island. In fact, I don't think it's even close to half.

They are private centres, so they are private employers. We do have some level of control over them because we give them some grant money, as we just had some questions on here.

So, in 2010, the industry agreed to implement that wage grid and there was – I think it would be fair to say at a given point in time, and 2010 is probably around that time, we started to recognize through great work of entities like the McCain foundation that education really starts at the age of zero and moves through our life cycle.

We need to move away from the thought that we send our children to daycare so that

we can go to work, and start to think about it more as we need to be conscientious of the fact that a lot our children's learning – in fact, probably the most rapid learning they would have would occur early on in their life, like at the ages of one to five. With industry help and cooperation and guidance, government set out to develop a program that's expanded tremendously since 2010. At that time, kindergarten was added to our school system as well.

Through that, industry recommended that a wage grid be implemented and they got together and said, collectively: We are interested in seeing this implemented for our good, for the sustainability of the industry, for the quality of the education that our children will receive and we need to ensure that we do this and pay attention to those factors that lead to that.

I will say that, again, it's that guidance over the course of the last decade that has led us to be number one in the country in this sector. This is not something that's just happened. We have been a leader in that, and that's been led through cooperation with industry and government with an openness to doing what we can.

All of that being said, again, and I'm not saying that we're not – we're actively looking to see what we can do to move this discussion forward. But, it will need to be something that is done together with the industry and with a recognition that parents of children that have kids in these centres, whether they're early years' centres, licensed centres or non-licensed centres, are going to be impacted by this one way or another.

Again, I would say in a very direct way, that if we were to – we could go in tomorrow and say that the wage grid would be raised by 10% across the board, and on the other end of things that fees are going to go up 10%. That's probably what this has to look like, is that there's a correlation between wage grid going up and fees going up. The big reason behind that is because if we put the wage grid up, or if we said to private sector employers that are getting money from government: The wage grid is going to go up – you look at the variables in that; we would either have to give the money to them to do that or they have to get it from the

parents. That's between a third and a half of all of the students in the early years' system.

Then, that other grouping that's there, the other two thirds, they're going to be impacted as well, because if a teacher at that centre is getting paid whatever it is, 10% more than a teacher at this centre, you know where they're all going to want to go. So, all of a sudden those other private sector businesses that had children that were going there aren't going to have the staff to keep them going because they all want to move to an early years centre.

We're very cognizant of that balance that needs to be maintained and so we recognize that we can't just head out unilaterally and say we're going to do this or we're going to do that. It's a conversation that needs to be led and as I've indicated, we're quite prepared to be a part of that and we've actively, just as of recently, spoken with Sonya Hooper at the ECDA in relation to how that might look. We're actively engaging with workforce and advanced learning to determine what work we might be able to do to help, but it's going to have to involve the industry in order for it to be accepted and be sustainable in the long-term.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks for that really great answer, minister. I'm fairly aware of the complexity of this and implications of raising costs somewhere, what are you going to do about that? Of course, there are other provinces that heavily subsidize their daycares or their childhood learning, Quebec, being the most obvious example.

The thought that if costs are going to up, or if we're going to increase salaries that inevitably the only place we're going to find that is going to by increasing fees to parents. It's not necessarily true. There are other models where public funding could, by choice, if the government could have done that. Again, I implicate – I understand the implications of doing that, if we were to do that.

The reason I'm asking this is that there is such a big wage differential between early childhood educators here on PEI and in New Brunswick, particularly, I'm talking about the French sector here. Where, on PEI, it's \$15 an hour, or thereabouts and in New

Brunswick, it's \$20. It's not even close. They get a bonus there, as well, sometimes even higher than that.

Attracting – recruiting French early childhood educators from elsewhere in Canada is extremely difficult, if not impossible. So, you find that the early childhood centres, the francophone ones are going to France and they're going to Belgium to try and attract people to come here. That, I mean, that's a tricky thing to do for, obviously, a whole number of reasons, immigration not being the least of them.

I'm wondering if we are to support the long-term viability of these francophone ELCs, what plan you have to close that wage gap, or to make it so that we are able – those centres are able to recruit the people they need.

Mr. J. Brown: First, I'm going to clarify. The wage grid would start at \$15.61 here and go up to \$17.56, and then if you're a director of a centre it's \$21.85. So, you know, not to say that's the best wage out there, not to comment on it any more than that, but just to say that the 15 characterization is probably not totally fair either.

In saying that, what I have said and what I would recognize is that we are at the frontend of this conversation. I think it needs to be a conversation that we have with the community overall. To put it bluntly, you know, as you indicated earlier, we could decide that we're going to fund early childhood education right from zero through to age five. That would be – we're talking tens, or possibly hundreds of millions of dollars per year to be able to do that.

You start to look at that and you have to determine, okay, well if you're going to do something like that and, as you indicated, Quebec subsidizes theirs. New Brunswick, I would say, they are coming along. They have developed a subsidy model. They haven't, I would say, focused as much on quality as we have. It's more that every child find a spot in a care centre so that the parents can go to work. They will subsidize based on income when they do that.

We do not have that income test. I would note that, whether you look to OISE or the

McCain foundation or the federal government, there has been a push away from an income test to determine whether children can get the kind of leg-up, I might say, that some of them may need through this kind of education. We see that through our bilateral where there's a specific line item support for, quote-on-quote, vulnerable children, which is not income-tested to be able to access early years programming. It's a very, very complex, and I don't pretend to know all of the ins and the outs of it, but it's a very complex system.

Quebec does something that's a fair bit different than what we do. We were tied with them for number one in the country for quite some period of time. To give you more local examples, Nova Scotia is trying now to follow our model. New Brunswick is going off in a totally different direction. This federal bilateral agreement will be tremendous for all of us and I think, least of which it's shone the light on the importance of early years education. All we can really do is continue to do what has worked for us and that's to collaborate with the industry to ensure that we're at the cutting edge of whatever it is and we're doing what we can to lead this discussion.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Again, I appreciate your answer, minister.

I'd like to ask you about the funding agreement you have with the ACPEFIPE, and I'm not going to attempt to do that in my fractured French. They had a three-year funding agreement, which has just expired.

This is the umbrella organization that is responsible for all of the francophone early learning centres. I'm wondering whether your department, what plans your department has to provide that organization with stable, predictable, long-term funding into the future.

Chris DesRoche Director: You're right. That organization had a three-year funding agreement, but it was through the federal OLE agreement. Back to the French first language federal agreement, it was funded through that.

Right now, we're in negotiations to see what type of funding model might work for that

organization going forward. It's still being worked on.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can you tell us how much money is being transferred from the federal government specifically for the administration of the ELCs through that program you just cited? Over the last three years, how much money the feds have sent?

Chris DesRoche Director: For all of –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No, for the administration of the francophone –

Chris DesRoche Director: For that association.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – ELCs?

Chris DesRoche Director: One hundred thousand a year.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: And that's all that you received from the federal government, there was no –

Chris DesRoche Director: For that purpose.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Was there other federal funding – or was there provincial funding for the administration of those ELCs?

Chris DesRoche Director: Not for that –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It was –

Chris DesRoche Director: – association.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – entirely federal?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, the early years centres receive funding from us as an early years centre.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: But for the administrative organization, that was entirely from –

Chris DesRoche Director: We were a flow through \$100,000 (Indistinct) to that organization, okay.

Mr. J. Brown: I might, Madam Chair, I would just – I'm going to speak to why this

is the way it is because that's important to ground this conversation.

French first language education on Prince Edward Island would recognize that there's a gap that they are having to make up. So in other words – the directors of the French Language School Board are very passionate about this. They would say, we've had a generation or two, in some cases, if you want to look at Souris-Elmira, where there has not been French first language education within that area of the province.

They would see that early years centre as an ability to recruit students into the French first language system and to retain them, and to build up the culture and all sorts of various things. That's why you see the integration of those early years centres into the schools along with a cultural centre. They have programming, again, through that OLE agreement for what's called *francaise action*, but it's basically, you know, French first language cultural programming within the communities to try and build up or supplement what you're going to receive at school in terms of your French language education.

They have said: we have an interest beyond the interest of a typical early years centre in coordinating the delivery of education to our early years group.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, of course, the closure of all but one of the French schools back in the 1960s or 1970s, whenever it was, created that gap in opportunity for Acadian folks to send their children to a francophone school. We're seeing the effects of that now. I agree that there's a lot of work to do to regain that, to win that back.

I just want to go back to the federal funding, is there any other specific funding for francophone ELCs that comes from the federal government above and beyond what they send per student for other early learning centres?

Chris DesRoche Director: Not that I'm aware of.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

It's just that \$100 per year – \$100,000, sorry.

Chris DesRoche Director: One hundred thousand, for that association, yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: Then the *francaise action* money that they would get that wouldn't necessarily be related to the early years centre –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Mr. J. Brown: – there's what (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: How much consultation does your department have with this organization, in terms, of how that money is spent and how they distribute it?

Chris DesRoche Director: The administrative association?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes, the ACPEFIPE.

Chris DesRoche Director: They report back to us at the end of the year because we have to report to the federal government.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Is there any ongoing dialogue with that organization as to how they spend the money, or you just – is like a grant, you give it to them and –

Chris DesRoche Director: Well, most of it, they have a staff. They have an executive director, so most of it goes out in the staff members' salaries. But again, that agreement ended March 31st –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Chris DesRoche Director: – so we're currently negotiating what that looks like going forward.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

Mr. minister, thank you for your comments on that. I'd just like to add – as a representative from Evangeline-Miscouche

area – I'll speak a little louder – I have heard these concerns as well and I appreciate the conversations the minister and I and our departments have had. This 2% increase, is that based on the wages you just said, or are those last year's wages?

Mr. J. Brown: That's the updated grid that I just referenced.

Mr. Gallant: Is there any discussion then going forward that there would be incremental increases going forward, or is that just for this year?

Mr. J. Brown: I don't think we have said exactly what that will look like going forward. Just further to the conversation that we had here a moment ago, I think it's something, again, that we'll have to see what we can do together with the industry to move this conversation forward.

Mr. Gallant: And as it has been mentioned here this afternoon, hon. minister, to try to recruit and try to bring people from other provinces, it's the remuneration that's a big factor in it. As you indicated, we'll work in the future to see what we can do to enhance this and I thank you very much for your comments on it.

Mr. J. Brown: Sorry, I missed the last part of your question.

Mr. Gallant: I just want to thank you very much for your answers and that this is something that we'll continue to work on, I hope, into the future.

Thank you.

Mr. J. Brown: And I thank you very much, too. I should recognize that I often – you're probably one of my most active colleagues in terms of coming to talk to me about education in your area and, certainly, I enjoy those conversations and the insights. Your community is very engaged in the education of their children and that's always appreciated too, hon. member.

Thanks.

Mr. Gallant: Thank you very much.

Hon. member, as we mentioned earlier, it's very important that it starts at an early age

for the language and for the culture. My grandson is in French and it's just amazing what they learn at that young age.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Autism Services

“Appropriations provided for supporting autism intervention services.”
Administration: 8,300. Materials, Supplies and Services: 16,600. Salaries: 750,600. Travel and Training: 33,800. Grants: 1,313,400.

Total Autism Services: 2,122,700.

Total Early Childhood Development: 19,305,200.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Could you clarify what amount of these new supports are going to go directly to families?

Chris DesRoche Director: Well, I'll speak to what the increases are and you can determine if that's what you mean.

In the salaries line we have two additional early year autism specialists. Those would be specialists that go to the early years' centres and assess children and provide some one-on-one support or reduce the ratio of support. Along with them, \$250,000 of the \$500,000 increase would go towards additional staff to lower the ratio for those children.

The other \$250,000 increase is for school-age children. There's a program that provides 6,600 – annually – for things, like after school tutoring or summer camps or what have you. So that would the remaining \$250,000 increase is an increase to that budget.

Mr. J. Brown: I note that that's actually a 50% bump, too, in those, which we feel is pretty substantial and will have a huge impact on families that are struggling with autism.

Chair: Hon. members, can we keep it down just a bit so we can hear the questions and the responses?

Chair: Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, you have the floor.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair and I were both in the same committee and heard the need for increases to this, so I really appreciate seeing that that is a direct intervention to those additional programming support, which is at value-add as well as the supports happening in the school.

We don't have, however, an autism strategy, so I am interested in what's guiding the decision-making process for the department around autism supports in the absence of a strategy.

Mr. J. Brown: So, it's actually a multifaceted approach, or a multi, I'm going to say, departmental approach to autism. We administer a fairly large degree of it through our department, but family and human services is integrally –

Ms. Bell: Integrally.

Mr. J. Brown: There you go. I'll let you do it – involved in determining what we're looking at as to how it works, how it rolls out, what the focus is, what the budgets will be, and that kind of level of detail. You don't do this in a vacuum, you look at the community needs and there's been some great advocacy throughout the community and certainly that's been recognized through increased grants to the community organizations that interact with autism here on Prince Edward Island of late.

Again, we know there's an important role to be played there, so certainly we feel that we have done a great deal to respond to the need that seems to be ever-increasing in this area. That's not to say that the work is done or ever will be done, but we've taken waitlists down significantly or almost to nil and we've done that through continued investments over the course of the last number of years and we feel very proud of what we have been able to accomplish. As you mentioned, it all relates back to students, but not just students – in this case,

families and their ability to function and carry on in a family unit and in a normal lifestyle as they struggle through an autism diagnosis and try to bring some normalcy to the life of their children.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Chair, I'm done. Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Chair.

My question's sort of along the same line, so the grant for autism services has gone from \$1,880,400 to \$1,313,400, so while it's great to see an increase in that grant, is that reflective of the \$6,600 grant that families can apply for and access for direct therapy and services for an autistic child? Does that \$6,600 family grant come out of that pool of money?

Mr. J. Brown: Oh, I see what you mean.

Chris DesRoche Director: Yes. 250,000 of the 500,000 increase is related to that particular grant.

Leader of the Opposition: So, the annual family grant that they can access for a child that's been diagnosed with autism – \$6,600. Has there been an increase in that grant?

Chris DesRoche Director: No, the maximum grant has remained the same, but more children are receiving.

Leader of the Opposition: I wonder if you could tell me how long the grant has stood at \$6,600.

Chris DesRoche Director: That program was transferred to our department a number of years ago. It came from family services, I think, prior to that, so I'm not sure how long it's been like that.

Leader of the Opposition: So when that grant program was transferred to your

department a number of years ago – and I think it's quite a few years ago – has there been any increase since it's moved from family services over to education?

Chris DesRoche Director: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. J. Brown: Just in the number of people that would be receiving it – which has gone up substantially.

Leader of the Opposition: You can probably see where I'm going with this. A \$6,600 grant, which I'm grateful that it's there for families to be able to provide more therapy services for their children, I don't know if it has been changed so that the children can access music therapy, because at one time, you couldn't apply for the grant or couldn't get music therapy and apply it to the grant. Has that changed?

Mr. J. Brown: I wouldn't know specifically in relation to music therapy, hon. member.

Leader of the Opposition: So, while costs for everyday living increase, same as visiting a psychologist, or a therapist, or many other things have gone up essentially, year after year. Why hasn't the grant kept pace with the cost of the pace of inflation?

Mr. J. Brown: Good question. As I indicated previously, the primary focus to date has been to ensure that the entire scope of folks and families living with autism on Prince Edward Island are serviced, rightly or wrongly. We are getting to that point, at this point in time, we've seen that through a tremendous increase in that grant, this year.

It will be – obviously, we do what we can. We're very happy to have the money to provide that increase this year. If rates do not go up then hopefully we can add to that in that way going forward, hon. member.

The unfortunate thing has been autism rates have been going up and there's been increasingly more demand. You have to balance those two off; the money that's received versus, or the money that we have available, versus those that need it.

Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate the response and the information that you're providing.

One of the things that I found when I was going door-to-door in 2015, in my district, is I was shocked when I came to two separate doors over different various days that one of the issue that the homeowner – the parents behind the door told me was that they were having very hard time making ends meet because they had an autistic child and they were trying to enroll him in as many therapy programs as they could to benefit the child moving forward while they're in the school age.

When I asked them if they were accessing the annual grant they had no idea what I was talking about, which shocked me.

I'm just wondering, how is this grant advertised or communicated so that people would know about it?

Mr. J. Brown: Student services at the Public Schools Branch has a program to advertise or to speak to it.

In addition to that, we know that the Stars for Life and the Autism Society have been great advocates in this area. DSP would often indicate if you're going there looking for resources that this programming is available.

The reality is that there are – every autistic child in the province is not accessing the funding right now. It's one of those things where it's hard for us to say why folks do or don't. We feel that it is fairly widely disseminated that this program is available. But certainly we are always open to recommendations as to what more we can do.

Leader of the Opposition: The minister mentioned Stars for Life. Correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is Stars for Life is focused more on providing home care services for those individuals that have aged out of the school system. Where would the correlation be that Stars for Life is part of the process the grant for school-aged children?

Mr. J. Brown: I just want to be clear in saying, they're not part of the process, at least as far as I'm aware. But, they are in the community advocating. I've seen, and I know of and I've heard of individuals that have interacted with folks from Stars for

Life. They've been a great community advocacy group that have indicated: yeah look, there's this program here that you should be thinking about that – they're, kind of, obviously, the continuation of that. You got through different programming right from early years through the continuation. They, I would say, generally would have a fairly good awareness of autism programming in the province, is all I'm really trying to say.

Leader of the Opposition: Thanks for that, minister. Again, I just wanted clarification that – because my understanding is that this grant was only for children that are in the school-age, so I just needed clarification that I missed something. That all of a sudden this grant was also available to individuals diagnosed with autism that have aged out of school.

Thanks for that clarification.

Mr. J. Brown: No, and I should be clear to say, we're not out there saying that they're actively advertising this or anything like that. Just there's a fairly good network, I'm going to say on Prince Edward Island and a lot of that has come up, as a result of, the advocacy that those groups have undertaken.

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, definitely.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Clarification on, I know we gave the Autism Society of PEI an additional \$75,000 this year. So, you're saying they're the body that actually navigates persons for the first time, maybe, trying to navigate the tentacles of government or different programs like Stars for Life. Is that the difference between –

Leader of the Opposition: Tentacles is a good term to use.

Mr. MacDonald: Pardon me?

Leader of the Opposition: Tentacles is a good term to use.

Premier MacLauchlan: Embrace.

Mr. MacDonald: Is that what that –

Mr. J. Brown: So I see the hon. Minister of Family and Human Services has her finger for an intervention here. Her department actually would administer a lot of that. I'll, perhaps, cede the floor to her with the Chair's indulgence.

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

Ms. Mundy: Sure, and I will give just a quick intervention.

When the hon. minister asked about how would families find out? They would through, number one, usually the first point of contact to many families is through the Autism Society and they provide a wonderful service. That's actually one services that we were very proud to partner with them. This was the first year we were helping because they do have such a great advocacy department. They know everything. They know from the government grants that families can access, to programs within government, to federal programs, to even community programs. They do do a wonderful job of that navigation. However, we also have our Disability Support Program that many families with children of autism also access. As do adult, I guess, adults with autism or any other disabilities.

Our Disability Support Program is actually undergoing a complete transformation and we will be rolling out the new program in January. We've made significant investments with this new Budget to prepare for that roll-out. That will also have a navigational support to it. It will be a one-point of access. Families will contact and we will do the navigating for them to make sure that they know all the programs that are out there.

We do realize that, in the past, there has been some confusion and we've listened to Island families and we're making those changes.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: No, I think she said it all.

Chair: Great. Thank you, minister.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking for some clarification from the minister that just spoke. I'm wondering if the minister could clarify whether or not the Disability Support Program is means-tested or not?

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

Ms. Mundy: No, it is not means-tested.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. J. Brown: I'll note too, I'll just say, on my own part, I've had a number that I've helped get connected up too, so we shouldn't diminish the role we each play in this.

An Hon. Member: Where's the (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: I know.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Joint Consortium for School Health

The Joint Consortium for School Health represents education and health ministries across all provinces and territories, except Quebec. The organization is responsible for promoting collaboration within and across provincial, territorial and federal boundaries to improve the health and learning of Canada's children and youth.
Administration: 12,700. Equipment: 2,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 19,000. Professional Services: 64,200. Salaries: 352,500. Travel and Training: 79,600.

Total Joint Consortium for School Health: 530,000.

Total Joint Consortium for School Health: 530,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Provincial Libraries

Provincial Library Services

“Appropriations provided for the management and operation of public libraries and provision of technical services for public libraries. The Public Library Service operates public libraries in 26 locations across the province with administrative headquarters located in Morell. The facilities include three French language libraries and French language collections in selected libraries.”

Administration: 118,300. Debt: 500. Equipment: 5,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 295,100. Professional Services: 8,000. Salaries: 2,497,800. Travel and Training: 20,800. Grants: 6,500.

Total Public Library Services: 2,952,200.

Total Provincial Libraries: 2,952,200.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, is there any programs out there for Islanders that want to donate books to the public branch library or to the provincial libraries?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yes, absolutely. If they want to donate books, they can and we'll provide a donation receipt.

Mr. Fox: Okay. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Does this include the Confederation Centre Library?

Mr. J. Brown: Yes.

Ms. Bell: Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: There's been significant discussion particularly around – with Downtown Charlottetown Inc. around relocating the Confederation Centre Library from its current location across the street to the Dominion Building. Is this in scope? And if so, where are the costs associated with that potential project?

Mr. J. Brown: That's actually a capital project, hon. member.

Ms. Bell: Capital project?

Mr. J. Brown: Yes.

Ms. Bell: So that there will be no salary cost and material costs that –

Mr. J. Brown: It's hard to say when, obviously, it wouldn't be for next year, but as it would ramp up, it might be. It's actually an interesting question in that libraries – the capital cost of them is typically their responsibility and actually, pursuant to our act of the municipality in which they're located, currently the City of Charlottetown does not bear the onus of the capital cost or the ongoing cost of our library.

They do contribute to one employee, so in terms of the capacity of the library and I think the value of that is about \$78,000 a year when you consider benefits and all that kind of stuff. I believe there's some tax forgiveness that would also go into the Confederation Centre overall where it's currently located, but all to say I'm very well aware of that project; have been right from the outset and we look forward to seeing how that discussion develops and it's something, certainly, that it's my understanding has been a grassroots discussion here in Charlottetown and we would encourage Charlottetown residents to make that a priority, particularly as it goes forward and we'll see where this discussion takes us.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: No, I'm good. Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

And certainly it has been a discussion. It's been a discussion for many, many years. I know back when I worked at the Confederation Centre – and it's going back some time now, as far as 20 years – there

was a lot of discussion then and they were looking at the Dominion Building and lots of different things. It's certainly one of those projects that I think eventually will move forward and it'd certainly benefit accessibility to our provincial library and allow them to do bigger and better things, but also would be a benefit to the Confederation Centre of the Arts as well to have more public space for – whether it's classes or performance space and things like that.

Chair, I just wanted to mention and I'd be remiss if I didn't: There's an individual that worked for the Provincial Public Library at the Confederation Centre of the Arts, Gary Ramsay. He just recently retired and he – accolades for Gary just for the work that he's done over his entire career in the library system and the programming that he was responsible for and initiated it. So, I just wanted to make sure that his name was on record there somewhere.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Cultural Heritage

Cultural Affairs

“Appropriations provided for the development, implementation, delivery and monitoring of programs and services in the culture and heritage sector, heritage preservation, museums, the arts and cultural industries.” Administration: 1,800. Equipment: 700. Materials, Supplies and Services: 1,900. Professional Services: 5,000. Salaries: 231,700. Travel and Training: 11,800. Grants: 2,170,200.

Total Cultural Affairs: 2,423,100.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

There's an extensive list of grants and I have extensive notes, I'm afraid.

My first one is: How does the role of the implementation of the new cultural action plan – I understand that it's split between the cultural affairs – the venues and some of

the community grants and things have remained here and then the economic development activities and things have gone to innovation. That's a question.

Am I correct in that assumption that that's a general approach on the split?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, cultural places and spaces, if you want to think about it that way –

Ms. Bell: Places and spaces? Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: – would generally be what we do, and then we would have responsibility for the art bank in addition to that, and possibly some various other funding.

The way to think about it might be that any kind of industry growth would be led out of economic development and tourism.

Ms. Bell: Right, great.

Mr. J. Brown: Sorry – we have museums and (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: Yeah, you've got museums. That's another question.

There is a line item in that performance venue funding under the Cultural Action Plan. Can we just clarify: Is that for (Indistinct) rental of venues during the rollout of the plan? Why would that appear under performance venue funding? Or is it office space?

Chris DesRoche Director: do you mean the new initiatives Cultural Action Plan?

Ms. Bell: You've got the cultural and heritage, you've got performance venue funding and then recipients starting with the Confederation Centre of the Arts, and at the end – yeah, new initiatives Cultural Action Plan of \$23,800.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, it's increased funding as a result of the Cultural Action Plan. It's not been determined how it's going to be rolled out, but the funding has been allocated to go out for that purpose.

Ms. Bell: Otherwise, performance venue funding is remaining status quo for the moment?

Mr. J. Brown: Well –

Chris DesRoche Director: It's increased by that amount overall.

Ms. Bell: That's it? Okay.

Under the organizational support, I did notice the line in here for the PEICA building administration, is that the PEI Council of the Arts?

Mr. J. Brown: Sorry, I've lost your question.

Chris DesRoche Director: So –

Ms. Bell: PEICA building administration.

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, it's the property taxes. It's our contribution to the property taxes of the council building.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Ms. Bell: So the council building – it's not that the – the PEI Council of the Arts no longer exists?

Chris DesRoche Director: Just that building.

Ms. Bell: Yeah, so the building belongs to the (Indistinct)

Chris DesRoche Director: That's right.

Mr. J. Brown: This was the final piece in the transition,

Ms. Bell: The final payment?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Then, where you have previously a number of smaller grants and they've been rolled up underneath what looks like heritage investment and cultural organizational support, is that that they're effectively more or less the same kind of number? Does that mean those grants no longer exist? Is it that

those funds – were they one-time funds that aren't going to be done again?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, the lower six were one-time funds this year. The ones that are unassigned are Cultural Action Plan items that are still to be determined.

Ms. Bell: So it's still TBA?

Chris DesRoche Director: The application process is –

Mr. J. Brown: It's not to say they won't be done again. It's just to say they have to go through the process.

Ms. Bell: We see that theme in some of the other areas as well like under Acadian development, you have (Indistinct) individual grants. They're coming up as a various community bi-annual application. The same line appears under community cultural partnership.

Is that funding – like all of those previous applicants would need to reapply? Or is it just that it hasn't been determined?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, it might be those again.

But, what we're trying to demonstrate is who will receive the funding this year and then what the total budget is for the application pool next year.

Ms. Bell: My last question on that is: Is that going to be administered, then, from within your department as places and spaces or is that going to the Cultural Action Plan?

Chris DesRoche Director: Which section specifically?

Ms. Bell: The various small –

Chris DesRoche Director: The Acadian development –

Ms. Bell: – community cultural partnership program grants, for example, which were all over the place – Rock Berra and Parkdale and Wellington and (Indistinct) –

Mr. J. Brown: If you see it in here –

Chris DesRoche Director: It more or less depends on the section.

The Acadian development section, there is an independent jury of people from the francophone community that would determine who gets the money based on content, essentially. That would be the same case for the Acadian product services fund. The community cultural partnerships fund is determined by our staff and they receive the applications and assess them.

Ms. Bell: Okay.

Thank you very much.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: I have two organizations that are looking for funding in my district. One is the New London Fire Department for their 50th anniversary celebration this summer, and the other one is the Cymbria Lion's Club in partnership with the community of Rustico for digital signage that the community would use.

An Hon. Member: Call the hour.

Mr. Trivers: I wanted to know –

Chair: Hon. members, the hour –

Mr. Trivers: Extend the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called.

Mr. Trivers: Extend the hour.

Mr. J. Brown: Madam Chair, I move that the Speaker take the chair and that the Chair report progress and begs leave to sit again.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee of the Whole House having had 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 the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Thursday April the 19th at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Have a good evening.

The House adjourned until Thursday April the 19th at 2:00 p.m.