

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome everyone to the Chamber for Thursday of our third week. A particular welcome to those joining us in the gallery or those watching from home or on the Internet. We have, with us, in the gallery, Kent MacDonald. Kent and his family are great dairy farmers – have been an earlier generation. His mother sat in this House. It's great to see him here from Little Pond.

We've got Cutcliffe family, who are here from Cape Traverse. I see Kevin Clory is here. I'm sure others will be welcomed.

I know we were all impressed by the kick-off Brayden White's school tour as the Easter Seals Ambassador for 2018 yesterday. It's my understanding that, today, he's going – had it in mind to appear at as many as 14 schools in the Summerside, Kensington, Kinkora area. At that pace, we might be able to take some lessons from him about campaigning. He's a great ambassador. You could see it in the way the students reacted to him in the schools where he attended yesterday. We can all take instruction, or take an example from Brayden's motto: be brave; never give up.

The Charlottetown youth council, this morning, together with the city and various other participants, including representatives of the province, were looking at the housing strategy and the work that the youth council has done in that area. I congratulate Alex Youland and Zac Murphy for the part that they played in it. They've been a great group and I'm sure will continue to make a contribution.

Speaking of continuing to make a contribution, Mayor Clifford Lee was quite actively involved in that session this morning as well, and spoke, on a number of occasions about the importance of this being something that is followed-up and made a priority by the three levels of government.

Mayor Lee has been a real player in ensuring that we get that kind of collaboration.

Finally, this is the afternoon that at Holland College they reveal which student will be the recipient of a car that's contributed by Lou MacEachern of Calgary. That's becoming a big annual event. Out of the five, who were in the running for it, the four who don't get the car get \$1,000 each. So, it's not a bad afternoon. I'm sure they'll all be enjoying themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I'd like to send out a great welcome to those that are tuning in today on Eastlink or online to watch the proceedings.

I'd also like to just say hello to a few friends, who have joined us here in the gallery today, of course, Kevin Clory, Jamie Larkin and Melissa Handrahan are here. I'm not sure where Matthew Hambly is. Usually, he's one of the three musketeers, but, I'm sure he's at Hambly's furnishings watching it on the large screen t.v. out there.

I'd also like to send a huge thanks and congratulations to Brayden White for the tremendous work that he's been doing as the 2018 Easter Seals Ambassador. I know, on the news last night, one of the highlights that he's enjoying right now is, not only travelling on the bus with Janice and the crew and visiting all the schools, but also, he's very much enjoying his hotel stay. I was quite amused that Jay Scotland on Compass last night was giving him some instruction of how to build forts in a hotel room, so being in a hotel – from my past career – I'm sure they'll be quite ingenious with moving some furniture around and making those forts.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd like to welcome everybody to the gallery here this afternoon – young and old and in-between. I want to make special thanks to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment for giving us the handouts for the Budget deliberations, which we may or may not get to your department later today, but I really appreciate the fact that we have them ahead of time.

I also want to make note of the fact that the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment and the Minister of Finance and my colleague from Charlottetown-Parkdale were present at the release of the housing report at city hall earlier today. I want to applaud the work of the people who put that report together. It was a really fantastic piece of work, shining a spotlight on what is – they refer to it as a crisis, in part because of the rapidity with which that has developed here in Prince Edward Island, specifically in Charlottetown. So I want to thank Alex Youland, and Lydia Peters, and Zac Murphy for their wonderful work on this report and also their wonderful work advocating for youth on Prince Edward Island generally.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in the House, especially to welcome someone to the public gallery from the district of Tignish-Palmer Road, Melissa Handrahan. Melissa's a fisher from our area, along with her husband, Scott. I know she's been busy in the recent past, but she's going to be really busy preparing for the upcoming season. I'd like to wish her, along with all the fishers right across Prince Edward Island and those fishers who are presently fishing in Nova Scotia, a very safe and prosperous season.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, wanted to rise and welcome everyone to the gallery. It's great to see you here today, but in particular, I wanted to welcome Kevin Clory. Now Kevin – if you ever get a chance to go bowling with Kevin Clory, don't bet any money because he'll take it from you. I also wanted to welcome Melissa Handrahan to the gallery. I just wanted to note that if you're making a road list, Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, maybe put her road on the list. I was up to visit her and it'd be a good one to fix up.

Mr. Perry: Private Road.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Lastly, I wanted to – hey, if you don't ask, you never receive.

I wanted to recognize Jamie Larkin in the gallery here, too. I understand that this Saturday, there may be a big announcement coming out from Jamie, so watch him this coming weekend.

While I'm up, I wanted to recognize Eileen Peters who watches from home and her son, Marvin Peters who – the opposition office bought his steer in the Easter Beef Show – some really good beef. But Eileen likes to watch and she always said: Brad, don't get worried – she says – either it will be, or it won't.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to recognize some very important people in the district today. They're in the gallery. Sylvia, Chloe, and Makayla – they're the daughters of Scott Cutcliffe and his wife Sharon Kamperman and also Barb Cutcliffe and I'll be saying more on this indirectly.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

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

Moo Let's Talk

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to thank everyone involved in the Canadian Mental Health Association and Cows ice cream Moo Let's Talk in support of mental health. Every penny earned through ice cream and t-shirt sales was donated to mental health initiatives in memory of Jason Driscoll, who passed away last year after battling with his own mental health. Over \$30,000 was raised and it is now confirmed as an annual event.

Thousands came out in support of both mental health and Jason's family at Cows Creamery at the North River causeway, the Cows location on Queen Street, as well as a pop-up shop at UPEI. March 1st was Jason's birthday, which is why they chose to have the inaugural Moo Let's Talk on this day.

Not only was money raised this day, but more importantly, awareness was created around mental health. On a cold day in March, to have everyone eating Cows ice cream, it certainly contributed to Jason's character and his story. I believe even some members of this House were even photographed scooping ice cream.

I offer my congratulations to Cows ice cream, the Driscoll family, and to all who supported Moo Let's Talk. They did a terrific job in creating awareness around mental health and the importance of speaking out to erase the stigma.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Chloe and Makayla Cutcliffe

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and recognize Chloe and Makayla Cutcliffe for their generosity and their kindness to others.

While playing in her room just before her birthday, Chloe asked her older sister Makayla: What should I ask for this year? Her wise sister mentioned to Chloe that they have more than enough toys and right then Chloe's eyes lit up with excitement. She then realized that she wanted to help others

in need with her birthday wishes and gifts. Chloe and Makayla's mom said: We, as a family had a big talk about how grateful we are to have a birthday to celebrate. So Chloe decided to help other children that may not have many more birthdays to celebrate.

In her birthday invitations she asked her friends to bring a donation instead of a gift to give to the Children's Wish Foundation. At her party, she counted \$125 with her friends and family and the whole room was jumping for joy – it might have something to do with the sugar, but I'm not quite sure about that. We are all so proud of little Chloe. Her warm and generous heart has now started a great family tradition.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the reasons I am so grateful and so proud to be the representative of Borden-Kinkora.

[Applause]

Speaker: Great to have a good news statement, hon. member.

Mr. Fox: It is.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Norman Peters-The Bearded Skipper

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of a tireless Island ambassador, husband, father, and grandfather – a man who is legendary in stature. Norman Peters, also known as 'The Bearded Skipper' passed away Monday on his birthday at the age of 76.

Norman fished lobster and ran a deep sea fishing charter out of North Rustico for more than 50 years. He was a man filled with knowledge, wisdom, and colourful stories – the sort of person people loved to sit and talk with and who always left a lasting impression – a man who truly cared about people and was willing to offer a helping hand to anyone who needed it.

Norman had a contagious personality and the ability to make everyone feel important. He was an international celebrity at seafood shows, where hundreds of people would be lined up to get their picture with him – from Boston to Beijing. While Norman was never

president of the PEI Fisherman's Association, he held numerous roles within the organization, including secretary, vice president, and treasurer and served on a variety of committees. He was also president of the North Shore Fisherman's Association for more than 20 years.

One of Norman's passions was the fisheries museum. He used his name to help promote the museum in the town of North Rustico and, indeed, all of Prince Edward Island. People came from all over to see the Bearded Skipper because he embodied what a fisherman is in spirit and looks. We will miss him in our community and our province. He truly is an Island icon. Setting day in North Rustico this year will seem strange without the Bearded Skipper, but I know his legacy will live on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses to Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Throughout the year government invites Islanders, everyday Islanders to apply to be members of boards here. I think that's a great initiative. In fact, the government regularly advertises vacant positions.

Appointments to board and public funds

My first question today is to the Premier: Premier, do you believe that your government is being transparent by allowing appointments to a board that distributes public funds?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, there are many boards and agencies and opportunities to give public service that are filled. It has been our practice through Engage PEI since we came to government to encourage all Islanders to express an interest in such positions. Those boards have a lot of different decisions that they get to make.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There's one obvious exception to what we've just discussed and that I asked the Premier about. It's the IIDI board.

This board, this secretive board, is made up of five handpicked, selected deputy ministers.

IIDI board and closed-door meetings

Question to the Premier: Why is this secretive IIDI board allowed to have closed-door meetings with no public input?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Tourism

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our loans are distributed and managed through the IIDI board. We're really proud of that that we're able to support small business across PEI with loans that can help them grow their business, hire staff, find new markets. And with those businesses, the money they make comes back into the economy of PEI. We're thrilled to do that so that we can inject money into the province to pay for hospitals and schools and manors and roads. We're very proud to support that.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

There was no response, no reply to my question as to why this secretive board can hold private meetings with no public input.

IIDI held assets over \$400 million, taxpayer dollars. Their lending portfolio totaled over \$150 million in 2016-2017. IIDI also manages the province's immigration program and owns industrial assets such as Slemmon Park.

Public oversight and government agencies

Question again to the Premier: In the spirit of transparency, will you agree that public oversight is vitally important for all government agencies?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our loan portfolio is around \$355 million and we lend that out to about 1,000 businesses across PEI that support about 14,000 employees. The loan portfolio generates about \$15 million in revenue to the province. We make – we net, \$5 million. We're happy to support business, and make a buck while we're doing it.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) it's so funded (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The budget of IIDI is not included in the government's budget estimates, therefore is outside the scrutiny of this Legislative Assembly. An annual report is the only window that the public has into the activities of this powerful and secretive board.

However, quite often this report, annual report, is as late as two years.

Publishing of annual report

Question to the Premier: Would you be satisfied with just an annual report that is years behind in being published if that was your personal money?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our report is available online. The funds were – our lending portfolio funds were put in place around the year 2000. We do not contribute yearly funding to that because it's self-sustaining. The revenues that come from that, from the small businesses that we support, come back in to help fund that.

As I've said: and we make some money at it. We make about \$5 million a year and support businesses at the same time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

This is also the same board that annually writes off millions of dollars; millions of dollars in bad loans.

We believe that members of the public should be able to serve on government boards that impact their lives.

Bill No. 108, *An Act to Amend the Island Investment Development Act*, would allow Islanders outside of government to be able to serve on the IIDI board.

Public oversight and government agencies (further)

Again, question to the Premier: Will you support Bill No. 108 and the principle of public oversight of powerful government agencies?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We make about \$15 million a year in revenues in our loan portfolio –

An Hon. Member: I thought it was \$5 million (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: You wrote off 18 last year.

Mr. Palmer: – our net profit is about \$5 million and our average write-off is about \$1 million a year, so we're still making money at it. I think we even perform better than most chartered banks.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Public loans to private businesses have been a hot topic as of late. Over the last while a number of respected small business people in my district have reached out to me in this.

What they're telling me is that what matters is there's a level playing field and everyone gets a fair shot.

Transparency and government loans

Question to the economic development minister: Why isn't there more transparency around large government loans?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, we're proud to support businesses across PEI; small business, farmers and fishers, and 60% of our loan portfolio is held in rural PEI and we're very proud of that. There's jobs created and brings new money into the province that can support our schools, our hospitals and our roads.

We are happy and proud to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I want to reel you in and say we're going to talk about Cabinet approval loans. When Cabinet approves multi-million dollar loans and Order in Council is issued. Sometimes, there may be a project description, but most times the only information is the amount and who got it.

Order in Council and loan description

Question to the minister: Is there any reason why those Orders in Council couldn't include the loan amount, who received the loan, a project description and what the terms are?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, again, I'm proud to support business across PEI. Actually, in

the member's district is a little bit over \$10 million in loans that have been to businesses there that help them grow, help them succeed and help them employ Islanders –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – and we know that that brings new money into the province that can help pay for all the things that we know are so important.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, minister, we are talking about Cabinet approval loans.

Orders in Council approved since 2015

Questions to the minister: How many Orders in Council has Cabinet approved for government loans since 2015?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, we have professional staff in Finance PEI that review all loan applications. They make recommendations based on the merit of the project, the ability of the proponent to pay it back, and the management expertise.

We are very proud with the record that we have and there's lots of investment going on right across PEI in all districts and we're happy to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, there were 23 Orders in Council for government loans approved by Cabinet since 2015. Would it surprise you to know that those loans totaled over \$58 million and change?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, it would not surprise me at all because PEI is on a tear –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: – there are all kinds of great things going on in PEI. Businesses are growing everywhere –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) health care (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – we have over 2,700 new jobs created this year –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – and we're happy to have small business do that –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Palmer: – they're the backbone of our economy and we're really proud to have them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) saying (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Twenty-three loans for \$58 million approved by Cabinet since 2015. Another thing those business people told me was that they don't have any problem with loans to new businesses creating a new product, but when government starts picking winners and losers then there's a problem.

Transparency and government loans (further)

Question to the minister: With the public concerns around government loans and political ties, wouldn't more proactive disclosures make sense?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, small business is the backbone of the economy in PEI. We all know that, and they continue to grow and we're happy to support more business every year that continue to hire new employees –

Mr. LaVie: Retire, you're hung over.

Mr. Palmer: – that create brand new opportunities that bring brand new money into the community. So, we're very happy to do that and we'll continue to do that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We press government to publicly disclose loan write-offs, and after a while they finally agreed with us and did it. The sky didn't fall.

Order in Council and loan description (further)

Question to the Premier: Will you commit to making the changes to disclose more information when Cabinet approves a loan, including the loan amount, the recipient, and the terms?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, small business across PEI makes tremendous investments in the community. They employ people. They bring new money into the community, and we're very proud to support small business owners through PEI and we will continue to do that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The *Liquor Control Act* has not had a full top-to-bottom review in over 40 years; 40 years. Thankfully, government has indicated that a review of the act is forthcoming.

Public consultations on *Liquor Control Act*

Question to the finance minister: When are the public consultations on the *Liquor Control Act* scheduled to begin?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LaVie: You on a tear too?

Mr. MacDonald: I'm glad to rise on the occasion, too, but also to recognize Amy Smith from the – we all know the relevant issue of kombucha, so just in relationship to what the hon. member is saying, yes it has.

I think it was 1974 since the act was actually revisited, and one of my first jobs when I came forward was – coming from the tourism industry, was to review the act and that's what my intention is. In the next likely six to seven days I'll even have more information on changes to the regulations within that act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, the public is interested. Heart Beet Organics is interested. If a major law like the *Liquor Control Act* is being reviewed, I would hope that the public would have an opportunity to weigh in.

Question to the Minister of Finance: Can you confirm that public consultations will be held as part of the *Liquor Control Act* review?

Mr. LaVie: The last minister did.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A number of liquor license holders and industry associations and citizens across PEI have already contacted me, many of them. In fact, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale – we had a meeting recently. My door is always open. I've been receiving many emails on this topic from many businesses. It is an antiquated act, as

far as I'm concerned, and as far as the public is concerned, I believe they'll agree with it.

We're going to move forward on this. There are lots of things in the regulations that are very minor changes. But, if you look at what we've done to small business in our Budget alone, we are for the small business operators; small-to-medium enterprises run this province and anything we can do to help them grow, we're going to help them grow.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) 3% and he gave them a half a per cent back.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you said it. After recent high-profile examples of red tape run amok with local businesses and products like kombucha from Heart Beet Organics and The Humble Barber, there's a clear need to modernize the act, absolutely.

Now, when the now minister of economic development raised the issue over a year ago he was told that the *Liquor Control Act* review was a few months away. When he raised the issue again in December, he was told the review would be done in six to nine months.

Review of *Liquor Control Act*

A question to the finance minister: What's the hold up on this review and getting down to business?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member wants us to speed things up, but then he wants to do a plebiscite and slow things down. You know what? We're a proactive government on this side of the House. We're going to continue to make changes to the regulations as fast as we possibly can; allow the companies, the small businesses to grow within the PEILCC act, and that's what we're going to continue to do because we feel it's extremely important

to our culture, and our heritage, and our tourism industry.

Creating small business and creating wealth for Islanders, I think it's a proven track the last three years that we've been in power, that if you've seen the growth right across the Island, we're doing the right thing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear to see why we're not making much progress. Why would you ever hold a plebiscite on the *Liquor Control Act*? It makes no sense whatsoever.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, the act is long overdue for a dose of common sense.

Regulations for production of hard cider

Question to the finance minister: What are the regulations around establishing a production facility for hard cider?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, like I said, if the hon. member can wait six or seven more days, I'll have a good answer for him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

According to the regulations, hard cider is defined as wine and this means a hard cider facility must use fruit from an orchard with a minimum size of three acres immediately adjacent to the production facility. This severely limits the ability to access locally-sourced apples from across the Island and it limits the options to locate production in retail facilities.

Question to the finance minister: Why are we allowing restrictive red tape to choke the creativity of Island entrepreneurs?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member and I don't agree on much, but that is one point that I'll stand and agree with him, and that's some of the issues that we're dealing with. That's some of the issues I'll be bringing forward as far as the regulations. I'm certainly aware, that's why I'm taking this initiative and we're looking at rewriting the act.

As we move forward, we're not going to wait until the act is ready to be rewritten; we're changing the regulations as we go as fast as we can legally. We're making those adjustments.

I do take offense with some of the stuff that he had said in regards to what's happening with the economy in Prince Edward Island. No one out there is going to argue that we are trending in the right direction. We are growing the economy, and people are better off with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Island entrepreneurs are continuing to succeed despite the poor decisions from this government, and thank goodness for our Island entrepreneurs. Regulations are there, and I'm glad to hear the minister say that he's going to work to change the regulations. He is not giving us any timeframes. He's not giving us any commitments.

Cider is a popular and fast-growing market, and its growth locally is being choked by red tape. Any review of the liquor act should lean towards common sense rather than maintaining outdated red tape. We need a commitment. We need to know when.

Review of *Liquor Control Act* (further)

Question to the finance minister: Islanders are ready, and it's time. Can we please work together to bring the *Liquor Control Act* into the 21st century now?

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, I'm at a loss because I can't explain it any better that we're moving as fast as we can. We've made changes.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: We're creating all kinds of opportunities for small businesses. We started with the micro loans, then we created a venture capital for small business –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: – then we lowered the incorporation tax rate in the most recent Budget, then we put a 15% rebate on a \$25,000 capital investment.

I think small business is looking at us saying –

Mr. Trivers: You've got the power, use it.

Mr. MacDonald: – you guys got it, keep it going.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) hands in your pockets.

Ms. Biggar: Come on up to Tyne Valley. I'll show you Arlington Orchards.

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: You can't use their apples to make cider.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last fall, I brought up the issue that government is failing to retain Blackberry and other instant messages that might fall into the category of government records. At the time, I tabled a special report by the Information Commissioner of Canada in

which she states: Instant messaging presents an unacceptable risk to the rate of access to information. She also makes numerous recommendations to ensure that valuable government records are not carelessly destroyed.

Policy around government records (further)

A question to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety: Have you read the commissioner's report, and if so, what do you think of her recommendations?

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

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

I'm glad that this question is coming back to the floor again this time around. I am glad of that because this hon. member led us all to believe here that there was a magic switch that we could somehow flip and we would have the ability to retain Blackberry messages.

Well, I can tell you here today that ITSS has looked into this, and there's not a magic switch and as it turns out, there's about a \$1 million cost each year to go and do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm really pleased to hear that the minister has followed up and done some investigations from those recommendations in the report and that has spoken to ITSS.

To that minister: Can you advise us then of what steps have been taken to implement this solution?

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

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

What I will do is advise this Chamber as to the cost of putting that solution in place and that is that the software alone that's required to do it would have an implementation cost of \$725,000 with an annual renewal cost of \$475,000. In addition, there would be storage costs with an implementation cost of \$150,000 and an increase in storage costs required annually of \$75,000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These software costs are comparable to the costs required to implement records management systems as they are in federal government departments. For instance, in the department of veterans affairs, which has had BlackBerry server and BlackBerry messaging situations in place for 12 years and I know so because I built them.

Recommendation to Information Commissioner

Minister, perhaps you could advise how much accountability is truly worth considering this is as recommendation for the Information Commissioner of Canada.

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

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

For somebody that actually built that technology, you'd think that person would know a little bit more about it and would not be misleading this House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. J. Brown: That being said, we have looked into this and I, as Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture, in addition to my other responsibilities, must take our Budget very seriously. And we're talking about the difference between implementing 10 additional teachers, or flipping a switch for BlackBerry messages, which is about one-tenth of the possible communication means that we're talking

about here. That is not a wise use, I wouldn't say, of our resources.

Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, minister.

I just want to remind the minister that using the term 'misleading the House' is very, very close to unparliamentary. Okay?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

A number of times over the past year I have brought up the issue of the lack of oversight when government contracts outside legal services. I was shocked to find out, last year, that legal services are explicitly exempt from Treasury Board policy and it concerns me that so much money is being spent with little or no oversight.

A year ago, I recommended to the former minister of justice that he should adopt the Nova Scotia policy where all expenditures for legal services in government go through the Attorney General's office according to some very strict criteria.

Contracting outside legal services

Question to the new minister of justice: Can you tell me whether any follow-up work has been done on implementing a similar policy here on PEI?

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

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

Yes, I can advise the House that since having become minister I certainly look back at the question that was posed by the hon. Leader of the Third Party and the Hansard would indicate that the Premier, who was minister at the time, had indicated that he did feel that there was some wisdom in that and thank the hon. member for forwarding the policy from Nova Scotia.

We have begun to do some preliminary work on this and I can report that there is a large degree of this work that is sent out through a public process, Mr. Speaker. So, I

don't think it's fair to say that there's no public scrutiny of this right now.

Thank you.

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

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

I was recently provided with data from the Department of Finance that indicated that over \$650,000 was spent on outside legal fees by government departments over the last three years.

Hiring more in-house lawyers

To the same minister: Do you think there might be savings to be made by hiring more in-house lawyers so less work needs to be contracted out?

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

Mr. J. Brown: Mr. Speaker, this is actually a very interesting question for me to stand and answer and I can tell you that I'm not going to be able to do it in 40 seconds, or not do justice to it in that period of time, but the short answer is no.

There is a much longer answer which involves the expertise of the people that we might hire, the reasons why you might have different outside council do different things. I might get along to say that there's different way that we can look at this, which is what we are doing in terms of ways that we can go out to the public – and, in fact, we are doing this now – through an RFP process or a different public process to ensure that we are getting the best deal that we possibly can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I distinctly remember during budget deliberations asking the first department that came up about legal services and whether they have to be contracted out and there was an explicit answer: No, we don't have to do

that. So, government has spent over \$650,000 and as I previously pointed out, the Liberal Party has received over \$78,000 in donations from legal firms or individual lawyers during the 2015 election.

Return on investment for legal firms

To the same minister: As a lawyer, do you think legal firms are, you might say, getting a good return on their investment?

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

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

That might be a question that the hon. Leader of the Third Party would do better to put to Matt MacFarlane, who's his justice critic and who works for one of the firms that I would suspect has made donations over the course of that time.

I will say that this follows a troubling line of questioning that started yesterday when the hon. member started to question the ethical integrity of the chair of the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission, who's somebody that I will say I practice at a different from, but I have the utmost of respect for that individual. I would never say one bad thing about him. I would never question his integrity ever. For him to have made a political contribution and to have donated his time to numerous good causes in the Charlottetown area and around Prince Edward Island and then to be subject to this kind of thing, Mr. Speaker, is totally unfair.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Minister: The Leader of the Third Party recently talked about being at a roundtable discussion and a question came up and I quote from Hansard, "...why is government supporting a really successful business. Is this an appropriate thing to do?" Minister, I believe they were talking in reference to ADL.

Government support of successful businesses

Could you tell us why the government supports successful businesses?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are very proud to support small business and large business across PEI. We know that's very important to the economy. They're the backbone. They help drive the engine that keeps PEI moving. We have professionals in Finance PEI that will evaluate loans, they make sure that people are able to pay it back, that new staff are being hired. We continue to do that for large business and small business alike. This year in our Budget, we announced new programs: tax cut for small business that will save businesses \$2,500 a year and a small business capital rebate which will save them up to \$3,750 a year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week the Leader of the Third Party suggested that large companies do not need support as much as small businesses. I quote from Hansard again, "...I just wish, perhaps, we were a bit more unfocused in our support and that we would spread this around a little bit and not forget about the little guys."

Minister: Does your department only support large business as suggested by the Leader of the Third Party?

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

Mr. Palmer: Mr. Speaker, again, we're proud to support business, both small and large, on PEI. We're also proud to support the 275 employees at ADL, and the 165 small business farmers on PEI –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: – and the 1,500 indirect jobs that are created because of the success of companies like ADL.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

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

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the idea of investing in Island companies to keep good-paying jobs here on Prince Edward Island is very important.

The Leader of the Third Party mentioned three smaller companies last week and he said, and again I quote, "All of these micro-producers who are not going to see a penny of government money, I don't think they ever have, but they could be part of the rural revitalization."

The Leader of the Third Party is implying that your department does not support small business. Can you, minister, confirm how your department supports small business so that the Leader of the Third Party would have the appropriate information so that he can spread the correct information?

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not about to pit one business off against another other as the Leader of the Third Party may want to do.

We support the micro-producers that were referenced by the Leader of the Third Party. We're very happy to do that. Maybe, the Leader of the Third Party could follow our lead and fight for business instead of just fighting for new office space for himself.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If you think that's bad, I have to share an office with member from Georgetown, the member from Souris.

Some Hon. Members: [laughter]

Mr. Myers: We're crammed in there.

Mr. R. Brown: You're fighting for new offices, too.

Mr. MacEwen: It's tough.

Mr. Speaker, the standing committee on health had a wonderful presentation a couple of weeks ago from the Rotary Club of Montague. I was talking with a few members after. I would call it one of the most complete, passionate and commonsense presentations we've had for a while.

A question to the minister of health: They come up with a number of recommendations for our committee and for the government, the first one was a big one, long-term one, was about a basic income guarantee.

Pilot project for basic income guarantee

Can the minister give us an update on negotiations with the federal government on a pilot project for a basic income guarantee for PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I am aware of the Montague Rotary presenting to standing committee. I'm looking forward to recommendations coming from the standing committee.

Unfortunately, basic guarantee income does not fall under my department. I believe it's under a different department, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can, perhaps, the Premier speak to it? Have we had any update on federal-provincial meetings on a basic income guarantee?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the situation, as much as it was when it was discussed in the House in the previous

sitting. The federal government has moved forward with five relatively small pilot projects. I believe it's five in different areas of the country. It seems that that's where they are for now.

Let me say, that in our Budget we implemented the fifth of five increases in the food allowance. We increased the shelter allowance. We made tax changes that are beneficial to people who are vulnerable when it comes to their economic situation. We've invested –

An Hon. Member: Too bad about the Auditor General's report.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in further subsidies for child care. We are working across the board, and not least of all, by adding 2,700 jobs to our economy in the last 12 months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the Premier brought up the economics of it. Carla Morgan, Maureen Hanley and Sharon Riley were the ones that presented to us that day. The Rotary Club is in its sixth year; \$2.8 in winnings they've given out, \$2.2 million to charities.

I want to talk about one of their short-term priorities and that's travel for medical on and off the Island. All of us, MLAs, in here have had people come to us: do you know what? I've got to travel tomorrow. I've got to travel right away. We know the difficulty it is in trying to access funding for something like that.

Supports for on and off-Island travel for medical procedures

Has the minister of health have any new programs or any thoughts to supporting on and off-Island travel for medical procedures in PEI?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we are very pleased to have a partnership with Hope Air that handles out-of-province travel. Obviously, I belong to a club on Prince Edward Island that does a lot of fundraising for various causes throughout the province.

In the past, that has been an issue with families that had to travel out-of-province for those needs. Based on situations like that the Province of Prince Edward Island stepped up, a couple of years ago, to develop programs with Hope Air that allows those seeking medical attention in other provinces the ability to do that with their cooperation, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Hope Air partnership, it is great. I'm happy the province has done it. But, we know the bureaucratic nature of trying to go through that process to go through Hope Air. It is ridiculous to be quite honest with you.

I want to give you an example that the presenters gave to us that day. They said: you know what? "...the bus is not an option. After six months of radical chemotherapy in PEI, there is no way we can put a woman on a bus to go to Halifax, by herself, for further rounds of chemotherapy and say that is looking after their needs. It's just not happening. The support person is important. The travel is important."

Does the minister of health have any plans to provide funding for the support person and for that person that is travelling over for off-Island medical treatment?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, at this time, there are no programs for support for any medical attention for any individual leaving the province.

Since its inception, Hope Air has – to the contrary to the hon. member's, I've talked to many that have used the system and are very

pleased with the system. They provide boat, they provide bus passes, they provide the bridge pass, they provide air when that's needed. It's a very valuable assistance that is offered by Hope Air for Islanders when they need it the most; when their health care is needing attention and they can get to other areas or other provinces or jurisdictions for that much needed help they need, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another one of their short-term priorities – and I should add; the Rotary Club of Montague is one the ground. They know what they're doing. They're responding to needs immediately. We heard it at that presentation.

Ostomy supplies is another serious problem. I give credit to the Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale for putting forward a motion on this.

I'll give you another example. Another quote, "Ostomy supplies is something we deal with a lot. You're looked after, you're a senior. You go home. Your ostomy supplies are not covered by the Catastrophic Drug Program. They run \$400 to \$500 a month. That individual then tries to..." stretch that out, "...They have infection or sepsis. They are then in the hospital or an assisted-living facility. It's a short-term savings for a long-term expense. And we've robbed that person of their quality of life."

This is from the presenters and I agree. Does the minister have a plan for ostomy supplies for the people of PEI?

Coverage for ostomy supplies

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, I was very pleased and delighted with a recent meeting that I had for those advocating for ostomy supplies. The Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, her mother was one of the those individuals that

came to me and painted an exceptionally good picture of daily challenges that those who require ostomy supplies would need.

I've agreed to meet back with them in June. I expect that later on this year to be able to stand with them and make some kind of a very positive announcement because it is a challenge for those folks, and I think it's something that we, as a government, should look very seriously at, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's great news that that's coming. I encourage the minister not to just sprinkle a little money around like the last budget. Let's go full way with it because that is important and I'm glad to hear that you're taking that serious.

Another priority for this group, a pilot project for school breakfast programs; the Rotary Club coordinates 12 different schools, supplying everything. Let me quote again, "We look after every school lunch, breakfast program for 12 schools." They've got a system in place, "That's done and dusted. It needs some coordination."

Coordinator for breakfast program

Does the minister of health, or minister of education, even, have any plans for a coordinator for that?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, as minister of health, I know full well the value of breakfast programs. And, to add, on top of that, as well, lunch programs that are now being looked at and being developed across the province.

Healthy students eating healthy lunches and breakfasts make for healthy adults. We certainly support that. We will be putting influence there up to the tune of \$200,000 towards that. I look very much at supporting

those programs today and well into the future because our healthy children will become our healthy adults and probably the people that sit in the chairs of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, your final question.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we go through the provincial budget every year and it comes up every year in estimates – the \$200,000 for the breakfast program. Yes, the schools appreciate it. Apparently it's based on some sort of a per capita, but this group knows – they coordinate the programs. They know that some schools don't have the money as other schools. Some schools have a piece of white bread and a granola bar. Other schools have full-fledged breakfast there.

Sometimes there's more volunteers available than in other spots. What we need is someone to help – they don't want to take this over. We've got good volunteers in the schools. We need someone to help coordinate that through many, many schools to leverage those partnerships with our agriculture industry and with other industries.

More funding for school breakfast program

Will the minister commit to doing more than just talking about that same old \$200,000 every year?

Mr. Trivers: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'll clarify that I'll answer this for education, early learning and culture, although it is a concern of all government departments.

In that vein, I will actually reference the investment from agriculture and fisheries, which we were able to access through a federal program last year, which the hon. member would be well aware of because Morgan Palmer was out – she works with the Public Schools Branch through that

funding – she was out at schools in Morell, I think, twice this year gearing up exactly that kind of programming.

I was at the provincial home and school AGM this past Saturday and this was a topic of discussion at that AGM and the home and school is very supportive of the approach that's being taken in hiring Morgan Palmer to develop this programming and to do it at a grassroots, organic level so that it's sustainable going into the future. We'd certainly recognize the importance of that and that's why we doubled the budget for it in 2015. That's why we added the budget last year of \$100,000 and that's why we'll continue to look at ways that we can build upon this programming, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Statements by Ministers

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to send the warmest of wishes to the students and staff of École La-Belle-Cloche on this historic day, which is their first day of school in their brand new facility in Rollo Bay.

[Applause]

An Hon. Member: Bravo!

Mr. J. Brown: *Ce jour marque l'aboutissement de nombreuses années de planification par la communauté de Kings-Est afin de développer le moderne et spacieux Pavillon de l'Est qui offrira : une meilleure programmation en français, langue première, aux élèves de la maternelle à la douzième année; des services de qualité en matière d'apprentissage et de garde de jeunes enfants; ainsi que des espaces communautaires modernes qui permettront à la culture et à la langue françaises de croître et de s'épanouir dans le comté de Kings.*

Today marks the culmination of many years of planning by the Eastern Kings community

to develop the modern and spacious Pavillon de l'Est facility that offers: enhanced French first language programming for K-12 students; high quality early learning and child care; and modern community spaces that will allow the French language and culture to grow and thrive in Kings County.

While teachers and parents have been busy for days, moving books and furniture from the former school in Fortune, today is the first day for students at their new school in Rollo Bay.

Mr. Speaker, I had a chance earlier in the year to tour the 45,000 square foot facility. It's very impressive and I can understand why the students are very excited. All students will enjoy the spacious classrooms, sports fields, gymnasium and exercise room, music room, multi-purpose room and amenities. The beautiful school will certainly enhance programming for students and particularly high school programming with new culinary, trades, and science labs.

Families will benefit from the new provincial Early Years Centre, Château des étoiles, which under the capable direction of Director Mélanie Beauparlant, offers full-day and after-school programs and more opportunity to expose children to the French language and culture from a very young age.

Monsieur le Président, l'avantage de cette école ainsi que d'un grand nombre de nos écoles de langue française est qu'une grande partie de l'espace est non seulement utilisé par l'école, mais aussi par la communauté, ce qui aide à promouvoir la culture française et permet d'utiliser l'établissement de façon plus efficace.

Nous sommes très reconnaissants au gouvernement fédéral pour son financement qui permet d'offrir de l'espace au secteur communautaire. Mais aujourd'hui, je désire souhaiter la bienvenue aux élèves et exprimer ma sincère reconnaissance à la directrice Marise Chapman et aux nombreux membres du personnel et bénévoles qui travaillent depuis des années afin de réaliser ce rêve.

Mr. Speaker, the added benefit of this and many of our French first language schools is that much of the space is available for both school and community use, which promotes

the French culture and more effective use of the building.

We are most appreciative of the funding provided by the federal government to provide space for community use. But today I want to welcome students and send along our sincere thanks to Principal Marise Chapman and the many staff and volunteers who have been working for years to make this dream a reality

Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I should say thank you to the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira for again bringing kudos on this earlier this week, and I do understand from the hon. Member that his personal thank you to our department is in the mail, and I look forward to receiving that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) name on the cornerstone?

Mr. LaVie: Should be. Should be two names.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A big thank you goes out to the former minister of education, because the former minister of education brought me into the process to help this process through. So a big shout-out to the former minister of education on renovating the school in Rollo Bay.

I am pleased that the French students have an opportunity to move into a newly renovated school. This is their third move, and the first one was in a renovated fisheries building, so you know what the renovations and your gymnasiums and your classrooms will be like in a small building, trying to renovate.

Then when they outgrew that, we put them into a school that was condemned, so we put

them into a condemned school. That's why you closed the schools, because they were condemned. You put these students into a condemned school. Anyway, that's why I'm so proud that we got them out of that school, because it wasn't fit to be in. That's why you closed it in the first place.

I want to give a big, big shout-out to all those that were involved in the process. There was a lot of volunteer time went into this process. A lot of planning went into this process; and to the teachers, to the parents, to everybody that was involved with this, it was a lot of work over the years.

My wife and myself were supposed to go out and tour the school this morning, but my wife is very, very sick this morning. She woke up very sick, and she asked that I wait for her to do the tour. The nice husband I am, I said: I'll wait for you to do the tour.

Ms. Biggar: So modest.

Mr. LaVie: So we're going to do it on Monday and I'm going to be proud to do that tour, Mr. Speaker –

Mr. Myers: No one needs to pat his back.

Mr. LaVie: – and –

Mr. Roach: No, he's on a tear.

Mr. LaVie: So again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the former minister of education for bringing me into the process once again with our second renovated school in District 1.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

This is a great announcement. I'm so happy to see the people of the Souris region having a new French school, and I'm wondering whether the previous location they were at would be available for the third party office. The place we're in now isn't big enough, or it likely won't be in the near future, so I will be –

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – fighting to get that (Indistinct) a little bit –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: *Monsieur le Président, félicitations à la communauté acadienne et francophone de la région de Souris à l'occasion de l'ouverture de l'École La-Belle-Cloche à Rollo Bay. Votre engagement et votre passion pour l'éducation et la langue française pour vos enfants sont véritablement inspirants.*

Je souhaite que les jeunes francophones de la région de Souris aient des expériences d'apprentissage inoubliables dans leur belle nouvelle installation.

Congratulations to the Acadian and francophone community of the Souris region on the opening day of *École La-Belle-Belle-Cloche*. Your passion and dedication to having French first language education for your children in your community is truly inspiring.

To all the young francophones in the Souris region, I wish you many unforgettable learning experiences in your wonderful new school.

Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Health Leaders of Tomorrow

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, the young people in our schools today are our teachers, nurses, firefighters, artists, and business leaders of tomorrow.

In health, we have several programs in place to inspire our young people and guide those who want to explore future careers in health care.

Volunteering is one of the first opportunities people have to experience leadership in health care. Every day volunteers contribute to the well-being and comfort of our patients, clients, and residents all across our wonderful province. There are many volunteer opportunities available for our

youth in hospitals and long-term care homes.

We currently have approximately 500 youth volunteering in health care across PEI every year. This is through volunteer service programs, as well as inter-general programming such as youth pen pals and reading programs at our long-term care facilities.

When our Island youth want to explore further the opportunities for a career in health, we encourage them to apply to our Health Care Futures Program as well. This program exposes students to jobs in various aspects of health care. They are hired for the summer to work in the public health care sector and private nursing homes. Students have the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience while giving back to the social fabric of our province.

Additionally, we hire approximately 45 nursing students every summer through our Nursing Student Summer Employment Program and this includes first, second, and third year LPN and RN students.

Through our Health Recruitment Secretariat we also offer various entry employment supports, including sponsorship programs for university students in certain fields of study who commit to working here in PEI after graduation. These include our Family Medicine Sponsorship Program, our Bachelor of Nursing Sponsorships, and our new Physiotherapy Sponsorship put in place for this year.

Supporting our youth is important, not only for today, but also for the future of our health care system. We appreciate the many young people who volunteer and work in our health facilities and we are proud to support them, both in their academic and career endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear about these programs. We know they've been going on for quite some time and I do believe they're quite

successful, even going back to when we were around (Indistinct)

It really gives an opportunity for people that are going through health education to get experience in the field, to see if that's what's right for them. They get accustomed to the frontline. I've spoken to so many people that have taken advantage of those types of programs.

I really want to give kudos to the many staff of the department of health and on our frontline in Health PEI that welcome these people in as well. We know that when you're bringing new people into the system there's always a bit of added work for those of the people that are involved working around them, and they're always quite good to help out and steer along these people.

Of course, the volunteers that are in our healthcare system; we've got wonderful people that are doing that great work. It's also great to hear about the physiotherapy sponsorship. That has been news, so it's great to hear this statement every year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a great program that offers positions for students in both the public sector and in the private sector, and a chance to explore their opportunities for future development and also gathering that volunteer experience, which is a critical part of leadership.

There's also a great piece in here around that value of intermingling of generations. We've heard so much about the importance of being able to bring youth into spaces where there are older generations for the preservation of cultural heritage and the rejuvenation of those in care.

It would be great to see this program, perhaps, in the future, even be extended to childcare supports as well in terms of our early learning systems. Great support for this program, and encourage, again, it to be used as a model for further and future expansion.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

National Soil Conservation Week

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our soil is one of our most important natural resources here in Prince Edward Island.

The week of April 15th-21st is National Soil Conservation Week in Canada, an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of soil health and soil science to our future.

The provincial government, in partnership with land owners, is taking positive steps to encourage soil conservation and more sustainable production practices.

Over the past five years, our Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has committed close to \$5 million under the stewardship program for a wide range of soil conservation projects. Our government's third consecutive balanced budget continues to invest with landowners in 2018-2019 to strengthen our soil conservation activities and to make the industry more sustainable and productive.

I want to pay tribute to the PEI Soil and Crop Improvement Association and its outstanding leadership in promoting soil conservation in our province. The Association presented Soil Conservationists of the Year Awards in March to recognize producers in the livestock and cash crop categories.

Today I want to congratulate the recipients. The winner in the livestock category was Ponds Edge Farms, a dairy farm in Little Pond operated by Kent, Michael and Robbie MacDonald. The winner in the crops category was Barnyard Organics of Lower Freetown, operated by Mark and Sally Bernard.

At the same time, I want to congratulate this year's recipient of the Honourable Gilbert R. Clements Award for Sustainable Agriculture. That prestigious award was presented to Verena Varga and Amy Smith of Heart Beet Organics in Darlington. They

are the first organic producers to receive this award.

I ask all members of this house to join me in expressing our congratulations to these award-winners – Kent MacDonald, Mark and Sally Bernard, and Amy Smith – and to the many others across Prince Edward Island who are working hard to protect our precious soil and our water resources.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great award to receive, and I know Kent personally. I was talking to him earlier outside when I was dragging my heels to come back inside on a very nice day. I was commenting on what a great operation Kent has down there for a dairy operation. So it's great to hear that the work that they're doing for conservation measures is also being noticed and rewarded.

I think far too often people are out blaming farmers for everything that happens to the environment. Every disaster out there is somehow a farmer's fault. I don't think it's fair. There's great farmers out there like the MacDonald's who put great effort into their farming practices, who have great nice run operations that are tidy, they're respectable and they're stars in their community for what they do.

It's fantastic that there's awards out there that farmers can be showcased for the great work that they do and be leaders in their own industry. I congratulate all the award winners. Like I say, I can speak to Kent's farm because it's definitely a gem down in a beautiful part of Prince Edward Island and we need to give kudos to more farmers for the great work that they do for our environment here on Prince Edward Island because it's far too easy for people to make them the bad guys and quite frankly, they aren't.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Before I start, may I ask your indulgence to recognize a couple of guests?

Speaker: Yes, of course.

Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd like to welcome Amy Smith and Sally and Mark Bernard and their son here today; three of the recipients of the awards that the minister just announced.

It's always lovely to stand up and to celebrate just a few of the many great farmers that work the land here on Prince Edward Island. Of course, all farmers know that soil is the foundation of everything when it comes to successful husbandry of the land. Soil is almost magical – this living system that takes whatever material is put into it and it transforms it into something which is available for plants. I just don't think that we give soil the respect that it deserves; love and the respect that it deserves. Sometimes it almost feels that is literally, as well as metaphorically, beneath us and we treat it like dirt, basically.

I had a little quote in here, Sanskrit quote from 3,500 years ago and I read it in the House just a week ago, I think, but I think it bears repetition.

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

We know the UN has said that because of increasing global demand and food demand due to the increase in population, that they estimate we need six million new hectares of farmland every year to meet that need. Instead, we're losing 12 million hectares of farmland around the world. We must never forget that we inherit this earth from previous generations and it's our absolutely solemn responsibility to make sure that we nurture it and preserve it and hand it on to future generations; and lovely to see Sally

and Marks son here today and remind of us of that. I sometimes do wish we did a better job, and I'm not talking about farmers here, I'm talking about all of us, collectively.

It's been said that in a handful of healthy soil there are more microbes in that handful than all of the people that have ever lived on this earth. The complexity, and again, the magic of soil is something we sometimes forget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

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

By leave of the House I beg leave to table, I think there are about 10 pictures of the new school Ecole-La-Belle-Cloche in Rollo Bay and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a document that I received from Earth Hour group with 140 signatures supporting the plastic bag reduction.

This attached petition was an action that a group of concerned persons who met during Earth Hour on March 24th, 2018, signed up to support. After considerable discussion about plastic garbage in our province and in the world's oceans and waterways, we decided to approach government with particularly around Earth Day, April 22nd.

What a delight to read in Wednesday's – *The Guardian*, about the proposal brought forth by your government in this regard. It would truly be wonderful and environmentally sound to eliminate single-use bags from grocery stores in our province. The City of Montreal has already

moved in this direction as of January 1st, 2018.

Thanks to Allen Roach in moving in this direction. In eco-spiritual circles, this is called an environmentally virtuous decision. You have our support and prayers as this motion moves forward to be enacted in legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Read that last part again.

Speaker: Hon. member, did you have seconder for that?

Mr. Roach: The seconder is the Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

By leave of this House, I beg leave to table a letter to the Chief Electoral Office Tim Garrity, sent by myself earlier today, formally requesting that an investigation be conducted by his office related to yesterday's accusations in the House, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale that the document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter to the Information and Privacy Commissioner Karen Rose, sent by myself earlier today, formally requesting that an investigation be conducted by her office related to yesterday's accusations in this House, and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, that the document be now received and do lie on the table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker: One more.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

By leave of this House, I beg leave to table the Hansard transcript from Question Period from April 18th and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table the 2016-2017 IIDI report, and this is the most recent report that's available because, once again, the current report has not been published yet, that shows that \$13.5 million in loan write-offs happened during that fiscal year and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

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

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the 16th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 16, *Public Intervener Act*, Bill No. 104, ordered for second reading.

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

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: *Public Intervener Act*, Bill No. 104, read a second time.

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

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration the said bill.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I will ask the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford to please come and chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (McIsaac): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *Public Intervener Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Mr. MacEwen: Chair, can we have a bit of an overview first?

Chair: We'll ask for that.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, do you have an overview for us?

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

This is going to be dry. I'm going to warn everybody. What I'd like to do is go over a bunch of points within other provinces, within the province, and with regards to IRAC itself and where this is actually coming from.

Bill No. 104, *Public Intervener Act*, would allow a public intervener to be put in place by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to place a lawyer to intervene on behalf of the public in matters regarding the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission.

We presently know, right now, that the

Auditor General is conducting a comprehensive review of IRAC. We do not know what that investigation or that review –

An Hon. Member: It's not an investigation.

Mr. Fox: – will bring forward in recommendations to the House and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

First, I'd like to say that, in law, intervention is a procedure to allow a non-party, called an intervener, to join ongoing litigation for members before a court, which can be further referred to as a quasi-judicial court, which is what IRAC is, either as a matter of right or at the discretion of the court, without the permission of the original litigants being the individual that has an application, or the company before the board being IRAC.

The basic rationale for intervention is that a judgment in a particular case may affect the rights of non-parties.

Yesterday, the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy, clearly outlined that in Bill No. 107, had I, the promoter of the bill, spoke with various groups that she raised. She has basically, in her statements yesterday, supported this bill to ensure that interest groups, or people that might have the right to intervene in front of a quasi-judicial court or the court, should have standing. The *Public Intervener Act*, Bill No. 104, actually does that.

I say, again, the base of the rationale in an intervention is that a judgment in a particular case may affect the rights of non-parties, who ideally, should have the right to be heard. I can tell you, for a fact, that I have and know that members of IRAC, in previous statements in the news, have stated that they have concerns over members of the public, or groups not coming forward when decisions are being made or evidence is being given to IRAC, to be heard.

I can also tell you that I have met with – as you notice, there is not an individual here on the floor with me. I have approached several lawyers and barristers in the province. I have met with several law firms in Summerside and in Charlottetown on this issue. I have spoken to two ex-judges on this matter.

They felt that – and they were asked if they would like to address the House in regards to this bill, and they basically felt that they could not as it might put them into a conflict with matters before IRAC or matters that they have dealt with before in the confidentiality or privacy issues in that way there. That's why I'm alone here, today.

The *Public Intervener Act* would allow the Executive Council and the Lieutenant Governor to appoint a public intervener to intervene in matters before IRAC.

With that, I'd like to talk about the province of Ontario. In December, 2015, the government of Ontario passed Bill No. 112, entitled, *Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015*. I want to speak to that in a second.

Back in 2015, IRAC had – pardon me, Maritime Electric had an application before IRAC to raise electricity rates based on how the markets were flowing, their cost and they made an application before IRAC and were heard. During that hearing and that case, there was nobody that went before IRAC and made a statement in support of any person or group within the province that stand to be effected by this; seniors groups, different federations, low-income families and so on.

What we have right now, is we have IRAC, who – they are doing a great job with what the act allows them to do. We have a quasi-judicial panel system. In basic – we have three judges sitting on a bench trying to weigh all evidence put before them by an applicant and making a decision based on the application to them. In IRAC, they are also required to weigh the effect or what can happen before the public good. Or, in others words, I guess, they have to try to take into consideration how this would affect a low-income family or a senior or the public at large.

From what I've learned talking with legal people and talking with members – or people that actually deal with this on a constant basis, is that is there a conflict there? We all know that a judge in the court, a lawyer, that he receives both the defense and the Crown's point of view on a matter. Or, if it's in a civil case, we have the plaintiff and the applicant that –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: The what?

The information is then weighed between the judges, or the judge makes a decision based on hearing both A and B sides of the story. What I'm seeing is in IRAC, we're actually missing that. We're missing a clear individual that can speak on behalf of groups on PEI to make sure that both sides of the story are before IRAC.

In Ontario, we have that Bill No. 112. In the province of Newfoundland, in accordance with section 117 of the *Public Utilities Act*: the Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint a consumer advocate.

The legislation in Newfoundland gives them the power to appoint that in regards to *Automobile Insurance Act*, section 61. The government of Newfoundland and Labrador has also agreed to appoint a consumer advocate for a standing of one year to represent the public interest. I think that's key here; to represent the public interest.

In the province of New Brunswick, they have the Office of the Public Energy Advocate. The advocate over there, specifically, deals with the public, or represents the general public, in matters to do with energy. The appointment of a full-time public energy advocate would correct limitations in that province that are seen by having no representation of the person that can't go before IRAC, or feels that he doesn't want to for some reason or whatever.

They have a balance to make sure that that public good is put before the commission and then, they're hearing both left and right of the story. Where, in this province, we have the applicant putting the application before IRAC. IRAC having to weigh the application, weigh the evidence supported by that, and, in some cases, they have no evidence in contrary to that evidence being presented. Plus, they're also trying to weigh the public good, or the effect on the general public.

I'll point out that appointment of public interveners within other jurisdictions is made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The Lieutenant Governor in

Council has the full authority to appoint a public intervener, who is an independent body acting on behalf of the public at large. We have that with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner; we have that with the conflict of interest. We do have some means there in some ways, but we have no public intervener within IRAC.

That's on overview of the basis of this. I'd like to bring you up to speed on IRAC itself.

I first started dealing with IRAC back in 1998 when I made an application to have a gas licence within the province. My interest in IRAC and how they interacted with the public, or with the applicant, I was very interested in that. Me, being the applicant, other gas stations and other interest groups had the right to come before IRAC and oppose my application.

With that, we had Irving Oil that opposed it. We had a couple of other gas stations. At the end of the day, in my mind, that proceeding was fair because we had the left side, me, giving the application to IRAC and we had the other side that were trying to say: this is why it should not be allowed. If, at the time, I would have – if I would have failed to get the application through, then I could have appealed to the Supreme Court. But, I was successful and we went forward. I think that was an actual fair system because the commission was hearing both sides of the story.

The legislative roles and response of IRAC are very vast and they cover a number of acts across the province. Of course, they deal with the *Island Regulatory and Appeals Act*, the *Lands Protection Act*, *P.E.I.*, the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, the petroleum properties act, the *Electric Power Act*, and the *Water and Sewerage Act*.

They also have sub-responsibilities in the appeal-ment area of the *Planning Act*, the *Unsightly Property Act*, the *Revenue Administration Act*, the *Gasoline Tax Act*, the *Health Tax Act*, the *Revenue Tax Act* and the *Environment Tax Act*, the *Real Property Assessment Act*, the *Real Property Tax Act*, the *Roads Act* and the *Heritage Places Protection Act*.

As you can see, they have a very large scope that they're trying to deal with. That's one

reason why I, sort of, think that with the audit going on, or the comprehensive review of the Auditor General, that we'll get an insight of actually how much these people are actually dealing with.

I will give them credit. We have a three or four member board that sits there. They're hearing a vast amount of information from a vast amount of applicants reviewing a lot of legislation that's put before them. They're not hearing from, I don't believe, in that special interest group, like the Women's Institute, or whatever group that may have a concern with something that's going before IRAC. An advocate for that, an intervener in that would assist them.

Just in the fiscal year of 2015-2016, the commission appeals panel met a total of 95 times to discuss 107 appellant agendas. Nineteen meetings were discussed at the 20 *Planning Act* appeals and 76 meetings were met to discuss the 87 rentals of residential property act appeals.

Who is IRAC – or I should say: who are the regulatory services is? The regulatory service division of comprised of a director and five staff members. The staff members within IRAC are broken up in different departments to deal with the different functions of the acts put before them and with that, they're dealing with a lot of matters going before them. Plus, trying to balance out the need for the public good, or making sure that, that low-income senior, or those different interest groups are actually dealt with and fairly and can be heard.

I'll take you back to that Maritime Electric, when they went before them for that three-year increase. It was 2.3% for three years. Only one person went before IRAC to actually raise the question: are you making sure that when put this 2.3% – and I'm not saying that 2.3% was not the proper thing to do at the time. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that nobody went before IRAC to present how this was going to affect the low-income single mother, or that low-income family, or the seniors, or the farmers or the businesses. No fault to Maritime Electric. Maritime Electric put an application before the board. It was considered. The evidenced was weighed. IRAC went and reviewed the evidence. Made a decision based on the facts that were put before them. And also, trying

to balance out what information was before them while also considering the public good.

In that case, alone, I was the only one that before then and gave that. This is what we're doing here, folks; we're impacting lives. As I can understand the 2.3%, but we must make consider that can that family afford that 2.3% raise? That's one thing that the board of the commission did not hear from any other group.

I know the board and the commissioner are struggling with trying to get people to attend their meetings. I know they're trying to improve getting the information out to the public to make sure they're well-informed on what is before the commission.

Back last year, we were successful as a House to bring in live streaming in committee meetings. I think that was a very strong move forward. I think what you've seen if you follow the live feed, the actual uptake on that has increased and I think that's a positive thing. We're getting the people involved in the House. In some cases, the Supreme Court is live streamed. Some courts are. Maybe not in Canada, but in some places they are.

Anyway, with that, what would be the problem with having IRAC live streamed? What would be the problem with having them get that message out to the public when they're having these hearings so that people can see what's going on and maybe become more involved with that?

As I said, IRAC deals with regulatory services and land division. They deal with petroleum, they deal with electrical rates and applications on behalf of Maritime Electric to them, they deal with water issues in towns and municipalities as far as setting the rates for those waters and sewers, they review the automobile insurance as the rates are put before them and rolled out to the general public. They also deal with the rental side of things. This is one that really interests me because in the year 2015-2016, there were over 11,644 inquiries into IRAC.

Mr. R. Brown: How many did you make?

Mr. Fox: Not a one.

Ms. Biggar: That's a shock.

Mr. Fox: It can be dry.

But the point of that being is that number's quite staggering actually, if you think about it, because we have – how many actual working days do we have a year? And how many days is IRAC sitting? And they're trying to deal with 11,000 inquiries going in to that. That's a significant number, just on the tenants thing, not taking into effect how many things that they're dealing with on gasoline, water and sewer, and all that other kind of stuff. So, they're quite busy. I guess the point of it being is, at the end of the day, can they adequately hear all the different issues and complaints or inquiries into them and hold hearings. Can they also make sure that they put the public's interest, or the good of the public, forth to make sure that the public is actually being served?

So with that, I'll open it up for questions.

Chair: Thank you very much.

I asked the question earlier if we want to have the bill read clause by clause. I have three people already who want to make interventions on this. Are they on the review we just heard, or are they on parts of the bill?

Ms. Biggar: Mine's on the opening remarks.

Chair: Okay.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, hon. member, for that intro. You mentioned it was dry, but I think it's important to explain all that.

When you first talked about this to me and about the time you did present to IRAC and you talked about how you were the only person there and stuff, I was pretty surprised. I didn't know that whole process and how it worked and to be quite honest, I was pretty proud of you for doing that. It's not an easy thing to go in there and do it. It reminds me of the time I went to the Health PEI board. It's not the easiest thing just to get in there and go and say hello, so it's a really, really intriguing idea.

When you went and presented that time, did you have – I'll say anybody from the public that knew you were there? Have you talked to anybody since then or since this bill's been tabled that said: I'd love to do that, but I'd rather talk to somebody else and to share my concerns there.

Chair: Hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

So the way that happened was I basically heard that that application was going before and I was actually interested in it and I stopped by – it was unexpected – I stopped by and I was sitting in the gallery and I was listening to what was going on and I noticed the chairs to the left were vacant. There was nobody there. Maritime Electric was going through their application. They had – I think it was three lawyers there and the executive of Maritime Electric was sitting in the gallery and IRAC – the board was listening to the statements by Maritime Electric on them justifying the rates. I had no problem – justifying the rates. I have no problem with that whatsoever, because they were looking out for the rate-payers and the company and the shareholders and they were putting that forward.

But as I'm sitting there, I was saying: Well, what about – as the minister stated – what about the seniors' group out in Kinkora, or what about the low-income family that we know that's making hard decisions to pay the bills. We know that's happening and we all agree with that. They had an intermission and I went and I asked Allison MacEwen – I think it was – that works there: Is there anybody intervening on behalf of the public and the answer was 'no'. I found that very strange, so I wrote a little note and I gave it to him and I said: (Indistinct) I'd like to go before the commission. He passed the note and I got word back within minutes and they said: Yes, the commission will hear from you.

So, I applaud the commission for that. They were open to it. So, I went up and I basically sat there on the right-hand side and I gave some off-the-cuff statement speech – why – are we considering how this is affecting the public. Have we talked to any groups of the public? Why are we not having the public

here? And I gave my statement and that was the end of it.

It was shortly thereafter, I want to say, hon. member, within days or weeks that I did receive phone calls from individuals – actually, one was from in IRAC and stated to me that they wrestle with that because they don't have somebody advocating or intervening on behalf of the general public – to tell them what the other side is or to consider other facts. We live in a world of where all sides, I believe, should be considered or even thought of and in that case there in IRAC, I was clearly – I didn't like it. So, people did come to me, hon. member, they did say that they don't want to go to a court room. They want to intervene, but they're scared. It's a pressure thing, right, talking in front of a judge or somebody. So, yes, I have had people say that to me.

Chair: Thanks, hon. member.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate you sharing that story, hon. member, and I think there is an accountability there. When you think back to when you brought the PTSD bill forward, right? That night would have been much different if we had of had nobody in the gallery versus people that are affected in the gallery. Right? It affects our decisions in here. Lobbyists, we owe – the same thing with the Sunday hunting bill. People are reaching out to us now for it. It matters.

I know in the Health PEI board, when you first go there, people act different. There's really good people there, but they act different and there's no difference from us or them, you're more accountable when you've got someone doing that. The thing I've noticed with the Health PEI board is that it can be a real positive, too. They recognize that: yes, we're doing really good work here and people should know about it. You talked about it in your opening comments there about – we're doing good work. People should know about this. You talk about live streaming and all that kind of stuff.

I'm wondering: Do you think IRAC would welcome something like this so they could say: Yes, finally we're engaging? I wouldn't doubt it that IRAC probably got – one of their mandates is probably to engage publicly and get more information out there. Would they welcome this, do you think?

Mr. Fox: I think they would. The information I've received is that they struggle with getting information out. They struggle with getting the public engaged in the process and they struggle with making sure that the public's informed of what's going on after the decisions are being made. I think they would and I'm hoping that with the audit by the Auditor General that this will come out – those type of recommendations. I think we all agree that we need some kind of regulatory framework and we need some kind of regulatory oversight and I think that this would assist the public going forward in making sure that that information gets out by IRAC.

Chair: Thanks, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Chair.

I actually have a number of questions.

First of all, just coming back to the Auditor General review there, she's in the middle of a review but you want to go ahead and do something like this before she comes back with her – I'm just asking the question – you want to go ahead with something like this before she comes back with recommendations?

Mr. Fox: My thinking on that is that the Premier and Lieutenant Governor in Council, you can put a proclamation clause in that this can be proclaimed at a later date. I think this would allow that if the Auditor General comes forward with recommendations that show deficiencies, government – this government – can be ready to move to assist her in her recommendations by having a bill already receive Royal Assent, and ready to be proclaimed at the government's wish to assist with that.

Ms. Biggar: Have you actually sat down and met with IRAC? I know you said you spoke with someone, but have you actually sat down with the board of IRAC –

Mr. Fox: I had a lengthy –

Ms. Biggar: – and brought this to them?

Mr. Fox: I have a lengthy discussion with Mr. MacKenzie some time ago. It was actually over, I think, about two years ago, him and I. We had lengthy discussions on a variety of topics within IRAC.

Ms. Biggar: I have some follow-up questions, if I may.

In putting this together, who did you consult with for expertise on your information that you're putting forward as professional information? Who have you got the expertise from?

Mr. Fox: I can tell you – I will not release their names because of what I believe is they've asked me not to. I did consult with two law firms within the City of Charlottetown. I can tell you street addresses. I have met with one law firm, who I'll not mention again, in the City of Summerside who is probably the biggest law firm in the City of Summerside, and I have met with three –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I can tell you the street. I'm not going to say the name – and I've met with three other lawyers privately, and I've met with two judges, ex judges, privately, on the bill and it was given to them and they reviewed it.

I will say, minister, that we must remember what you said yesterday in the House. Did you consult with this group or that group, or whatever group? This ensures that groups of special interests or all parties, there's feedback from them and something going towards IRAC. So, please remember that.

Ms. Biggar: I do have some more questions, if I may, specifically related to the New Brunswick piece. It is specifically related to energy matters.

Mr. Fox: Yeah, that's right.

Ms. Biggar: Could you break down what energy matters that's related to in New Brunswick; and I would point out that New Brunswick is the only province with a legislative public intervener.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Ms. Biggar: Could you expand upon what their mandate is?

Mr. Fox: Description background – the Province of New Brunswick will establish and appoint a full-time public energy advocate to replace the system of an ad hoc appointment of public interveners. This is from the Province of New Brunswick.

Utility consumer advocacy arose with a rise of a regulation for energy utilities. The traditional role of consumer and advocates is to challenge proposed rate increases by intervening in formal, regulatory cases. Consumer advocates may also focus on consumer protection issues, such as service quality, reliability and price stability.

There is no single model for utility consumer advocacy. Our current model, the New Brunswick model, provides for an ad hoc government appointment of a practicing lawyer as a public intervener to represent rate payers' interests. That's something we do not have in this province. A public intervener remains independent of government influence and conducts the intervention according to his or her discretion.

Other advocacy models provide for cost recovery for advocacy groups appearing at regulatory proceedings or the establishment of a dedicated consumer advocate.

Ms. Biggar: I would point out that I, too, have intervened in my previous life as a private citizen at IRAC in a matter related to my community. So, I have had experience sitting at that table and with success, I will say, in winning that case.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Hon. member, you are aware that we passed legislation last fall in our House under the *Electric Power Act* that allows for our energy corp to now intervene in rate applications, as such, on behalf of the

interests of Islanders? You are aware of that?

Mr. Fox: Oh, very much so.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Fox: But –

Ms. Biggar: I just wanted to point that out.

Mr. Fox: I'll say, with that, though, we've got to remember that the list of things that I said at the very first, that IRAC deals with.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Fox: There's more than just energy. We're talking rental agreements. We're talking land issues. We're talking insurance. We're talking water rates. It's great to see that we have the Office of PEI Energy Efficiency is going to now advocate on behalf of Islanders –

Ms. Biggar: Islanders.

Mr. Fox: – or whatever.

That's right, but we must make sure that they're independent. I'm not saying they're not. I'm not saying they're not. That's good to have it, but we also must look at all the things that IRAC deals with as a body.

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

Ms. Biggar: With your indulgence.

This act in New Brunswick only has four statutes related, as you mentioned. This one pertains to 10 overreaching statutes.

What policy work did you do in support of having such a broad review or a public intervener in such a broad range? What actual policy work did you do and would you table that?

Mr. Fox: I never did any policy work. I think that's the policy of the government and for the government to set regulations in regards to that.

I think what we need to remember here is we have so many laws or acts going before IRAC – and you should be advocating for

this – we must make sure that every person that could be affected with a decision by IRAC is heard in some way. I would have to ask the question: Is the minister suggesting that only we need to protect the consumer with energy issues?

Are you suggesting that? Or are you suggesting that we should look at everybody?

Ms. Biggar: Obviously, hon. member, we have bills and laws that protect Islanders in those other areas, certainly. They're protected under different laws as to what can be done and can't be done. In terms of electricity, as I said, the corp and our government have an intervener status, but I would ask you, then, if I may, to follow up with some additional questions.

How would you fund such a position? Because in New Brunswick, it's actually the rate payers that fund this position.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: So what budget – what kind of a budget – to have such an extensive overriding mandate, I would anticipate probably one person can't do it. So, you're talking about setting up a whole new system; a whole new structure with a whole new bureaucracy –

Mr. Fox: I'm glad, actually, you brought this up.

Ms. Biggar: – that Islanders would pay for?

Mr. Fox: I'm actually glad you brought this up.

Ms. Biggar: Good.

Mr. Fox: In other models in North America, what I found, and in Canada, it is the rate payers –

Ms. Biggar: In Canada?

Mr. Fox: In Canada.

In rate payers – North America and Canada – it's actually the rate payers that pay for the overall cost as it comes to utilities. The applicant bears the cost of any application put before IRAC. Yes, there would be a

small budget, I have found, in other provinces – pardon me – other jurisdictions. But, it's basically a negative-positive. Whatever application is put before IRAC or before the commission is borne between the rate payers and it actually equals out.

But, what I have found in research, in reading, is that in some cases it actually lessens the time before the board because it requires the applicants to take more things into consideration, especially the public good.

Ms. Biggar: So as was mentioned, the cost of this whole new office with all the bureaucracy that goes with it would be born at cost of Islanders utility bills. So, have you made an analysis of how much their electricity rate would go up to fund this kind of an office?

Mr. Fox: No.

Ms. Biggar: Is it \$5, is it 5%. So you have no analysis –

Mr. Fox: No.

Ms. Biggar: – on how much that Islanders would have to bear when we already have a system in place to protect them.

Mr. Fox: So I would have to say: No, I have not, but I would have to say: Should we, as a government, be ensuring that the public is represented or protected by anybody that makes an application before IRAC on something that could affect their lives. Don't we have a role to do that?

Ms. Biggar: I just want to remind the member that the role of IRAC is to ensure that Islanders are represented and that their prices are fair, equitable, and non-discriminatory. That is the role of IRAC in making determinations in our rate structures. Again, our role within government and the energy corp. to intervene, so I would just leave it at that because I think there are other people that have some interventions.

Chair: This is on the overview?

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

You mentioned in your introduction that you'd spoken to a number of lawyers and a couple of judges and I understand why they chose not to come here, but did they give you an opinion on the worthiness of your act? Did they speak with one voice and say: this is great?

Mr. Fox: Yes, they all – I'll speak about the three lawyers first. The three lawyers I met with on an individual basis, they saw the need to ensure the impartiality of the commissioner – the board up front – because as I'm aware of and they stated is that if you have a commission or a judge sitting on the bench and receiving all the information from the applicant, how can they fairly make a decision only based on the evidence as put before them, or the exhibits put before them, or the applicants put before them by the applicant when there's nothing to compare it to from the side of the defendant or somebody opposing the matter. It's almost like saying: Yes, I need \$1 for a litre of gas, but yet there's nobody saying how that's going to affect them.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Is the bill based on – you mentioned Ontario in your introduction – is this bill based on the legislation in Ontario or any particular jurisdiction?

Mr. Fox: So, what we did – basically the bill, of course, was sent over to Legislative Counsel and we gave them the information or what we believed the bill should encompass and then they based my understanding on legislation in other provinces to come up with the final draft.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The minister of transportation talked about the potential cost of this position and that's a concern of mine and I'll come to that later because there's a section, but I'm wondering whether you – in the absence of an ombudsperson here on Prince Edward Island – had you considered the possibility of – as they do in Nova Scotia, where the ombudsperson and the child advocate is combined in one office – whether the intervener and an ombudsperson here, is that something – a possibility you would consider?

Mr. Fox: Yes, hon. member, that is a possibility. You bringing up the ombudsman

is a very valid point. There are so many issues within a province, within a jurisdiction that, as you would know, there's no representation for, right? Or who does a person go to to have information put before a court or before a body like IRAC. So it is a good point.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: There are lots of aspects to the combination of offices, whether it's ombudsman-intervener, or ombudsman-child advocate, whatever, but specifically in regards to cost, given the size of our jurisdiction here, I think there's a strong possibility that we could put an ombudsperson and an intervener – one in the same person. Does your bill as it's drafted allow for that possibility?

Mr. Fox: No, not in the way it's drafted, but it's something that could be, of course, modified or amended to allow for it.

I will go back on a statement you said and I skipped over it. As I said, I met with the three lawyers and then I did meet with the three firms: one in Summerside and two in Charlottetown here and I had lengthy discussions with their lead counsel on matters that they'd seen before – put before the court. I should say that they felt that it would be improper for them to come before the House and give information or answer questions that could jeopardize matters that are before IRAC and also some of them felt – I will say – that if this bill is passed and it goes before Cabinet and Cabinet picks or appoints a Legal Counsel for this, that they wouldn't want to be seen as any conflict – possibly be able to get that position and I can understand that and I respect what they said.

But the two judges – we had candid conversations – and as both of them – basically, they found it very interesting, one guy said. They found that it's hard – they can understand when a board – that three panel judge system is making a decision based on only one side of the evidence being put before them and then they're trying to balance out the public good based on previous decisions or whatever's before them, it's hard for that fairness.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Chair.

Hon. member, I just want to compliment you on all the work and the passion you've put into this. You've done a lot of work. In regards – I know you want to make sure every group is representative and like what happened here last night, there was a gentleman here that kind of didn't have a method to be able to present –

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. Dumville: – and you were kind enough to bring him on the floor and let him have his case. If we had went to a vote –

Ms. Biggar: The whole Legislature approved that.

Mr. Dumville: Pardon?

Ms. Biggar: The whole Legislature approved that.

Mr. Dumville: Yes, but he invited the stranger on the floor, so anyway – and I really appreciate what you did in the sense of fairness. If we had of went to vote last night, if we had passed it, he wouldn't have had the right to speak unless it had gone to committee – he'd probably have that right in committee.

So, I'm just wondering – I know we've talked about costs here a bit – you mitigated the cost a little bit in regards to they can make maybe a better decision if they had the other side of the case from the intervener. Do we need the cost of setting up an intervener as such, or could we have an intervener act so that groups had the right to present? Groups could go to the act with the right to present and would they really need to be kind of coached or ushered by an intervener?

Mr. Fox: That's a good point. We have, within the legal community –

Mr. Dumville: I just want to hear his answer.

Mr. Fox: – you can get free access to legal opinions through one of the minister's programs, I believe. You can get information through different government agencies on how to bring a matter forward

or to guide you through a procedure, or whatever, and that might be a way too. This advocate could provide information to a group so that they can present, or – I think that's what you're meaning.

Mr. Dumville: Yes.

Mr. Fox: Yes. That's right.

Mr. Dumville: What I'm thinking is I know maybe government is concerned about the cost and does the number of cases that might need to be intervened justifies the cost; but if government could set up a place where you go to get advice on how to get your right to present. It might be an information thing, but I think an act, an intervener act, to give the right to present, if you couldn't get your full intervener status because it may be too costly for the number of cases presented.

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, hon. member for bringing this forward.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Chair.

If you don't mind, I mentioned in recognitions of guests that they were having that draw, or that award of the car at Holland College. Someone just sent me a note to say that Tony Davis won the car this afternoon. A journalism student, so there you go.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Premier MacLauchlan: Chair, my questions have to do with, I might call it the multitasking with, kind of, anticipated for the intervener you, the Member from Borden-Kinkora mentioned, the New Brunswick model and the Ontario.

As I took it, in Ontario it's principally about electricity and in New Brunswick it might be energy, it might be insurance, but it tends more to be someone who has done a point on ad hoc basis according to the matter.

In fact, when I was in New Brunswick, I was asked to take a look at how they, the public utilities board was, at the time, did insurance matters.

My question then, is, has to do with the case for this being a public intervener who is appointed, I'll say, across the board, or is a standing, I take it, that's what's intended, as opposed to someone who might be appointed with some specialized knowledge of the area in question?

Mr. Fox: In some cases, the public intervener is not actually a full-time job. As you say, they can be appointed as required by the commissioner, or as appointed by a Cabinet. At the, how would you say, as a need arises by IRAC, or by an application that's put before them, could it be a full-time position? Yeah, it could be. But, it could also be a part-time position. I think regulations could field that.

On the budget side of this thing, I don't think we're looking at a big cost here. I think we're, if I had to put a figure on this, I'm thinking somewhere, it could be a budget line item of around \$250,000 to \$400,000. To have a lawyer handle these cases, maybe on a term basis, or a contract basis, on a retainer with a staff member to ensure what's going into – how I would envision it, Premier, would be that you could – a person makes an application into IRAC. The applications go before, we'll say, into an office and then it's weighed whether the public good or the impact of this application on the public, and if it's determined that there is a need to intervene to ensure that that public good or impact is considered, then the lawyer would be called and would come forward.

Premier MacLauchlan: There are probably two aspects, to what I'm getting at. I appreciate the response. One is the array, I'll call it, or the diversity of areas that are intended to be addressed by the public intervener. There are close to 10, it might be nine, the piece of legislation mentioned here as diverse as roads, or unsightly properties or it could be gas pricing or electricity rates.

Should we be concerned about the likelihood of being able to appoint a single person, or a person who would be the public intervener, who would have the expertise or the capacity that would be involved in that diversity of areas?

Mr. Fox: That's a good point, Premier. I think it goes to show how much, actually,

stuff that IRAC deals with, right? We've got a body that, basically, touches every part of Prince Edward Island. They've got an extremely big responsibility to make sure they administer all these acts and legislations. I think that even presents a bigger need for there to be an intervener that can stand with the public, as I put it, right.

To find somebody that would have that expertise in all these different areas. Like, the hon. education minister, you're a lawyer. You're a lawyer, too and you know, usually you practice in one area of law only. This is a big position. I agree with you.

Premier MacLauchlan: I'll leave that, I might say, concern or that point on the record. It is a, sort of, a jack of all trades role that we're talking about here. Then, I want to ask the member about, from your experience on the more – the recent electricity rate setting.

The type of person that would have been able to, I'll say, challenge, but to bring discernment or discipline beyond what you say there, do you have an idea of, what I might call, the skill-set would be that that a public intervener or even an ad hoc person could bring that would, I'll say, improve what you saw?

Mr. Fox: You know, one – I'm thinking of one family right now that, they've got hard times. If you're a single mother or a single family and you're trying to raise two or three kids and make sure those kids have clothing for school and food on the table and you pay your bills. If you get into sports activities, and you clothe them, and all that stuff. It has to be somebody that can understand what that family is actually going through and the hardships that families are actually seeing.

Do I get emotional sometimes? Yeah, I get emotional because it plays on me when you speak to some of these families and you see how they're being affected. Then, you've got a 2.3% rate increase on three years and that's fine. Like, I'm not bashing Maritime Electric, but who is that person that these single mothers, or these parents, or these seniors, they don't want to go before a board and say: I'm poor and I can't afford to put meat on the table. It's got to be somebody with a special skill-set that can relate to that

and understands it and that can make sure that those points are put before the commission so that they understand it. If that –

Premier MacLauchlan: I appreciate that. In some ways, this is the skill-set of, what I might call, a social worker. At the same time, when you and, of course, you were there, when you look at what is being put before IRAC by the utility, with a whole barrack of experts more focused on accounting and economics and it may also be, and with, of course, with engineering and the technologies – I'm sure there are days when it's more of an economist that would bring that extra piece that you're looking for.

I ask because when I see the number of acts identified, and then, of course, when you think about even a particular matter such as rental, for example, might be one skill-set, rate setting and electricity would most likely be a different one.

I have a further question if I may, Chair, and it – I was looking at the number of acts or enactments that are mentioned. I believe it's under – and I may be corrected on this – but I believe it's under the *Municipal Government Act* that the commission is now called to consider the proposed municipal restructuring that, of course, we all know about.

But I don't see *Municipal Government Act* listed there. Was it because you didn't think that the public intervener would get involved in that kind of thing?

Mr. Fox: No, you're right; I didn't think they would, because I think that we're talking as the public and the general, the people as a whole – right? – was my thought on that.

Premier MacLauchlan: And they do have the power under that – as I understand it – under that act to appoint what I believe is called a mediator –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Premier MacLauchlan: – if I'm not mistaken.

I have one last question if I may, Chair –

Chair: Yes.

Premier MacLauchlan: – and it has to do with the work that the Auditor General is doing and you had a hand, member, in setting that in motion. Am I correct that that was focused on setting the price setting for gas and fuel?

Chair: Hon. Member.

Mr. Fox: So how that – thank you, Chair – how that started out with me, I want to thank the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir and the Speaker. We met I think twice and discussed in the audit committee my experiences and what I thought about IRAC and/or how they've evolved.

I think IRAC hasn't had a comprehensive review, they've never been reviewed in 26 years; but us as a government and previous governments have continuously put more things on their plate to deal with. I thought that with that, that they – is it fair for us to continue to put stuff on them but not change the act or their mandate or their policy or their procedures? That's where that basically stemmed.

It stemmed back to the fact that we hear negativity about IRAC. I would have to say that if I was in an organization like IRAC and I was constantly getting beat up in the media for whatever reason, I'd almost have to wonder – it's almost like when I was the chief of police. I never heard from the mayor and council. I never heard from the attorney general's department. I felt like I was alone; and I almost have to wonder, does IRAC feel like they're alone and that they need to be –

Chair: Okay.

Premier MacLauchlan: If I may, (Indistinct) –

Chair: Mr. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: When I said, made reference to a jack of all trades, I was not being gender-specific.

Chair: Okay. I have two other people on the list for questions on the overview. I think

we'll move to the bill then. So next on the list is the hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Chair.

Actually, I have a question on the overview, and then when you get into the bill itself under 3.5 –

Chair: We'll come back to that.

Ms. Biggar: – I have a question there to be noted.

Going back to your consultation with legal services, did you have to pay for that or did you give a receipt in lieu of services rendered to those people? Did you have to pay for that –

Mr. Fox: Are you being serious?

Ms. Biggar: – consultation?

I'm asking if you had to pay for it.

Mr. Fox: I really can't – to be honest I can't actually believe you're asking a question like that.

Ms. Biggar: I'm just asking –

Mr. Fox: No, I never.

Ms. Biggar: – if you had to pay for it. Okay.

Mr. Fox: I never gave them a receipt. They never –

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Fox: – gave me a bill.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Fox: We met because – actually, because they were interested in the concept and the bill.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, just asking.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: You don't need to get all upset about it.

Mr. Fox: I just (Indistinct) –

Ms. Biggar: I'll ask a question when you get into the bill.

Chair: Right on.

The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

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

You know what? It's a great discussion, and it's a discussion we should have every number of years: how IRAC, and how the workings of IRAC occurs.

I remember 30 years ago I was in charge of the light committee at the city and we put new lights out on University Avenue. The lights in front of the university were – I said the city will buy the infrastructure and put it in place. Maritime Electric said: No, that has to go on the bill. So ever since then, I've been questioning a bit, their books all the time.

I been to IRAC a lot of times, I want to say right up front, in the rentalsman area anyway. A lot of my constituents call me to go with them to help them through the rentalsman thing. I have to say they have a great staff there. They really work with the applicant. They really work with the people involved. I've sat in a number of rate hearings or rental hearings and I just want to take this time to commend them over there, because they do a good job and they've got the interests of Islanders in front of them.

But as for – it always comes up for electric rates, and Maritime Electric, and you know, in 2000; I intervened as a citizen in Maritime Electric. I sat at one table and IRAC sat at the other table and the board sat up front and Maritime Electric sat there, and I made a proposal where we would nationalize the assets. Not the company, but just the assets, because of the cost benefits of such nationalization would do.

The IRAC – the people that were sitting across that were there for IRAC seem to have asked me a number of questions. So did Maritime Electric. I got the feeling when I was at IRAC that the people that are on the left side, whatever, the IRAC side of the board there, they've asked a lot of tough questions both to Maritime Electric, and they're not just sitting there and saying:

Okay, is this right or is this wrong? They're going through the detailed financial statements of IRAC, or of Maritime Electric, and Maritime Electric has to justify each and every expense to them.

So to say that IRAC does not have the best interests of the people; I have to question you there. I'll admit, IRAC's a pretty easy target when it comes to electric rates and to fuel prices. I always hear people about why can't IRAC change fuel prices. We have to understand the fuel price legislation was put in place, number one, to save rural –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – service stations, number one; and number two, it was put in place to even out the gas prices, so you Islanders didn't have to go tomorrow morning and find out, well, gas prices are up 10 cents, and the next day go again and they're up 20 cents or they're different prices all over Prince Edward Island.

That's the function of IRAC in terms of gas prices. Everybody thinks that we can just call up ExxonMobil and tell ExxonMobil: You're charging \$64 a barrel of crude. You can't do that. It's a world market.

So in terms of gas prices, I know people may not – I think IRAC does a good job on even out the price over a month. I know they go to a two-week period now, and if there's an emergency they will go with it. I think they do their job there, and they do their job in terms of insuring that there are service stations in rural PEI. I think if IRAC wasn't there we'd have maybe two or three service stations across Prince Edward Island.

But the conclusion I always come to with IRAC is, that first of all, the people that work at IRAC really drill Maritime Electric pretty hard on their pricing structure; and when they're doing a pricing structure, we have to understand that IRAC is given a rate of return – you know, 9.75 – and I've argued at IRAC that rate of return 100 times, 1,000 times, and it always – there's big books of case law and regulatory law all across North America, all across the world, in regulatory authority over utilities.

Like it says: These are the rate of returns, and these are the rate of returns that should

be given. So either we can legislate the rate of return here, in the Legislature, and end up like Ontario and places like that that, for a political reason, do a rate of return and then all of a sudden a rate of return drives them into less cash.

So wouldn't you think that the people that sit on the IRAC side of the table – I consider them the public interveners; anytime I've ever been there, they've fought quite hard for Islanders.

Chair: Response from the hon. member.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

I agree with some of the things you're saying. They are doing that, hon. member. They are trying to be that intervener for the public based on what they're hearing from the applicant; but is it actually fair to put that burden on them to weigh the applicant's application, and also to weigh what the good of the people there is or the impact on the people?

Mr. R. Brown: The board does the weighing of the evidence.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. R. Brown: Not the staff. The staff presents –

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. R. Brown: – evidence.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. R. Brown: And questions the (Indistinct).

Mr. Fox: You have the applicant –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: – putting the application before the commission, and the commission based on that information or application put before them is making a decision on the evidence or the information that's put before them, but also trying to ensure that the public is protected.

Mr. R. Brown: Every time I've been there–

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: – I'll just conclude with this –

Mr. Fox: And Al, and the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, I'm not saying they're doing a bad job, not at all. I'm saying, are we putting such a large burden on them? Are we putting too big of a burden on them?

Chair: The hon. Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, 30 seconds, we have to –

Mr. R. Brown: Thirty seconds? Well, all I can say is that every time I've been to IRAC, the staff over there have done a tremendous job defending Islanders when it comes to power rates, rental rates, all the other issues they put up with.

Thank you.

Chair: Good, hon. member, I'm going to have to ask you to move us to the next order of the day.

Mr. Fox: No problem.

Chair: If you'd read that clause, please.

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

Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having had under consideration a bill to be intitled *Public Intervener Act*, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that Motion No. 56 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): Motion No. 56.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale moves, seconded by the hon. Leader of the Third Party, the following motion:

WHEREAS there are thousands of Islanders living in poverty, who routinely find themselves having to choose between paying for housing, food, medications or other life necessities;

AND WHEREAS poverty has a profound impact on an individual's physical and mental wellbeing;

AND WHEREAS poverty strips individuals not only of material comfort, but also hope and dignity;

AND WHEREAS a primary principle of current social assistance policy is that most individuals prefer to be self-sufficient rather than dependent, and services provided should be directed toward that end;

AND WHEREAS many of this government's current policies do not actually support the goal of helping Islanders to become self-sufficient;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly calls on government to undertake an immediate red tape review of all social programs to ensure that they not only provide Islanders with economic security; but also treat Islanders with respect; and support their overall well being.

Speaker: I will now call on the mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale to speak to the motion.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, may I beg your indulgence to recognize guests?

Speaker: Yes, go ahead.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests (II)

Ms. Bell: I'd like to recognize Judith Bayliss and Ava Grace King, as well as Kent Bryneel. Ava, particularly, is happy to be here because she has been asking to come to work with me even since I took on my new role, so here she is today at work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to bring forward this motion. This is the first time that I have been able to rise in the Legislature and speak to a motion that I personally tabled. This may seem very routine for other members, but for me it feels momentous, especially since this motion is very close to my heart.

I am the daughter of a proud and fierce woman, who has spent her entire life standing up for the most vulnerable members of our society. She has taught me that all people deserve to live their lives with security and dignity. This principle is one of the reasons I ran for public office because as an MLA I can speak for those Islanders whose voices are so often silenced or ignored.

Over the last year, we have heard this government take credit for a growing economy. We are told almost hourly that the province is on a tear. Yet, when I was knocking on the doors in District 11 just a few months ago, people were not telling me that their biggest concern was the GDP. Instead, they were telling me that they were worried about health care, that prices were going up and wages were stagnant, that it was getting harder and harder to find affordable housing.

They told me that they needed to spend hundreds of dollars every month on ostomy supplies that aren't covered in the Pharmacare formulary, or that they were living pay cheque to pay cheque and would not be able to cover the cost on an unexpected emergency.

They told me how difficult it was to navigate the range of social support programs. Did you know that we have over 21 distinct programs just within the Department of Family and Human Services and that the Social Assistance Program alone has 95 separate policies?

These are the Islanders who are getting left behind as the Premier celebrates our GDP and our healthy trade balance. Whenever I hear how our economy is on a tear, I think of all the people who have not been invited in that prosperity.

The Premier claims it's through increased revenue and the province can start investing in Islanders. I'm unsure exactly what that phrase means, although it seems to indicate a government more comfortable speaking the language of business or one that chooses to see people as units of production, valued mostly for their ability to contribute to that GDP.

Of course, the Premier is not the only one who has fallen for one of the most destructive myths of our capitalist society. To various degrees we have all been convinced that we should value people for their ability to contribute to society solely as producers or consumers or taxpayers, and we have lost the truth that all people are intrinsically valuable and equally worthy of respect and dignity. When did we become an economy instead of a society?

It's not that I don't appreciate the increases in funding to current programs; I know the Minister of Family and Human Services is able to stand up and rhyme off impressive numbers in proof of this government's investment in Islanders. Yet, when you examine those numbers more closely, you begin to realize that the increase in the food allowance is equal to two loaves of bread a month, and the revised shelter allowances in no way match the substantially increasing cost of housing. And these only apply to those, who are on social assistance, a fraction of the number of Islanders who are actually living in poverty.

The thing I find most frustrating about this government's approach in the most recent Budget is that they simply increasing the funding to existing programs; programs that have been failing Islanders for years, if not generations. Government has no innovative plan to use the current opportunity to move from a culture of dependency to a culture of empowerment.

I would like to offer just one more example of this government being friendlier to businesses than to people, which is the much

lauded red tape review. Almost immediately after the Premier was elected, he announced a government-wide red tape review to help businesses succeed by reducing the barriers and the regulatory burdens placed on them.

It is a great idea. I want businesses to succeed. I spent more than five years working for the PEI Business Women's Association, directly helping hundreds of businesses start and succeed right here on PEI. Why stop there? Why not launch a red tape review of our social programs? Why not look at the barriers and the regulatory burdens being placed on most vulnerable citizens? Why not value the success of individuals as much as we value the success of businesses?

That's what I'm proposing today, that government do a full red tape audit on all social programs. That, in this audit, they identify inefficiencies and barriers, that they find and eliminate those nasty catch-22s that plague people when programs focus on dollars and forget about commonsense.

For example, social assistant clients are encouraged to seek employment and training to improve their situation. However, there are a couple of unpleasant surprises for those on social assistance. Most of the dollars they will receive from other sources are clawed back from their social assistance, so they actually are no better off. Secondly, if their income exceeds their social assistance cut-off they will lose all their benefits, including drug coverage and then end up much worse.

Even when the provincial government offers additional funds, as with the recent program for grandparents who care for their grandchildren, there is often a failure to consider how various programs work together before the new initiative is launched, so great ideas are executed so poorly that the supposed beneficiaries end up confused and stressed, but not to worry because the economy's on a tear.

We must remember that there are costs to administering all of these programs and these costs escalate when you narrowly define who can benefit. The only administrative burden of having bureaucrats documenting that every applicant meet multiple criteria multiple times before

receiving any assistance, there is the human burden. The frustration of department staff who sincerely want to help people, but are constantly forced by policy to turn them away and the humiliation for the applicant who is left feeling that the person they turned to in desperation is indifferent to their need.

That feeling was beautifully documented by Teresa Wright last year in *The Guardian's* special poverty issue. She eloquently described her own experience of applying for social assistance when she was a young mother and the despair she felt when she was turned away. Teresa has been able to rise above that and become a well-known political journalist on the national stage and we miss her greatly, but the majority of Islanders who are turned away continue to subsist on the margins of society while the Premier crows that we're all on a tear.

In December 2016, this Legislature unanimously supported the third party motion on introducing a basic income guarantee. Government subsequently reported that efforts to work with the federal government to develop an Island-wide pilot were not successful and we heard that again today. That is the last, it seems, that we have heard from the minister on that issue and from this government to date. We, in the third party have not given up so easily on introducing a basic income guarantee, although we are not so naïve as to think that just because we repeatedly claim we want or need it that it will magically happen. It is something that we must fight for and work collaboratively for with all parties, jurisdictions, and non-profits within our community to achieve. We also believe that, like proportional representation, election finance reform, and becoming a carbon-neutral province, it is an idea whose time has come.

I am confident that the past will give way to the future much sooner than many people think, but in the interim, we don't need to sit on our hands and wait. We can overhaul our current social programs to introduce the spirit of the guaranteed income. For me, the fundamental differences between a basic income guarantee and our current patchwork of programs are the very assumptions about the social good that we are trying to promote. Our current system, by focusing

almost exclusively on making sure that nobody ever gets a penny that they are not entitled to, creates a punitive culture of denial that treats people like liabilities.

What was originally designed to be a social safety net has somehow become a spider's web where our most vulnerable citizens are trapped in chronic poverty. We need to develop a system that recognizes the intrinsic value of all people and recognize that you cannot force someone to be more economically independent by beating them down. Our social services should be designed instead to lift people up and help them achieve their full potential.

But we must also recognize that not all Islanders will become active participants in our economy, even when that economy is on a tear. Some people, for reasons such as physical disability, mental or intellectual challenges, or the result of long-term abuse or trauma, may spend much of their lives dependent on social programs; but that does not mean that these people should be treated as if they are a burden or forced to live in abject poverty. It also does not mean that they cannot make meaningful contributions to our communities. They can still create and engage and bring joy, and they deserve to live their lives in security and dignity.

There are countless others, probably the majority of people currently living in poverty now, who hold down jobs, often more than one, yet still cannot afford to live securely. These are the working poor, and include over 15,000 Islanders. They work long hours in precarious employment at low wages with few or no benefits. Yet in spite of all of their efforts, they can never bridge the gap between what they earn and what they need to provide for themselves with food, shelter, child care and the basic necessities of life. These are the people who so easily fall between the cracks, and they and their children suffer the long-term health effects of insecure housing, inadequate diets and constant stress.

There was a time when, if you were willing and able to work and there was work to be had, you could expect to live in modest comfort; but those days are gone, and as a society, we must develop strategies to help Islanders bridge that gap and we must do it now.

I know that there are no easy answers to this complex issue of poverty, but I believe that we can and must do better. We can eliminate the Catch-22's in our programs. We can create systems that do not penalize people for working harder or for being unable to work at all. We can provide our fellow Islanders with more opportunities to escape the downward spiral before they find themselves destitute. We can once again learn to value all members of all of our communities, regardless of their ability to produce goods and services to consume or to pay taxes; and the next time we hear the Premier brag about the Island economy being on a tear, we can take a moment to think about all of our fellow Islanders who are still being left behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Next speaking to the motion will be the seconder of the motion, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I'd just like to take a moment to welcome Ava and Judith as well, and Kent.

It's a real pleasure to – at the moment stand, but sit beside the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale. As she said, her first opportunity to speak to her own motion; and it's no accident the motion that she chose to speak to as her initial – you could say proper speech in this House, and I really appreciate and was very moved by the eloquence and passion of what she said. Thank you.

Gross domestic product, GDP, is – you can consider it like a speedometer in a car. It tells you, as it does in a car, whether the economy is going faster or whether the economy is slowing down, but it doesn't tell you the whole picture of the journey on which you are going. Is the engine overheating? Are you about to run out of fuel? The speedometer does not tell you that, and in particular the speedometer does not tell you whether or not you're actually going in the right direction.

If you say to the driver: Excuse me, I think that we may be on the wrong road; and you get a response from that driver that: Well, then I think we need to go a little bit faster – you might scratch your head and wonder what was going on. You might even reach for the steering wheel.

PEI's economy may indeed be on a tear, but the stories of thousands of Islanders suggest that their experience is not of the exhilaration of speed and of good times, but of pain and of struggle. We need a driver who checks all of the instruments on the dash panel, not just the speedometer, and particularly a driver that looks in the rearview mirror to make sure that nobody has been left behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Thank you, hon. Leader.

The hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning.

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

It's a privilege to rise and speak to this motion. You know, as a government we're not going to not encourage Islanders when they're doing well, and the Island economy is doing very well. To say the Island's on a tear is a fair estimate. As I said, we're not going to downplay that.

Our department, through one of the departments under Workforce and Advanced Learning looked at minimum wage, and they dealt with Islanders, businesspeople and employees, and they came up to a figure where we put minimum wage to 11.55 on the first of April. There's been discussion our there we should tie it to CPI. Well, if we had, as the minister before me has indicated, our minimum wage would probably be just a little less than \$10 right now, or hovering around that. So it's best to have it done by an independent body.

Which that does, it helps the people on low income and it helps the people in vulnerable situations. We have many, many NGOs that we sponsor through my department – you know, Adventure Group and Career Bridges. I've gone to the Adventure Group graduations where single moms have come

off of social assistance and got employment, and they've felt very wonderful about it and learned some new skills. It really lifted up their outlook on life and they're very heartwarming to attend.

There's also been stars and SEAM programs put on where they take youth with barriers or with some issues and teach them life skills, and show them the education that they can get.

All of these things are helping people in our economy. We can talk about these many things. I was up west with my colleague from O'Leary-Inverness and we went to graduations at Career Bridges and to listen to those people and some of the hardships that they've had in life – my voice is cracking because I always didn't have it rosy in life either. I came from – my mom was a single mom and she raised four children, and things weren't always rosy in our family either.

We all need to help everybody on PEI, and I think our government is doing a good part. Yes, there are more things we can do. But, I'd certainly like to say we're doing our part. We talked here about the price of gas; we have absolutely no control over that price. We all know that in here. It was on the news today. It's a world price. We can't change it. They're talking about it's going to get higher, so it's going to hurt a little more, all of us. But, we can't control that, and there are things we can't. But there are things we can control and I think our government is doing a good job.

Is there a little bit more we could do? Sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

May I just say, squarely, that I think there's been a false premise presented here today? It's almost as if you have prosperity, that means that you disregard poverty and I don't know how anyone that has been around for as many decades as a number of us have, and who've dealt with all aspects of life, could ever present that as a black and white scenario.

In the 2017 Speech From the Throne, we made it very clear that we are taking a comprehensive approach to poverty and that we are committed to that. Indeed, in the language of the speech, it said: My government will introduce a comprehensive poverty reduction action plan with the engagement of a poverty reduction advisory council drawn from communities across the province. We will look at all aspects of poverty; including housing, food, education, employment, and health. That is a long way from what has just been talked about across the floor.

In January of this year, we did indeed appoint a poverty reduction advisory council of people who are highly regarded from all sectors, and notably from the sectors that are working directly with people who are struggling in this province, and they are working well and I'm proud of the work they're doing.

Among our government departments, so far from saying this is all divided up into silos, we have across-departmental secretariat with 10 government departments and agencies working together, that put in place the poverty reduction advisory council.

There was reference to a claw back – the biggest thing that's been done in the past several years was done with the increase and the readjustment, or the restructuring, of the Canada Child Benefit. That brings \$100 million a year into this province, into families, children, tables, budgets, and our government agreed when that was done – and an increase of \$25 million a year annually – we agreed that there would be no claw back. It would not affect social assistance consideration.

I spoke with the minister yesterday, and she very directly – and we had this conversation – speaks with enthusiasm and passion about the work of that department and the work and the approach as being a shift from eligibility to capability. That is exactly what we are doing as a government, and we are proud of it.

If you look at our recent Budget, the largest single increase of all of our departments – and we're doing the estimates, you'll have lots of time to talk about it, but I don't think

you can come in here and say somehow we're not paying any attention to the issues of poverty – the largest single increase was in family and human services with increases in food, and I think it'll go a lot further than was suggested across the floor. If you look at those five increases, it's now \$3.5 million since we came to government.

The very first thing we did when we came into government was the Generic Drug Program. We've just – an increase in –

Mr. MacKay: HST there not long ago.

Premier MacLauchlan: – in the shelter allowance.

We've made changes successively in income tax, and there's one program –

Ms. Casey: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Hon. members, this House will recess until 7:00 o'clock this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

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

Hon. members, we are on page 60, under cultural affairs. The section has been read, but it hasn't been carried. I would direct you to there.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: We'll get him set-up. I've got you on the list.

An Hon. Member: Thanks.

Chair: Good evening, could you please introduce yourself and your title for the record.

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

Chair: Welcome.

I have a question from the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald. If I could remind everybody to direct their questions to the section that we're discussing. If your question is not related to this section, we just ask you to hold it and we'll let you know that.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, you have the floor.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

When the hour was called last night I was asking about grants under culture and heritage, I believe, would be the section. The New London Fire Department is having their 50th anniversary celebration this summer. We're looking for, perhaps, some funding to help them out with that event and a number of initiatives around it.

As well, in Rustico, it's really the Cymbria Lions Club that's heading up the purchase of a new digital sign. They really want to use it for the community, as a whole. It's quite an expensive item. The quote I saw was in the

neighbourhood of like \$25,000 for this sign. Of course, they wouldn't be asking for a full grant.

I wanted to know if there's any funding available here in the grants for culture and heritage for either/or those two items. If there is, who I can direct them to in your department to apply for that funding?

Mr. J. Brown: You could speak with Mark Derry in my department. Mark Derry.

I'm not going to get into trying to explain the guidelines of those programs to you here now. Mark can do that. All I can really say is there'd have to be a cultural element to it, at the very least. Beyond that, I'm sure there are more specific program guidelines.

Mr. Trivers: You think there's a chance that these two projects will qualify?

Mr. J. Brown: It's pretty hard for me to say that just of –

Mr. Trivers: Hard to say.

Mr. J. Brown: – that description you gave me.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: The other thing I would not to you, too, is that I'm not sure what part of your community it's in, but there are Acadian, there is Acadian programming that goes on, as well. There are a few different baskets under which you can seek to – call Mark and see what your options are in terms of cultural programming. I'm not saying that's the only basket that you might look at, either.

Mr. Trivers: I just want to be 100% sure. So, if it's not in the cultural section, it might fit in another section in these grants in your department, would Mark Derry, again, be able to direct me to the right spot, or be the right guy to talk to?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'd just like to ask about the Confederation Centre. I know there was a time when the other provinces would give large amounts of money to the Confederation Centre as a national building and organization. I'm not sure whether that's true or not. I'm know you wouldn't have any knowledge of that.

The \$910,000, how does that compare to last year, for example?

Mr. J. Brown: In terms of the (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's exactly the same. Yeah, the Confed Centre.

The grant to the Confederation Centre is \$910,000.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, it's the same.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: As the line says.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Has that been going up over the years or is that stable?

Chris DesRoche Director: No, it's been stable.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It has.

Chris DesRoche Director: You're correct. The provinces used to contribute to the Confederation Centre, but I think there might be one or two –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: One or two that do it now.

Chris DesRoche Director: – very small amounts.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: I'll say, Chris is on the board there. The Confederation Centre has had a pretty good year, years, the last couple or few years, which we are very, kind of, happy to see as a cultural institution here on Prince Edward Island that is reflective of culture across the country.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I agree. It's one of our cultural flagships here, and many good things going on in there. That's a large amount of money. It's almost \$1 million that

we give the centre. Do you know what, sort of, percentage of their annual budget that represents?

Mr. J. Brown: One fifteenth, roughly, I guess.

Chris DesRoche Director: They'd be over \$10 million in revenues (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: About 10% or so?

Mr. J. Brown: The financial statements are probably online for the Confederation Centre.

Chris DesRoche Director: They might be.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Chris DesRoche Director: It would be less than 10%, I would think.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Public Archives and Records Office

“Appropriations provided for archives and record management services under the requirements of the *Archives and Records Act*.” Administration: 6,900. Equipment: 4,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 11,400. Professional and Contract Services: 3,000. Salaries: 1,127,700. Travel and Training: 16,400.

Total Public Archives and Records Office: 1,169,400.

Total Culture and Heritage: 3,592,500.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I know there was a series of questions this afternoon about Blackberry messaging and how much that would cost.

Minister, would you be able to table the documents to support the cost that you used in your answer this afternoon?

Mr. J. Brown: I'll say I don't know if I can. That work was actually done by ITSS, so it

might be a question that either I can ask the finance minister or you can, but between us we'll see what we can get.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Clearly had access to it in answering the questions this afternoon so

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, I have the information, which I –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure.

Mr. J. Brown: – read out today. That's as much as I can tell you for sure.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Wherever the information comes from, would you table the documents to support the amounts that you suggested this afternoon?

Mr. J. Brown: If I can get them, yeah.

Like I say, I don't – it wasn't me that did the work. It was done by ITSS. I just happened to know – our department asked. That's the information we were given. As I said today in my answer to the question: ITSS answered that question. I think they went out to look at it. I'm not sure. I can't tell you beyond that, the particulars, but I'll talk to the Minister of Finance. As I'm saying, you can do the same and we'll see what we can come back with.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

P.E.I. Museum and Heritage Foundation

“Appropriations provided for the study, collection, preservation, interpretation, and protection of the human and natural heritage of the Province; operation of six historic heritage sites and a National Exhibition Centre; and production of the *Island Magazine*.” Materials and Supplies: 3,800. Salaries: 1,094,000. Travel and Training: 600. Grants: 281,000.

Total P.E.I. Museum and Heritage Foundation: 1,379,400.

Total P.E.I. Museum and Heritage Foundation: 1,379,400.

Total Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture: 273,482,200.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I see that the grants have gone up from \$81,000 to \$281,000. Can you say where that money has gone?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, it's related to the Cultural Action Plan. So, the Museum and Heritage Foundation is going to undergo two projects. One is to digitally archive the items in the artifactory and another is a mobile lending collection. For example, some time ago you may have seen on the news where they took war artifacts to schools and showed the kids and lent them out. Those are the two projects. Most of it is the first one.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I was glad to see the grants going up. I figured that wasn't going to be enough to buy us a provincial museum, but I'm wondering if there are any discussions ongoing within government about that possibility.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Of a provincial museum?

Mr. J. Brown: A few things I'll say, is it is something that we wish we kind of had the capital money for, as we've had discussions about here over the two-and-a-half weeks preceding this, or I guess two weeks tonight.

We have a lot of competing demands. Given the likely price tag on a provincial museum, I don't see it being as close to the front, perhaps, as some other projects, but it's something that's always on our mind.

I will say in all that, too, we do have a great provincial museum collection on Prince Edward Island. It's fairly well run in terms of what we have and the value that we've been able to derive out of that. Actually, there's been some great projects over the last couple of years linking back into the

education systems and the libraries and all that kind of stuff.

I think, much like the success libraries have seen, we're starting to see a lot of the same kind of outreach happen with our museums here. Hopefully we can build as we go forward. In saying all of that, we have some very substantive infrastructure – I'm going to call them issues, because that's really what they are – that we have to be very cognizant of going forward. To give you examples, we saw some money on this in the Capital Budget. There are a few projects out at Orwell Corner, as one very small example, that will chew up some substantial dollars over the next five years.

You'd like to be able to do everything, but the reality is we need to take care of what we got first and then we'll hopefully be able to move onto some other things as we start to gain some more capability and capacity as a province.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Just a final comment; I'd just like to thank you for the support that you do give to the museums, and I'm excited about the project that's ongoing in Orwell Corner, and what's coming here so thank you for that, minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

This is the only cultural organization that seems to have a completely separate line item for the organization itself. So it's got provincial salaries for the NGO staff and so rather than needing to get grants or operational grants and managing their own operations, this one is sort of coming in as a departmental budget line. What's the reasoning for that; for this to be sort of sitting as its own separate entity for the funding support? Historical I'm sure?

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, historical. It is a little unusual. It's a Crown corporation, which is incorporated or amalgamated with us at the end of the year, but we cover their salaries and provide an operational grant, essentially. But, they would have other sources of revenues within their foundation like entrance fees to museums and such.

Mr. J. Brown: I think we have federal government money coming in, too, for the last couple of years on infrastructure projects, do we not?

Chris DesRoche Director: A little bit, yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: If I recall correctly.

I should be careful to say, too, it's not – if you look, again, the typical – I'm going to call it a capacity model for libraries – the model is actually quite similar to this. Libraries – the municipality that they're in, pursuant to our act, is actually responsible for the capital costs of the library. We carry the cost of the capacity to operate them. This is not actually the only division within our department that we see that similar kind of model to do that, and that's still, again, leverage community capacity I think.

Ms. Bell: It just stands out in terms of the structure when it's recognized as one of the creative industry pillars, and treated as an NGO in many of those aspects, that it can create some different challenges in terms of planning and so on. Salaries are often one of the biggest challenges for NGOs; to have to fundraise for your own salary as well as operating an organization is a challenge.

It's fantastic for the museums that they have that opportunity, but it does – I understand the difficulties of inheriting historical arrangements as well, but it does provide some other challenges for those others in the area

Thank you for the qualification. I appreciate it.

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

Mr. Murphy: You might have just answered some of my questions there, but it's about the community-based museums. Are they receiving any funding or did they get an increase in funding in this budget?

Mr. J. Brown: I better ask you what you mean when you say that because we have a number of museums that fall under our funding envelope. I think there are

something like 49 in the province and I think we have six or seven (Indistinct)

Chair: Six historic.

Mr. Murphy: I'm referring to like the Alberton museum. I think there's one in Montague.

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah, that was in the previous section in Cultural Affairs.

Mr. Murphy: Oh, one (Indistinct)

Chris DesRoche Director: We issue a grant to the Community Museum Association and then they issue, I'll call them, micro grants, for the lack of a better word, to community-based museums. There's \$23,500 on the handout and I think it's five to \$2,500 grants that they're eligible to apply for.

Mr. Murphy: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: They have some interesting work on the go, too. They have a new executive director, actually, with some very significant expertise that just came back to PEI from, I believe, Toronto where she did her education and she's looking to move things along there, we might say.

Mr. Murphy: Okay.

Just one more thing; the community museums can still access stuff from the museum or the storage down here, the archives? They can –

Mr. J. Brown: Yes. I'm not going to say that without qualification, but yes.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you.

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

Mr. R. Brown: Thank, you Madam Chairman.

The downtown association is looking at a new library. The Confederation Centre wants to take over the old library site. There are some good proposals. How's that going?

Mr. J. Brown: I think it's coming along fairly well. I did make a few comments on this the other day. There has been a push. The developer of the Dominion Building has

actually gone to the lengths of preparing a fantastic schematic design for a new library. There's a fairly unique space opportunity available in the ground floor of the Dominion Building, as I understand it, and possibly, a limited time to take advantage of that.

Not only that, the Confederation Centre is looking for additional space. They're doing other things to fill that need, right now. There are other – there is other talk about a bit of a cultural hub going on at – out on Victoria Row here, too. It's an interesting time, I'm going to say, in this sector. There are some great opportunities there.

As I said here, the other day, I think the City of Charlottetown has focused a lot on this and it will be interesting to see what comes out of city council, in terms, of whether it's a priority for them to go forward with or where we end up going with that.

Mr. R. Brown: My hon. colleagues in the third party there are looking for some space. I think we should just move the archives in with the new library and give them the third floor. We're looking for some space, and they need some space.

But, anyway, I've got another point. The Beaconsfield, like, it's running pretty good; the last year, it's been a lot of events there, and everything. Did you get a new manager there or something?

Mr. J. Brown: Yes, we do have a new manager there. In fact, Beaconsfield is going so well that they're kind of hitting the upper end of their capacity there and they're looking to do more now with the Carriage House because they have, kind of, done so well with Beaconsfield itself.

It is one of our crown jewels, in terms, of what we have to offer in this division. A big part of that is through some money that we were able to get to do some work on Beaconsfield and on the Carriage House over the last seven or eight years.

Mr. R. Brown: Is the manager the Crown jewel?

An Hon. Member: Yes, it is.

Mr. R. Brown: Anyway, I just wanted to pass on, whoever is the manager is doing an excellent job and keep it up.

Unidentified Voice: (Indistinct) get the job forward to.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, Green Park museum and heritage site is in my constituency –

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – down in Port Hill –

Mr. J. Brown: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: I think – was visitation up there? Do you have the visitations stats for sites, or not?

Mr. J. Brown: I don't have –

Ms. Biggar: Okay, that's –

Mr. J. Brown: – them right here –

Ms. Biggar: – quite all –

Mr. J. Brown: – no.

Ms. Biggar: – right.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: First, I want to thank the minister for some of the work that was done there. We had to tear down one of the locations, but I think there was some work done on the sites.

Do you have anything planned in the Budget for that? I know you have a number of different heritage sites across PEI, but in particular, is there anything in the Budget this year to do any further upgrades? It's getting a lot of high profile because of rock the boat. We get 5,000 people in there for rock the boat.

Our soapbox derby, so that certainly takes a lot of people into the area. I was just wondering what's planned?

Mr. J. Brown: I can say, hon. member, that we do not have anything planned for there, right now.

As I mentioned we have a big capital project on the go at Orwell Corner, right now. Again, we'd love to have more money. Frankly, what we do have planned, in terms of capital improvements at Orwell Corner, we could probably do a half a dozen or maybe a dozen of those projects every year. That might start to beat the list down.

Anyway, we've seen a pretty good increase to our budget in the last year or so to do some of this work, hon. minister. Hopefully, we can continue to push that envelope a little bit and if things keep going well, then we might be able to see more done.

The plan, for right now, is to get a couple of buildings that are very old and are basically in the position where they need to be repaired or they will fall in on themselves at Orwell Corner, done, and then, kind of, move on.

Ms. Biggar: The Green Park Development Corporation works, you know, in partnership with that site. There is the old school from the community that was hauled there. I know there was a little bit of work done to that.

I want to thank Dr. Keenlyside, too, for his passion with that particular site. Certainly, there, but I just want to come back to the libraries for a second, minister.

The small community libraries, the one in Tyne Valley is located in the village office. They're offering a lot of great outreach programs to the community, to students – summer student programs during the – tutoring out of there in the summer. I just want to and thank the department for their contribution to rural PEI, to those small libraries.

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

We have an unreal libraries department. Kathleen Eaton is the director there. Visitorship is starting to go through the –

Ms. Biggar: It is.

Mr. J. Brown: – roof at our libraries. We have some great programs. You know,

where you can go in and take out exercise gear, books, movies, DVDs, videogames, yoga stuff, snowshoes, pretty well, you name it and they will do it.

Like you say, they have some great programs tied in with the Literacy Alliance, and a bunch of different stuff like that, that they do. A lot of them are getting into things like art classes. They'll even take books right out to your house if you're – particularly a senior or whatever and you can't get out; all kinds of great stuff going on.

Ms. Biggar: I just want to mention one thing, which I think is a great addition to the community libraries, is the autism sensory kits. It's phenomenal. So that parents that may be can't afford to buy those sensory items can go in and have an opportunity for their child to check those out and keep them. I want to congratulate for that addition to it, I think it's a great addition.

Thank you.

Mr. J. Brown: Thank you.

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

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister, you mentioned, you referenced Orwell Corner there as one of the two jewels down in Orwell. There's Macphail Homestead, of course. It's nice to hear they still are maintaining two boards with the coming together, to work together in a management piece, which is great. The Macphail Homestead has been funded, to some degree, out of three different departments totally around \$19,000.

Is there any way we can, instead of having – for them to apply to three different departments for each piece of the grant, could we put those together and ensure that we have the long-term funding there because they are starting to work together and it's great and I'd like to encourage that, and want to make sure that we do ensure that there's a long-term viability there for both entities.

Mr. J. Brown: I'll say a few things on that. One is, we are working towards trying to

achieve that. Again, the hon. member mentioned David Keenlyside. He's actually a neighbour of mine, but he does a phenomenal job, and he's got a lot of experience in this sector. And a lot of experience, kind of, growing these entities, and, as you mentioned, the combination of Orwell Corner and Macphail Homestead are really a Crown jewel in our group of museums.

The answer is yes, we are working on that. I think the more successful that spot is, the more opportunities that I think will come to it. We've seen visitor-ship go up tremendously over the last number of years. We've had, again, great programs through the library and with schools and stuff like that. They've done a bunch of outreach to schools. The more of that, that goes on, the more it'll be driven. The more that's there the more tourists will go there. They're working on trying to get tourists off the cruise ships there, more; looking at opportunities like serving meals and things like that.

I guess, all to say, it's not always a bad thing to have a link into a few different spots. Particularly, if you're looking to grow what you might get. I'll say we're working on it, but we may want to keep that in mind, too.

Mr. McIsaac: I want to give kudos to Dave Keenlyside, too. He's done great work there, working with two boards. The only frustrating part, I think, might be, is that – have to spend so much time trying to reinsure they get their funding or to source that funding. If it could be stabilized to some degree and put under one roof and put it, maybe, a line item, it's no extra cost to the government. It's just ensuring that they have the money there and they don't have to spend half their time and energy trying to make sure they get those dollars down the road.

There's fantastic movement down there. They have big plans. Both entities have big plans. They're both volunteer boards, as well. That puts extra pressure on them there. They want to really get at the meat and the bones of what's going on there and what they can do.

You mentioned the idea about the cruise ships coming down there. They've talked

about that, and putting on a meal there. There's also some talk about perhaps, they're not far from the Confederation Trail, putting on a meal for some people who may be biking through there, that sort of thing.

If they could put their energies towards – that's the type of thing, instead of trying to ensure they have the dollars that would be a fantastic item for them.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the total Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture budget carry? Carried.

Thank you.

Hon. members, we'll now move onto page 62.

The Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission

General

“Appropriations provided for primarily to cover costs related to the Land and Property Division of the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission.” Operating Grant: 1,400,300.

Total General: 1,400,300.

Total Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission: 1,400,300.

Mr. MacDonald: Carry the section.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacDonald: Carry the section.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) public intervener to come in.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I just have one question and I'm wondering when government is going to implement in the recommendation in the 2017 Auditor General's report. Recommendation 9.19:

"Detailed budget information of significant agencies, boards, and Crown corporations should be provided to the Legislative Assembly as part of the budget approval process."

So, rather than having a one line here, as we do here, for IIDI, later or the other corps, are you going to implement that Auditor General recommendation?

Chris DesRoche Director: I think it has been implemented in a different section of the book. They were showing gross revenues and expenses. I'm not sure which page off-hand, but I believe that has been done.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Is there – is it possible to have a breakdown of the \$1,400,000 for IRAC?

Chris DesRoche Director: It's a grant.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Pardon me?

Chris DesRoche Director: It's a grant.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, sure and that's whole point.

Chris DesRoche Director: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Would it be possible for the Legislative Assembly to have more details of how that grant is distributed during the budget process as the Auditor General has recommended in her 2017 report?

Chris DesRoche Director: I thought there was a schedule added to the estimates this year that showed the gross revenues and expenses –

Ms. Bell: We do not have any schedules for IRAC.

Chris DesRoche Director: – but perhaps not.

Ms. Bell: Chair, we didn't get any schedules (Indistinct)

Chris DesRoche Director: We can look into that and bring that back.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Can I ask the minister if he has any intent to implement the recommendation for this department, for this body, which is –

Mr. J. Brown: I'm just going to say this, in relation to IRAC, and you guys know this already, but I'll reiterate it. We – IRAC falls under our department because we are the only department in government that, most likely, would not have any conflict with something going on at IRAC.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: IRAC is a regulator and an omnibus appeals body. We ostensibly get their ask and figure out how much money we can allocate back towards them and we don't have a whole lot of choice other than to give it to them.

They, you know, other than what we get here that's tabled in the Legislative Assembly, we don't have a whole lot of back and forth with them over their day-to-day – I'd say we have zero back and forth with them over their day-to-day goings on.

Anyway, that said, we'll certainly see what we can get. I can't promise your much, or I can't promise you anything in relation to IRAC, frankly, but we'll see what we can get.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's not a promise to me, it's just upholding a recommendation of the Auditor General that's all I'm saying. I hope, with the other agencies and commissions that we do see a fuller detail as the official opposition has been asking for, for many years, I believe.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, did you have a question?

Ms. Bell: I was – it was the same.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Just one question: What's that extra \$200,000 for?

Chris DesRoche Director: Over the last couple of years, IRAC has had lower than average revenues in running deficits, essentially, so that was an increase in the operating fund to try to bring them back up to (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: What's bringing to them having deficits?

Mr. J. Brown: They have lower – to go back to how they derive their revenues, every IRAC application that goes through, you have to submit the fee that goes along with it. Every – basically they have – there are tariffs on most things that they do or hear or whatever.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: Those drive revenues. As an example, there were a number of large corporate acquisitions in recent years that would have –

Chris DesRoche Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – yeah, going back to 2015, 2016. Look around Charlottetown, all the apartment buildings that were bought out by, you know, whether it be national or international, or local or whatever companies. Every time one of those are bought by a non-resident corporation, you're going to have an IRAC –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: – fee, quote-on-quote, that's charged.

Mr. Fox: It's funny. I think I heard somebody say today how busy they actually are.

Mr. J. Brown: Well, and so I guess part of what I'm saying is –

Mr. Fox: That's fine.

Mr. J. Brown: – the different variations of busy. The fee is based on the purchase price. If you don't have big purchases going through –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: – like you could have and your seatmate there Kensington-Malpeque could tell you, you could have a million, you know, small purchases going through or 10 big ones going through, the money would be the same, but the work would be –

Mr. Fox: Understandable –

Mr. J. Brown: – a thousand times as much.

Mr. Fox: – yeah, carry the section.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

In the operating grant, how many full-time equivalent positions are there?

Chris DesRoche Director: It's around 17.

Mr. MacEwen: When you say: around 17, is that, like, someone kind of comes and goes for that seventeenth person?

Chris DesRoche Director: It was 17, the last I had checked in, but I know they're reorganizing their department right now, or commission, I should say.

Mr. MacEwen: Can we have a breakdown of those 17?

Chris DesRoche Director: I don't have a breakdown here.

Mr. MacEwen: Does the minister have a breakdown?

Mr. J. Brown: No, not that I'm aware of, no.

Mr. MacEwen: Could we get a listing of the position titles?

Mr. J. Brown: We can ask IRAC and bring it back?

Mr. MacEwen: Are you the minister of the department?

Mr. J. Brown: I'll reiterate what I just said –

Mr. MacEwen: No, no. I understand all that –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – I’m asking: If you request that, can they say no? I guess is the question.

Mr. J. Brown: Probably, yeah.

We give them a –

Mr. MacEwen: Why can they say no?

Mr. J. Brown: Okay, so I’m going to take this back. They are a separate entity. They are, for a good reason, a separate entity. They are an omnibus appeals body. They have a quasi-judicial status. We had some discussion about the hon. member’s intervener act there, earlier today. It’s very likely that, by times, government will actually appear before IRAC. They are required to maintain independence from government. Again, that’s the reason why they fall under my department.

They would take the position, and I’m just telling this rightly or wrongly –

Mr. MacEwen: No, it’s the same answer we got too with IID1. But, I guess my –

Mr. J. Brown: Well, I’m not saying –

Mr. MacEwen: How do we know there’s 17 positions there if they won’t even tell you the titles?

Mr. J. Brown: What I’m saying is, we can see what we can do, but we will be asking them. I guess what I’m saying to you is, other than the fact that we provide them with an operational grant to make the difference up between revenues and expenditures in any given year, they are separate from us. They report back to the Legislature. They may choose not to tell us exactly what their org-chart looks like right at this given moment because we’ll get that report back whenever they decide to send it along and have it filed every year.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.
Hon. members, we’re moving onto the next budget, justice and public safety. It’s on page 108 of your Budget book and permission to bring a stranger onto the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Thank you.

We’ll allow them to get set up and we’ll move on.

Good evening. Could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

George Mason Director: George Mason, Director of Finance.

Chair: Welcome, George Mason.

Do we have handouts or anything for the group?

Minister’s/Deputy Minister’s Office

“Appropriations provided for operation of the Office of the Minister and Deputy Minister.” Administration: 21,900. Equipment: 6,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 11,300. Salaries: 269,200. Travel and Training: 41,200. Grants: 400.

Total Minister’s/Deputy Minister’s Office: 350,000.

Total Minister’s/Deputy Minister’s Office: 350,000.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Corporate, Insurance and Financial Services

Corporate Services

“Appropriations provided for administration of various statutes related to Consumer Affairs, Corporations, Securities, Insurance and Real Estate Licensing.” Administration: 32,100. Equipment: 4,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 8,400. Professional Services: 138,000. Salaries: 929,600. Travel and Training: 23,000.

Total Corporate Services: 1,135,100.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm just looking at the increase in the professional services and salaries there of \$100,000 in each one. Does that relate to the new *Business Corporations Act*, or is that another (Indistinct)

George Mason Director: No. It's not directly treated to the act. It's actually related to securities brokers' regulation. So, when there's an incident, as there is occasionally with securities brokers ever having problems, we basically have to find money to cover the investigation or whatever. So, we're budgeting that here and part of that will be allowing us to draw on one of the other Atlantic Provinces who have more expertise than we do.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Last week we asked if it would be possible to have these handouts prior to time, and I realize that there may be reasons why it's not always possible. But, I see that most of these documents, the first few pages, are as of April the 1st, so I'm assuming it would have been possible to have had at least some of this information prior to tonight, two minutes ago.

Mr. J. Brown: As I'd indicated, hon. member, there were – this was a draft document as of last Thursday (Indistinct)

George Mason Director: Yeah, it's not the date they were printed. It's essentially March 31st –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No, I get that. But, they're relating to a point in time of April the 1st and I'm just wondering why it wasn't possible to have these last week, for example.

Mr. J. Brown: No. You're looking at – justice and public safety permanent positions staff list as of April 1st, 2018, so that's like – the information had to be pulled off and all of those schedules had to be prepared and provided after that as of a certain date.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: All I'm saying is, as I said to you last week, we were working on these up

until the end of last week, at least. I don't want to speak for George, but –
George Mason Director: We were still making some updates on Friday, for example, is what you're saying.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Friday of last week, George?

George Mason Director: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Sorry, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No, I was just going to say it would have been – I thank the minister's (Indistinct) for the handouts that we got for communities, land and environment. It's just so nice from this side of the floor to have that information so we can craft our questions properly. I hope next year we get them a bit earlier.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Vital Statistics

“Appropriations provided for the Office of Vital Statistics which is responsible for the collection, registration and maintenance of vital event information for the Province, including: births, deaths, marriages, adoptions, divorces, and changes of name.”
Administration: 17,600. Equipment: 400.
Materials, Supplies and Services: 6,400.
Professional Services: 20,000. Salaries: 269,900. Travel and Training: 3,400.

Total Vital Statistics: 317,700.

Total Corporate, Insurance and Financial Services: 1,452,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Legal and Policy Services

Justice Policy & Access and Privacy Services Office

“Appropriations provided for policy and legislation development, program support, Federal/Provincial negotiations, the Access and Privacy Services Office, and the Human Rights Commission.” Administration: 11,300. Equipment: 4,100. Materials, Supplies and Services: 7,800. Professional Services: 155,800. Salaries: 567,400. Travel and Training: 14,600. Grants: 505,000.

Total Justice & Policy and Access and Privacy Services Office: 1,266,000.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I’m just looking at the salaries line there and I know over the last few years some attempts have been made to fully staff APSO, the Access and Privacy Services Office, and I’m wondering if we’re there now.

Mr. J. Brown: We’re still working on it, yeah. We’re, I think, getting to the point, though, where basically we’re in a hiring process looking at adding staff there still.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Which section is to do with JP’s? Is that coming up in family and court services?

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I’m specifically wondering about JP’s to do with emergency protection orders. Would that be in –

Chair: It’s not in this section.

Mr. Fox: – family and court services? Or would that be in justice or –

Mr. J. Brown: Definitely not in this section.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: Probably court and sheriff services.

Mr. Fox: Okay, I’ll wait.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.
Legal Services and Legislative Counsel

“Appropriations provided for legal services to government departments, commissions and agencies, and for legislative drafting services.” Administration: 44,000. Equipment: 2,800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 60,600. Professional Services: 14,000. Salaries: 2,039,600. Travel and Training: 13,400. Grants: 6,900.

Total Legal Services and Legislative Counsel: 2,181,300.

Total Legal and Policy Services: 3,447,300.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Public Safety and Policing

Public Safety

“Appropriations provided for the Office of Public Safety, 9-1-1, Emergency Measures, and the Fire Marshall’s Office; including administration of the RCMP, 9-1-1 and public safety radio contracts.” Administration: 40,500. Equipment: 14,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 2,239,100. Professional Services: 17,758,000. Salaries: 1,652,500. Travel and Training: 73,100. Grants: 354,500.

Total Public Safety: 22,131,700.

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair. Actually, in total, I have five questions through this section.

Can you give us – first one – can you give us an update on the police review that’s presently going on?

Mr. J. Brown: Yes. We have had some very productive, I’m going to say meetings and discussions with different police services providers over the course of the last – oh, certainly since I’ve been involved, but I think probably since the last year or so.

I think headway is being made on a lot of the different – I think there were 17 recommendations in the report. There's also a kind of a related process going on in relation to the act, where we've been engaged with police services providers as well in relation to amendments to the act and we're bringing conservation officers in under the act in a different capacity. There's a bunch of stuff like that going on.

All to say we'll likely have a more fulsome update, but if you have specific questions on various things that are going on, I'd be happy to do my best to provide answers.

Mr. Fox: Under the Department of Justice and Public Safety organizational chart, which was provided to me in a written question, it shows John Flood, Police Services Transition Manager. What happened to Randy Robar?

Mr. J. Brown: He's there as well. He's under a different section of the budget. I'll say that much right now. George might have a (Indistinct) –

George Mason Director: He's a contractor, so he doesn't show up on the org chart.

Mr. Fox: So why would John Flood show up and Randy not? Because I was under the understanding that both Randy and John were hired to conduct the police review.

Mr. J. Brown: That's correct.

George Mason Director: One's a term employee and one's a contractor.

Mr. Fox: Okay. I'm hearing that the province has moved over to the new PICS two system, and that the only organization that's not on that PICS two system is Charlottetown City Police. I'm hearing that the PICS two system is not as good or doesn't have the capabilities that the PICS one did. So I'm wondering why we made a decision to go to a system that has less capabilities than what was being used before.

Mr. J. Brown: So I guess, hon. member, I'll start by saying I'm not sure that that would be something that I had heard previously, in terms of PICS one being better than PICS

two; but to kind of pull it back a little bit, there's been a regional transition in relation to this radio system. So that's really what started this.

It has to do with the kind of technology that's there to be able to use it. As you'd likely know from your policing career, radio communication is extremely important; and as we've unfortunately come to learn with incidents like happened in Moncton a couple of years back, and if you want to go on a more international scale we've had a number of different incidents of late, but 9-11 was a very kind of sad reminder to us all that communication is very important and when it breaks down it causes some very severe problems for our first responders.

The PICS two system was meant to kind of unify all of the different first responders, and that – the province, when we get into it, put a big investment into PICS two and right across the province in terms of EMS and fire services there was an investment in that. So rightly or wrongly, that was the technology that we moved to at the time.

Mr. Fox: So I can tell you that back a number of years ago when the PICS one system was in, and it was used in cooperation with the RCMP system, we could talk to every agency across the Island; and that was during 9-11. It worked 100%.

What I'm being told now is that when the Bell network went down last year, that the only system on the Island that was able to actually work was the Charlottetown system, and that all other agencies on the Island could not communicate with each other unless they were in a very close proximity to each car.

Mr. J. Brown: The Charlottetown system in my understanding is old-fashioned two-way radio.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. J. Brown: The way the PICS two system works is basically on a cell phone network, and the incident that occurred with Bell, was, I'm going to say an unforeseen incident that – it was a regional outage, really – that occurred. It was due to a technology issue. Technology being what it

is, I'm not sure that any system would be immune to that.

Mr. Fox: So if I can interrupt, so I was speaking to Bell representatives and they informed me that it was unfortunate circumstances where basically within hours two construction sites hit the cable, which severed the communications across the Island – or across the region, you're right.

So I sort of wonder why fire departments and policing agencies are raising concern that PICS two – yes, it's a more digital system than an analog system or a two-way radio system – but that PICS two is actually going to limit the capabilities of agencies on the Island to communicate in the event of an emergency.

I understand what you're saying about going to the PICS two; but if these agencies are having concerns, have you heard of these concerns, or has anybody brought them to your attention?

Mr. J. Brown: I'll put it to you this way: It's not that we kind of – it's obviously a concern when the network goes out like that. Maybe I'll just kind of tell you a few of the facts as I know them about that.

It was August 4, 2017 that Bell experienced a network outage that affected the entire Atlantic region, as well as parts of Ontario and Quebec. It lasted for six hours, and there are obvious ramifications of that as they relate to anything from cell phone usage to 9-1-1 capabilities in terms of locating and that sort of thing.

We did, the representatives of the public safety division, did meet with representatives from Bell to see what the issue was, and basically to ensure that it wouldn't happen again.

Mr. LaVie: It'll happen again.

Mr. J. Brown: As a result of that, it was resolved that three improvements to the IP network for the Maritime region would be made to reduce the possibility of that kind of an outage occurring again. They were to install a third loop to the two main fiber lines going to Montreal, which would add an additional level of redundancy, so a third level of redundancy versus the second one

that was there; to establish a fiber link between Yarmouth, Nova Scotia and New York to provide a third, completely diverse route to the deflector in Montreal. And to install an IP deflector in Halifax to help direct IP traffic for this region.

On October 4th, 2017, Bell confirmed that those improvements had been completed. That would mitigate any possibility of that kind of an outage occurring again in the future.

Mr. Fox: Okay. I'm getting – several communities have contacted me over the lack of patrols that they're seeing in actual rural PEI. It seems this has gotten worse and worse since funding to the RCMP's highway unit, highway enforcement unit, has been dropped.

I'm wondering, what are we doing – I think it was O'Leary and Alberton were in the newspaper, Bedeque has concerns, Borden-Kinkora has concerns. I know the Confederation Bridge has concerns. Kinkora has concerns. Down east they've expressed concerns to me.

What is being done to assist the RCMP, or help them put more man-hours on the road in patrol?

Mr. J. Brown: There's a multi-faceted answer to that question. I'll say a few things and George, likely, has some insight on this, as well.

Depending on what municipality you're talking about, some of them have services agreements. So, just to explain it – I know you know, but to explain it to everybody else, since you're asking the question. We have an agreement with the RCMP for Island-wide coverage, unless you're in a municipality where you've chosen to go with your own police force.

That would provide a certain, you know, base coverage across the Island. Then in addition to that, certain municipalities have elected, out of their own budgets, and depending on the situation, often in concert with an additional contribution from the federal government to add to the police services that they would get.

When they do that, they have the ability to have some direction over the mandate of that additional capacity. If they do not do that, the RCMP provides a policing service for all of Prince Edward Island, which could mean if there's an accident in Bedeque, they might be tied up there, three or four officers or whatever, for a day. They might not be back for a month. I'm not saying that's been the case or whatever; I'm just saying that's how things work.

Generally, I appreciate your question. You have asked me that question and I've gotten back to you and said: they don't track it. Certainly, we have a bit of an ongoing conversation about that; both between you and I and also with the RCMP. As it pertains to the municipalities that do have a service, you have asked me before and I suspect you probably will again, so I might as well just say it now.

When they contract for that additional service, depending on what it is, so say it was one person's time, they're not necessarily going to get an RCMP officer in the community 40-hours a week. Would it be the RCMP officer less their training, less their administrative time, less their court time, you know, I'm sure there's probably an average of what that might be, but – and then they have the ability to direct them, say, to ticket enforcement or whatever, as the thing that they would go to, kind of, as a base point in that community.

Mr. Fox: Can we have discussions with the RCMP to see if there's any way, maybe, it's how they're organized within the division, to increase more officers on the road?

Because that's what it's coming down to, right? That's as simple as that is.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Maybe, I'll attack it from a different perspective. We always look at it, in terms of the service that's being provided overall. I, personally, and I've only been minister of this department for whatever it's been, three months, I guess. I haven't heard a tremendous gap in the service that's offered by the RCMP or any of the municipal forces. In fact, I've heard the opposite.

We've been ranked, again, this year, the

number one justice system in Canada. We're – I think we might be number one, or very significantly up there, in terms, of all of our crime statistics and the seriousness of crimes that go on and all that kind of thing.

Now, that being said. I'll give you examples like Stratford, where the town of Stratford has asked RCMP to focus more on enforcement and RCMP has taken that up. I think, I just saw this in the local media, it's not something that I know from speaking with the RCMP, but they issued four times more tickets in whatever, the last quarter, I think, of their last fiscal year than they had in the same time last year.

Overall, I guess what I'm saying is, there's different priorities –

Mr. Fox: And, minister, I don't think it's about writing tickets. What I'm hearing is, in rural PEI, people want to see the patrol cars. That's what I'm hearing. They're not seeing the patrol cars. They want to see the car going down the street and they're not seeing it.

I know, myself, I never see a car on the highway. I see a car on highway 10 going to the bridge, but I never see a car between here, or Cornwall and Borden-Carleton. Or, if I go over – I never see a car on rural roads.

I'm sitting back, I'm saying, I can see what you're saying, mayor and community people. I don't see them either.

Mr. J. Brown: I should be going behind you, perhaps.

That being said, I guess what I'm saying to you is this –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: – we have different focuses as law enforcement becomes increasingly complex in today's world. Fortunately, more time is spent on things like outlaw motorcycle gangs, drug enforcement –

Mr. Fox: That's specialized. That's not patrol.

Chair: Hon. member, the minister is chatting.

Mr. J. Brown: It's all about the allocation of resources, basically. Again, I think, I want to be very clear. We think the RCMP, and frankly, all of our police agencies are doing an excellent job on Prince Edward Island right now –

Mr. LaVie: No, they're not.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: Certainly, the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira is saying, no, they're not. If –

Mr. LaVie: I'll explain in a minute.

Mr. J. Brown: – there are specific issues, then we're always open to hearing them and bringing them back to RCMP brass.

Mr. Fox: I have one more question.

Within public safety and policing we have, of course, a director of public safety and it goes down into gun control, which is Vivian Hayward.

I'm wondering, how many staff now are in that office, and what are they actually doing since that we don't have the long-gun registry and so on. And with that, I guess, when the long-gun registry was dismantled and done away with, were all the records held on PEI to do with the long-gun registry destroyed or were they kept?

Mr. J. Brown: You asked a question about the staff. There are three staff in that.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: We're talking about the chief firearms – the Firearms Office. Three staff, including the chief firearms officer.

I will be honest in saying, I don't know with a huge degree of certainty, the answer to your question or questions, in terms of what happened with the old information. My understanding from the reports that everybody would have heard, would be it was not maintained. In fact, the federal government, I think, ordered that it be destroyed, but I don't know that from my position here.

Mr. Fox: A follow-up.

George Mason Director: It's my understanding, as well.

Mr. Fox: I have to actually wonder, with three staff, what they're actually working on. I'm wondering if the minister can come back to me with what that section is actually doing now that the long-gun registry has been done away with.

Mr. J. Brown: We can, basically, speak to what they do in a broad sense. I'm not going to sit here and say nothing. They have the *Firearms Act* and the relevant provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada, which is federal legislation. As we know, there are private investigators in the security guards acts, as well.

We heard here this week – some hunters were in here talking about different things that they would do interacting with offices such as this. You would probably, over the course of your time as a police officer, have been involved with an office such as this where you have firearms prohibitions that would be filed in relation to certain individuals over the course of time through sentencing or whatever it might be.

Mr. Fox: Can we get a meeting?

Mr. J. Brown: Sorry?

Mr. Fox: Can we get a meeting; a briefing meeting, me and you and the deputy?

Mr. J. Brown: You and I will have a sidebar conversation.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

My question has to do with emergency measures. I've met with the North Rustico Lion's Club last week and their location, in case of disaster, people can go to that and I may be in the wrong section here, but basically they said they don't get any grants or compensation for being a place that's used in the case of emergency measures. They pay a large amount of, for example,

property taxes and that's money that they can't give out to the community. I was wondering – I noticed it's not in the grants here, any compensation for community facilities that act as locations for disasters and emergency measures; is that something you consider? Is that somewhere else in the budget? How does that work?

George Mason Director: It's definitely not in our budget to fund those. I think you're talking about emergency centres, which might be used once a year or a few times a year, or perhaps never in a particular year. So, we wouldn't be expecting to provide a grant to such a facility; if I'm understanding you correctly.

Mr. Trivers: The emergency measures that we're referring to here, then, don't include preparing for that sort of disaster?

George Mason Director: They definitely would include preparing it. It's essentially focused on the National Bank Tower facility over there, but they don't fund community centres across the province that might possibly be used for an emergency, on a regular basis.

Mr. J. Brown: I might just mention, Madam Chair, too, I'm going to go back to the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

One thing I didn't mention about the firearms section, they're 100% federal funded too, just so we are clear on that. I didn't want to go by without mentioning that. Sorry, hon. member.

Mr. Trivers: No problem.

But, your department is responsible for emergency measures and responsible for identifying these emergency centres but is not responsible for funding them in any way, shape or form?

Mr. J. Brown: To be clear, hon. member, as Minister of Justice and Public Safety, we do have certain provisions, depending on where we get an emergency, to make certain orders and if that's the case, there's different things that we do have the ability to do and one, as an example that falls under both of my departments, I can commandeer the school buses that we have within the province to cart people around. There's no extra funding

that goes to the Public Schools Branch for that. Really, we're looking at community-based organizations that overall we try and do as much as a community as we can to support them and then in the event of an emergency, we hope to call upon them. We have been fortunate to get cooperation in that, so far.

Mr. Trivers: Given the service that the community service organizations provide, including emergency centres, I think they deserve a break from the government and some help from the government in recognition of those services.

If you're not willing to entertain that in your department, I'll ask the question again, perhaps, when we've got finance on the floor to see if they would relax the property taxes or something like that.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Getting back to the PICS radio that the member was bringing up; I know any time you go through a phone line it's dangerous, anything can happen. Lightening can strike and put it out. Digging through the ground can strike and put it out.

Your department is in charge of fire departments too, right?

Mr. J. Brown: Generally speaking, yes, the fire marshal's office.

Mr. LaVie: The fire marshal's office? So, maybe this is a good question for the finance minister but I'll try your department first to see if I can get some money out of you.

Our radio system is a through a phone line.

Unidentified Voice: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: There are some departments on PEI that go directly to the message centre, right? They've got direct contact, but we have to go through a phone line with ours and our system has been down three times now because of the phone lines. Once the

phone lines go down, our system goes down and we don't have a backup.

Fire departments with that system now do a lot of service for your RCMP, for your Island EMS. We're the first ones called now to cover the government agencies so we should have a backup plan. Is there any way your department will help these departments with a backup plan on the radio system?

Mr. J. Brown: I think, hon. member, if I recall correctly, you had actually asked the question something like this last year.

Mr. LaVie: I've been asking this question for seven years.

Mr. J. Brown: And it's my – all I can say right now is that, having recognized that, I had followed up and –

Mr. LaVie: For us to get connected to the base in Charlottetown, it would probably be \$15,000 to \$20,000 to get connected, and then we'd have access all the time.

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not sure I follow exactly what you're saying. So –

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) system's not working.

Mr. LaVie: Our system goes through a phone line, right?

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: You have – if I call a certain number, it's just like calling the telephone. Actually, if you call that number by mistake you'll get our paging system. We get a lot of that, right? We get two or three calls like that every day. People call the wrong number; that goes through our paging system.

So, if that phone line is down to our hall, going into our hall, our system is down. We have no backup, no system.

Mr. J. Brown: You're talking about the system to call your volunteer members to go to a certain spot?

Mr. LaVie: No. If you call the message centre to dispatch the Souris fire department to a fire, we don't get the message if our phone line is down. If your phone line is

down in your house, you don't get a phone call. That's the same as us.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

But, I'm just wondering whose trying to call – like, obviously you have the PICS two-way radio that we've been talking about here.

Mr. LaVie: No, that's only for mutual aid.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: That's only for mutual aid systems like if we go out to Central Kings or Montague or something, we all – emergencies.

Mr. J. Brown: So, you're talking about your internal –

Mr. LaVie: Exactly.

Mr. J. Brown: – system like if you get a call and you have 20 guys that are on call on a Friday night or whatever who – how they get the call kind of thing?

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, it's through a paging system which comes from the phone line.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: So, if that phone line is down we don't get a call. It happened three times now.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: In emergency –

Mr. J. Brown: We can talk more. I can't guarantee you that we can get you anything, but we can certainly have a conversation and there are a few departments; you might want to talk to the hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development as well. I don't know whether he might have access.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Question; I'm just wondering, when he's talking about the RCMP and patrols on our highways and stuff. This was a concern of mine for a number of years

now, and I find it – this is talking to members of the RCMP – when I say the RCMP members aren't doing a job, it's that they can't do their job.

We've got them cut back so much – how many RCMP officers are out on stress leave?

George Mason Director: I believe it's approximately none, but there have been some that have recently come off stress leave.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, see what I find is we've got it cut back so much – we've got one RCMP officer from East Point to Bonshaw from 3:00 a.m. in the morning til 7:00 a.m. in the morning.

I know what everybody does. They monitor the calls, but who is to say that they're not needed? Us as first responders have to wait up to two hours for an RCMP officer at an accident scene.

Mr. MacEwen: Downloading responsibilities –

Mr. LaVie: What?

Mr. MacEwen: Downloading responsibilities to you.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: Anyway, I don't – I'm not going to get into numbers on particular shifts at particular times, hon. member –

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: – that would be a dangerous conversation to be having. Certainly, overall, again, we contract with the RCMP to provide policing services for Prince Edward Island and areas that are not covered by municipal police forces. We, overall, you know, through rankings that have nothing to do with ourselves or in other words; we're not doing them. Our justice system in consistently ranked as one of the top in Canada. I'm sure that's for all sorts of different reasons. Not least of which would be that we live in small communities. A lot of PEI is rural. We, for the most part, know each other and we respect each other and that, you know –

Mr. LaVie: But, we only –
Mr. J. Brown: – (Indistinct) piece to that, too.

Mr. LaVie: - got one officer in a car now attending to a scene. Is that safe?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. J. Brown: Again, I'm not going to get into sitting here trying to tell you what's safe or not safe, in terms of the RCMP's provision of services. They have a very significant level of expertise to determine that. I suspect that they do that in an expert way. This is a contracted service, just like anything else is, and ostensibly, we contract with the RCMP to provide that policing across the province. They tell us what they think that they need –

Mr. LaVie: What do you call that (Indistinct) what do you them –

Mr. J. Brown: – and we take the terms.

Mr. LaVie: – those cars that stop and do checkpoints?

Mr. Fox: Just general patrol.

Mr. LaVie: Does RCMP still do check stops on the sides of the highways, patrol stops?

Mr. J. Brown: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: Do you have any data of that?

Mr. J. Brown: Not right here, certainly.

Mr. LaVie: Can you get that data?

Mr. J. Brown: You'd have to ask the RCMP for it.

Mr. LaVie: Can you get it from the RCMP?

Mr. J. Brown: I will see what I can do.

Mr. LaVie: How many RCMP officers were on PEI 10 years ago?

Mr. J. Brown: That, I could not answer off the top of my head, for sure.

George Mason Director: It would be pretty close to the same number we have now, plus the exception of the traffic (Indistinct)
Mr. LaVie: I missed that answer.

George Mason Director: I'll put it this way, in the four years, I've been in this position, it has not gone down; it's, in fact, gone up a little.

Mr. LaVie: That was my next question. How long are you in your position? Four years. I've been asking these questions seven years, and you're only here four.

Chair: Well, you've been around a lot longer than that.

George Mason Director: (Indistinct) this position.

Mr. LaVie: What I'm trying to get at, is, and RCMP talked to us, us MLAs, and us as first responders and the pressure is going on first responders, I'll guarantee it.

Do I still have the floor?

Chair: Yeah, you do.

Mr. LaVie: When we used to be at an accident scene, a fire scene, wherever, whatever it may be, you had two or three RCMP cars, probably four to six RCMP officers and now it's taking us two hours. This is not exaggerated; it's up to two hours, at an accident scene, in the middle of a road waiting for an RCMP. It's not his fault. He could be in Bonshaw with a domestic dispute.

I waited one evening for an RCMP officer, all by myself. I sent the boys home because I felt so bad for them. I waited, in the driveway, until he showed up. He had three cases of domestic dispute that evening, which was more important than a car burning in somebody's driveway that was going to burn a building down and two people running from the scene.

What I'm getting at is, we talk about balanced budgets and we talk about all the money but, and we talk, the most priorities in the province is our roads, our schools, our hospitals. I'm telling you, our schools are suffering. Our hospitals are suffering. Our roads are suffering. Our RCMP is suffering

and those are the most important things. And that's the things we cut first. That's what we're cutting, is our hospitals. I see it in my own district. Our schools, I see it in my own district; you cut the teachers. Now, the RCMP officers, we're cutting.

Don't be shaking you head over there because that's what we're doing.

Where is the report that was started with the RCMP?

Mr. J. Brown: The report?

Mr. LaVie: Is that what you'd call it, Jamie, a report?

Mr. Fox: Yeah, the RCMP should report every year.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: Annual report.

Mr. LaVie: Do you get that annual report, every year?

Mr. J. Brown: In –

Mr. LaVie: Look at the eyebrows over here.

Mr. J. Brown: – (Indistinct) RCMP yeah.

Mr. LaVie: Look at the looks.

Mr. J. Brown: So, anyway, Madam Chair, if I will, I take exception to some of what you're saying there. There are no cuts going on in this department. In fact, if you look at the overall budgets, I mean even if you wanted to look since last year, we're up to a better part of \$1 million, you know?

Mr. LaVie: You're here four years, when was the last check –

Chair: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair –

Chair: Hon. member, he's been with this department for four years, but he's been a longstanding employee of the Province of Prince Edward Island for 26 years.

Mr. LaVie: Okay. But he's been with this department for four years.

Chair: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: When was the last check point in eastern Kings for speeding?

Mr. J. Brown: I'll just be clear in saying, I, as the minister, and George as the person in charge of the finances for our department, don't typically get into RCMP operations. Nor, I should say, hon. member, would it be appropriate for us to get into RCMP operations. You know, in terms of when and where there's going to be check stops, for obvious reasons –

Mr. LaVie: I'm not –

Mr. J. Brown: – and the hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, can have that discussion with you.

Mr. LaVie: I'm not asking to tell them when to have check stops, I'm asking when was the last one? Do we have records?

Mr. J. Brown: I guess, what I'm saying to you is, that just the discussion about the frequency of check stops or the, you know, how many officers are on where at what point in time can be sensitive information if you're in policing.

Mr. LaVie: No. Not – when was the last one. When was the last check stop? We used to have check stops, frequently, weekends.

Mr. J. Brown: As I'm saying to you, I don't have that information right here with me today. I will go back and endeavour to get it from the RCMP. I don't have it here, today.

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Chair: Thank you –

Mr. LaVie: Not going to make any headway.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, under your handouts, the public safety and policing section, you have a business continuity consulting contract to

McFeely Consultant. What's the business continuity consulting contract for?

George Mason Director: Every department in government has a business continuity plan or is supposed to have a business continuity plan. Mr. McFeely is, essentially, the coordinator of those plans, and, in some cases, the author of the plans for various departments. He also runs workshops and things of that sort.

Mr. MacEwen: This contract wasn't just for this one section, it was for all of government?

George Mason Director: Correct.

Mr. MacEwen: Who owns – who is McFeely Consultant?

George Mason Director: It's Brian McFeely. He's an individual and he's being doing that for several years now.

Mr. MacEwen: This is, kind of, an annual thing?

George Mason Director: I would consider him like a half-time or part-time employee, but he's under a contract instead.

Mr. MacEwen: For how many years?

George Mason Director: I can only say a few. He was, previously, an employee of the department –

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

George Mason Director: – and I don't know when that changed.

Mr. MacEwen: Could you tell me how many years? When you say a few is it like two years, is it like five –

George Mason Director: I'd have to look up the records. I don't know when.

Mr. J. Brown: It's more than both of those. I asked that question. My recollection is seven years, but I'm not positive of that.

Mr. MacEwen: Doing business continuity consulting for seven years with government?

Mr. J. Brown: He's been a contracted employee for that period of time. I believe, doing the work up to – there was a major plan done, I think, for all departments –
George Mason Director: It kind of came together last year –

Mr. MacEwen: I'm just looking for this specific business continuity consulting, just for how many years. If you could just bring that back.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacEwen: And the date it started. This particular one.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Just a quick statement on what the Member from Souris-Elmira said. I'm hearing the same thing from all rural fire departments. Basically, there's a big discrepancy in their capabilities for communications with other departments across the Island, especially in rural PEI.

Victoria talks about it. Crapaud is on me right now for some kind of funding or some kind of help with a radio communications system. All of these departments are saying the same thing, and I'm going to say it, it seems like there's the Cadillac in Charlottetown or Summerside, but when you get out in rural PEI in the fire departments, the fire chiefs, they are not happy because they can't communicate and they're doing the exact same thing he said; they're losing communications all the time.

That's the way it is.

Mr. J. Brown: Again, I think when we're talking about this – and I'm happy to have a sideline conversation with the both of you if you want to about it, or whoever wants to talk about it. My understanding from the hon. Member from Souris-Elmira is that he's talking about a different thing than what you're talking about.

You're talking about –

Mr. Fox: He's talking pagers – some of them are pagers (Indistinct) exact same thing.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, but you seem, to me, to be talking about communication between one fire department and another fire department.

Mr. Fox: It's both. It's the pager system and it's also the ability to talk to a sister department when they need mutual aid.

Mr. J. Brown: Again, sister department is PICS two. Paging people is not.

Mr. LaVie: No. PICS is out of it. That's just for emergencies only.

Mr. Fox: We can have a sidebar after (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of questions: Is your department planning on shutting down any RCMP detachments over Prince Edward Island?

Mr. J. Brown: No.

Mr. LaVie: No?

Mr. J. Brown: Other than to say that the RCMP in Charlottetown is talking about the possibility of building a new detachment.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, but you're not planning on shutting down any RCMP detachments in the next future?

George Mason Director: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. J. Brown: Not that I'm aware of, and George says the same.

Mr. LaVie: Good.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Investigation and Enforcement

“Appropriations provided to carry out investigations and enforcement pursuant to

environmental and wildlife legislation including the *Environmental Protection Act*, *Unlawful Property Act*, *Pesticide Control Act*, *Wildlife Conservation Act*, *Fisheries Act* and *Migratory Bird Convention Act (Canada)*.” Administration: 19,800. Equipment: 22,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 24,700. Professional Services: 9,500. Salaries: 509,300. Travel and Training: 76,700.

Total Investigation and Enforcement: 662,500.

Hon. members, I don’t mind if you take your conversations outside.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

As I understand it, minister, this section specifically deals with the conservation officers. With that, are the conservation officers, which I understand it and I would believe, that they’re no different than any, basically, law enforcement agency in how they should act or govern themselves?

Mr. J. Brown: Now is probably not the best time to ask me that question. They, up until – well, right now, if you went to our act, they would be considered differently. We’re in the process of bringing them under the act.

Mr. Fox: That’s right.

So, with that, do the RCMP or Charlottetown City Police send you any information on who was charged? You as the minister or your deputy, do any of the RCMP send you emails telling you that whatever person was charged under whatever section at whatever time, and whatever date?

Mr. J. Brown: Again, I’ve been here for a few months. The only thing that I can say that I’ve been made aware of along those lines would be the individual that was considered to be a dangerous offender that was being released into the community. I would think it would be irregular for us to be made aware of – when I say us, I mean – as you would be aware, hon. member, I’m not sure everybody would be – generally we

are the (Indistinct) of justice services for the province.

A lot of that, really, is attributed to different Crown agencies and most of them would have a fairly large level of independence from myself. So, the Crown Attorney’s Office, as a prime example, they would be made aware of anybody who would be charged. We would be aware, probably, if there was a conservation offence that was being prosecuted, depending on the circumstances, I guess I might say. In my time, I have not been made aware of any.

I think I’m accurate in saying that. I don’t know if I would personally be made aware, but just depending on what it is and whether or not it would be the Crown Attorney’s Office or somebody else that might need to be engaged to prosecute the offence.

Mr. Fox: So, whether we’re talking the RCMP, Charlottetown City Police Department or the Kensington Police Department, conservation officers or Summerside PD; if they’re laying charges to an individual or a corporation, the only person they should be having direct conversations with would be the Crown Attorney’s Office.

The Crown Attorney’s Office should only be disclosing any information they have to the accused upon a request for disclosure. Would you agree?

Mr. J. Brown: No, actually.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: I’ll just give you a few examples of what I mean by that.

When, say, an environmental offence occurs the conservation officers do the investigation and they would work with communities, land and environment on that going forward. So there’s a piece there. If, say, there was a domestic situation that occurred, Victim Services would usually get a referral out of that.

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Mr. J. Brown: Those are two quick ones off the top of my head.

Mr. Fox: Yes, I understand where you're going and I think you understand where I'm going.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: I want to know – no, you are. You're – basically the same thing.

If there was a matter under investigation that had to go to Victim Services or it had to go to an environment officer within communities, land and environment, I can see that transaction going forward.

I'd like to know why that we have the chief conservation officer laying charges reporting to deputy minister, going into the Premier's office, into the then minister of agriculture and fisheries, the chief of staff of the government, the deputy minister of agriculture and fisheries, and Mr. Paul Ledwell.

There's the email. So, I'm wondering why that as soon as a charge was laid, that information went through all of government to let them know the deed has been done.

Can you explain that, minister?

Mr. J. Brown: I can't speak to your question particularly not having the particulars of it, hon. member. If you want to table that or whatever you want to do, I'd be happy to look into it.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: (Indistinct) copies.

I guess the question is, minister, I have to ask the question: How much – we're talking about conservation officers and police officers, are supposed to be independent and how is – is there being direction from the chief of staff or Paul Ledwell, or the Premier's Office into law enforcement agencies to tell them when to lay charges and what's – I don't understand this.

I would never, as a chief of police, lay a charge and go to the mayor in council or the Attorney General and let him know what's going on. I can remember being in meetings when I first arrived and they'd say: Go over what charges have been laid. I'll tell you how many, but I'm not going to tell you that

X and Y was charged for an offense. Those individuals have the right to privacy and the same rights as anybody else until they're proven guilty in court.

For emails to be going up from the chief conservation officer up into the deputy and getting passed over to other people is not right. Can you explain that, minister?

Mr. J. Brown: As I said, hon. member, I don't have any knowledge in relation to what you're talking about and I'd be happy to look into it and get back to you.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

When these copies come in, we'll distribute them.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Provincial Coroner Services

“Appropriations provided for coroner services throughout the Province.”
Administration: 4,800. Equipment: Nil.
Materials, Supplies and Services: 3,500.
Professional Services: 563,000. Travel and Training: 8,700.

Total Provincial Coroner Services: 580,000.

Total Public Safety and Policing:
23,374,200.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Mr. Henderson: Question.

Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Just to reiterate, I've had a number of complaints coming from my district regarding issues around coroner services. The wait times to get a person taken to the, I guess, wherever they take the bodies. Whether it's the coroner's office, or whether they take them to the funeral home.

Anyway, can you give me; I'm told there have been some significant changes that have been made. Can you, maybe, give me an update on that and how it seems to be going?

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

As you are well aware and MLAs, in particular, for West Prince, we've been in ongoing and open discussions about this since I've become minister. I think the Premier was actively engaged before that.

It came to light as a result of a few unfortunate incidents that resulted in deaths, in West Prince, where individuals were, where deceased persons were, kind of, in their location for a period of time. That that period of time was, frankly, too long.

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: So the process, hon. member, as you are aware, but I'll explain it for everybody; is that if a person dies outside of the hospital or care somewhere, there's a process that needs to be gone through to determine whether or not a coroner's investigation needs to be done.

Typically, what would happen there would be the first responders would come. They would often pronounce the person dead at the scene. Then, if they were dead, and they didn't remove them; so in other words, if they didn't have them in the ambulance, they were dead there when they arrived. Typically, they would stay there and the police would conduct whatever investigation they would need to conduct. That might or might not include a traffic analysis. Then, they would call the coroner to see if they need to or wish to conduct an investigation. Of course, during this time, time is elapsing, the coroner might or might not go to the scene, depending.

Then, after that's done, the coroner was calling to have the remains collected. You can see, it took me probably four minutes to explain –

Mr. Henderson: Tell a story.

Mr. J. Brown: – that. You can imagine if you had to do the work in between –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: – that, that would take a while.

In any event, we've recognized that we're making efforts to see what we can do to abridge that time. The time is never going to be zero. It's always going to be travel time.

The biggest hang up in it, right now, is that – the sequencing and also, you know, having a coroner that can make that determination in concert with whomever may be at the scene and the time it takes to do that.

We are looking at doing that, as you would be aware, that's going to require some amendments, likely to the *Coroners Act*. We're actively in a process to figure out how best we can make that happen.

Presuming that some of the things we're looking at would be having a field investigator, or I want to hesitate to use that because that's not a term that's there now, but somebody that can be on the ground that can, you know, look it, you don't need to send the actual coroner out here to do a full investigation.

Mr. Henderson: I think that that where my – my issue is, is you'd assume with today's technology where you can take pictures on cellphones and stuff like that somebody could, you know, the RCMP officers, usually, or the first responders can, sort of, pass this back to a coroner fairly quickly. Then, maybe, if it's a bit unsure, you could designate an RN or somebody should be able to figure – pronounce the person dead or not dead, and some of those types of things.

Generally, what I'm saying is, is there were problems before. We've seemed to have made some changes. It hasn't seemed to have made any difference. In fact, I get complaints that it's worse in western PEI.

I would encourage you to have a conversation with, I know, the funeral directors in the area. I have Ferguson Funeral Homes in my riding. They've always been saying they're ready to pick the body up. It's just a case of they need somebody to give them the go ahead to do it. They're on the scene.

I know there was a situation where an individual in a tractor had passed away, and they were there ready to take the body, but

they had to have the coroner issue. That took all of that delay.

There was another recent one where, once again, there was a process where, I think, somebody from Summerside was supposed to come up from the fire department, then the RCMP had to override the protocol and go and say, take the body.

I'm just saying, I think there needs to be some rethinking of it and re-looking at it. If there's anything you could do, I would be happy to set-up any meetings or anything to do to try to come to a solution. That's, once again, reasonably costed, and just meets the demands of the requirements. I blame it, just, there's not enough coroners. Are there ways you can designate a coroner below the regular coroners, I don't know if there are professionals that can do that.

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

As you know, we have been working with yourself and the other MLAs from the area. And folks from my office have been in contact with the funeral directors in West Prince or Prince County.

Anyway, we are working towards a solution. I know it's taking some time. Please, bear with us, it's not something that we want to do halfway and have to redo again. We're trying to get –

Mr. Henderson: Yeah, okay.

Mr. J. Brown: – input and make sure whatever the solution is works.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

While, you're on this topic. How many coroners do we have?

Mr. J. Brown: There are three county coroners and then they have like deputy coroners.

Mr. LaVie: Just probably a little info for the minister. When we get on the scene and if we have a body, it's normally the Island

EMS call the coroner and he makes the call over the phone.

I'm on the department now for 36 years. Chief, probably, for 16, 17 years. I might have seen the coroner once. I might have seen him once in the last 15 years. But what they do, they usually make the call over the phone.

There might be some information from him, with –

Mr. J. Brown: We are aware of that, hon. member. I think the situation that – situations that the hon. members were referring to in the western part of the province were different situations where, again, one involved a tractor that rolled over and we're not (Indistinct) sure why –

Mr. LaVie: Been there.

Mr. J. Brown: – anyway, I think it's fair to say that the coroners were contacted in those situations –

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: – it's just a factor of them trying to figure out whether they need to go or whether they went or not.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

And in another situation, we had tractors over the banks and drowning and fires and we had it all.

Even my own father died in his kitchen. They made the call over the phone with the coroner at their side. We never see a coroner. I'm not graveling.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. LaVie: It's just some information for the member that – just a phone call, yeah, with the technology today, yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: I get what you're saying. Certainly, we're looking at that. We're working –

Mr. LaVie: You know, that's –

Mr. J. Brown: – there are a number of different players involved in this, but yes,

we are trying to coordinate, obviously, the best service that we can offer here because it deals, in particular, with very sensitive situations, as you would be well aware.

If you only got three coroners for across Prince Edward Island and there's a lot of deaths across Prince Edward Island and they could be all at the same time – a coroner can't be everywhere at once. But yeah, we have a great relationship with Island EMS and the coroner and they do their coroner work for us by far. It's good.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Legal Aid

“Appropriations provided for criminal and family legal services to eligible persons.” Administration: 40,400. Equipment: 1,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 8,400. Professional Services: 238,500. Salaries: 1,577,600. Travel and Training: 15,200.

Total Legal Aid: 1,881,600.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Crown Attorneys

“Appropriations provided for the Crown Attorneys office to represent the Attorney General in all aspects of prosecutorial function.” Administration: 30,600. Equipment: 700. Materials, Supplies and Services: 30,800. Professional Services: 20,000. Salaries: 1,376,600. Travel and Training: 18,500.

Total Crown Attorneys: 1,477,200.

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: Total Crown Attorneys: 1,477,200.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

So it's my understanding a number of years ago there used to be a position within the Crown Attorney's office that specifically dealt with sexual assaults and them type of

cases. It's my understanding that they now, that position has been cut or no longer exists. I'm wondering why that is.

Mr. J. Brown: Hon. member, you're going to be a pretty happy camper because in my time there's never been such a position, I will say, that I'm aware of anyway –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: – but we are instituting one in the very near future.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Mr. J. Brown: So yes, (Indistinct) –

Mr. Fox: So with that, it's my understanding that the head prosecutor, and Aaron Campbell, Gordon Garrison, the chiefs of police and the new commanding officer of the RCMP actually have a group going to deal with some of the stuff we've been hearing in the media lately by an individual that's become very abreast of sexual assaults and reporting rates across the Island. Can you update the House on how that group is functioning or what their mandate is or –

Mr. J. Brown: I'm not totally sure I follow what – there was a lot of references to people that (Indistinct) –

Mr. Fox: So, there's been a group. So we have a lady that's brought a lot of information before the media in regards to sexual assaults and victims of sexual violence and so on.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: With that, it's my understanding that a group was put together within the department of justice. That group has a lady on it from victim services, I believe. Cindy Wedge sits on it; Aaron Campbell, Gordon Garrison, Chief Smith, Chief Sutherland, Chief Poirier, and it's either the CrOps Officer or the commanding officer of the RCMP. Are you aware of that group?

Mr. J. Brown: I think there are a few groups that would be constituted in a roughly similar manner, but you're probably talking about the bridge. I'm not exactly sure.

Mr. Fox: Could be the bridge.

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: So can you update the House or tell us how that group is functioning or what their mandate is or –

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah. Well, generally, there are – so again, there are a number of different groups that are functioning within the justice department, but in particular there's an effort to kind of get together to share information productively and to look at different reporting standards in terms of the – if we're talking sexual assaults, there's an effort to get together and that group has met a few times, in particular, since the start of this year, to talk about reporting standards, to talk about different kind of training that might be able to be taken. I think actually they did take some training.

George Mason Director: (Indistinct) November of last year (Indistinct) timing (Indistinct) –

Mr. J. Brown: Yeah, I think November of last year they took – and I can't even tell you who it was – but there was a group that took some training last year. Effectively, this is obviously an issue and it's something that we're sensitive to and something that we're looking to deal with appropriately, and so we're making investments that we feel will move this kind of file forward.

I don't like calling it a file, but overall, we recognize if we need to do better in relation to sexual assaults and how we see them, how we deal with them, how we interact with victims. There are multiple departments that are involved in that, multiple divisions within our department. It's to try and effectively figure out ways that we can provide a better service.

Mr. Fox: So any idea, minister, when this new position could be up and running with a special prosecutor to deal with this type of stuff?

Mr. J. Brown: In the very near future, I'll say. Maybe I'll leave it at that. We could have an update before we leave here, but I'm not going to guarantee that.

Mr. LaVie: Don't want to make your announcement.

Mr. J. Brown: We need to get the budget passed first, is the first thing we need to do.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Community and Correctional Services

Division Management

“Appropriations provided for the Division's administrative functions.” Administration: 25,500. Equipment: 7,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 5,800. Professional Services: 5,000. Salaries: 905,500. Travel and Training: 60,800.

Total Division Management: 1,010,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Adult Correctional Centres

“Appropriations provided for operation of the Provincial Correctional Centre and the Prince County Correctional Centre.” Administration: 50,400. Equipment: 60,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 776,600. Professional Services: 100,400. Salaries: 7,855,500. Travel and Training: 71,700.

Total Adult Correctional Centres: 8,914,800.

Mr. Fox: Question.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

I believe it was back in the capital budget that we spoke about the new wing that was being put on in Sleepy Hollow. What's the status on that?

George Mason Director: This year it's in the planning stage, and the intent would be to begin construction next fiscal year.

Mr. Fox: So with that, I brought up – and it was a couple of instances where Charlottetown City Police and the RCMP

have taken subjects or prisoners to the back door of Sleepy Hollow and where the prisoners or the accused have escaped. The back area is non-secure, and I rose that saying that there needs to be a locked compound in there or a place where the officers can drive in securely and release prisoners and transfer them from the car into the building. Has there been any work done on that?

Mr. J. Brown: That is the plan, hon. member, yeah. I can't confirm what the design will look like here today, but that's definitely a consideration that we're looking at.

Mr. Fox: So can we assure our sheriffs and our police department members that this will be built within this year, in the near future, to help protect them? It also helps protect the public, and it also helps the individual being transferred.

Mr. J. Brown: I definitely hear what you're saying. A few things that I do want to be very careful to say –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. J. Brown: Firstly, this construction won't be done this year. In fact, I don't even think it'll be started this year.

George Mason Director: No.

Mr. J. Brown: We're in the initial planning phases. This is something that we're looking at doing. Obviously the whole – you start into this process and it's not an overnight kind of thing. You start out with a planning process. You got a space plan from our good friends at TIE, and they're great to help us with that.

Then after you get the space plan, you need to get an architect. After the architect goes through and gets drawings together you need to send it out to tender, and if the whole thing works out then you have a building, usually a couple of years later.

Mr. Roach: Call the hour.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Hon. members, the hour has been called.

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 under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Friday, April 20th, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

See you all here early in the morning.

The House adjourned until Friday, April 20th, at 10:00 a.m.