

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.

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome, hon. members here on the floor, and visitors in the gallery; those viewing from home or via the Internet.

First, to say that our thoughts are with everyone, and especially the victims affected by the terrible events at Yonge and Finch, yesterday. Our thoughts and support and real concern go out to the people of Toronto and Ontario, and, indeed, recognize that this is a terrible event for all of our country.

In our gallery, today, we have the representatives on behalf of the organ, tissue donation, and this being organ tissue donation week, we're wearing our green ribbons for the week. Among those here as representatives are Carleigh Macleod, who is a former Page in this Legislature, and Angela Carpenter; welcome them and other representatives, Carleigh's family.

Also, to welcome representatives of the Greater Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce, Jennifer Evans, incoming president, Penny Walsh McGuire, Executive Director, and Blair Corkum. I recognize there are many others in the gallery today, who will be likely recognized by others.

This is the day for the 2018 Women in Business Symposium, which has become a great annual event for Island women in business to develop and grow and build relationships, personally and professionally. It's taking place next door at the Confederation Centre.

The reminder, in case anyone could possibly miss it, that this is the final week for Burger Love and a chance to promote the food, the great products of our province and, of course, all of the friendship and culture that comes with that event. We've heard from people, well beyond Prince Edward Island, who have their eye on this and seem to think it has become a real, sort of, a regional,

cultural event that a lot of people come to the Island for.

And to recognize that our Charlottetown Islanders are getting set to host game three of their series in the Quebec major junior best of seven against the Armada. That will be an opportunity for all of us to cheer on the Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It's certainly a pleasure to rise today. I just look around and I see the great turnout that we have in the gallery today.

A couple of individuals that I'd like to send a special hello out to would be Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clarke; it's great to see you here. As well as, the representatives from the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce, Jennifer Evans, Penny Walsh McGuire, and, of course, Blair Corkum.

Another good friend of mine I see sitting in the back row there, Maria Burge. Sitting directly behind us we have the new leader of the NDP party of PEI, Mr. Joe Byrne, as well as his handler Campbell Webster.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't extend severe condolences on behalf of our caucus with regards to the tremendous tragedy that took place in Toronto, yesterday. I know that the Premier spoke about it briefly there, as well. I know that all Islanders join in unison to send our sympathy and best wishes for a speedy recovery for those that were injured, but, more importantly to let the families of those that perished in this terrible incident know that our hearts, thoughts and prayers are with everyone.

Of course, today marks the start of the National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. It is great to have representatives here in the gallery today, as well to join us. I wear this pin proudly today. I encourage all Islanders to have this discussion with your family members. It's one thing to check it off on your drivers licence, but if you don't actually have that discussion and make your intention known

then, unfortunately, it might not come – your wishes might not come to fruition.

I'd just like to add, as well, just a couple of activities that have happened over the last few days, particularly, on the weekend that I had the immense pleasure to partake in. On Sunday, the Earth Day activities in Stratford over at the Cotton centre. It was phenomenal. We had a huge turnout. There were a lot of activities that were put on, especially for the young people. I know that it was enjoyed by many. It was a very good educational day, as well.

Also on Sunday afternoon, I had the immense pleasure to attend an event – a 25th anniversary over at the Murphy Community Centre and that was for the birthright association, the Charlottetown branch. It was great to see such a great turnout and to celebrate the terrific work that they do.

Just one last thing, I want to talk about a great young man that attended Stratford yesterday. Of course, the Easter Seals Ambassador for 2018, Brayden White, came to Glen Stewart Primary and Stratford Elementary and he was greeted with a resounding applause. The Minister of Family and Human Services was there as well. It was great to see you in my district. This young man has done such a phenomenal job in his role as ambassador this year and I'd just like to congratulate Brayden for that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, of course, would like to welcome everybody back for another week in the Legislature and particularly those that join us in the gallery today. I look around at a sea of good friends and people in the community doing a lot of wonderful work from – I won't start because then I won't stop.

I also want to make note today that there was the fifth annual Women in Business Symposium put on by the PEI Business Women's Association and there were 140

women there – entrepreneurs, community leaders – in the Confederation Centre, I believe the symposium is happening as we speak, so I wish them a great day and congratulate them.

I also want to use this as an opportunity to pass on my condolences to everybody in Toronto affected by that awful tragedy. I think we've all been moved by the horrific scenes, moved by the extraordinary restraint of the police officers involved in the arrest, moved by the kindness of strangers and, for myself, pondered once again – I should say prompted to ponder once again the randomness of life and death and our thoughts, of course, are with the families and the victims and all of those who were involved in that. For it to happen, particularly in a city like Toronto, a place where we look – it's a success story when it comes to the integration of different cultures. It's the most multicultural city in Canada and it's just a tragedy that that would happen and all our thoughts are with the people of Toronto today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, would like to welcome everybody here today: Joe Byrne and Webster Campbell – it's good to see them here. Sarah Stewart-Clark and Marie Burge and also, I won't name everybody, but the chamber of commerce here. It's welcome – the great work that you do in our community.

I'd also like to thank everybody in organ and tissue donation. It's a wonderful gift that we have to give and that young fellow that gave all his organs – with that hockey team that got in that tragic accident a couple of weeks ago now, I guess – pretty near ten days.

I'd also like to express my concern for Toronto and how great a city that is. I've worked with the Toronto police force for five years in that city. It was a wonderful city. It was only breaking a million people at the time and now it's got many millions and it's growing up substantially. These things never happened. We probably had one police fatality a year back in the late 1960s

and now our society seems to be changing to the point that people are using different weapons to make such tragedies. I wish everybody well and I hope everything gets cleared up in Toronto and that life can return to a little bit of normalcy and I wish all the families and members of those injured – prayers for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say hello to Donna MacLeod and her daughter Carleigh – great members of my riding up there in Kinkora on 225. I'd also like to say hello to Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark. Thank you for attending.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like say welcome as well today to Carleigh and Donna MacLeod as well, Angela Carpenter. I'll be recognizing them a little further later on during the proceedings today.

As well, hello to Sarah Stewart-Clark who's with us in the gallery today; Sarah, a great mental health advocate for PEI, and from my neck of the woods. Her mom and dad live around the corner from me so it's great to have her in today.

Also, some other people that were recognized a little bit earlier as well; here today with the Chamber of Commerce, Penny Walsh McGuire and Jennifer Evans. They are both residents of my district and I hope they leave here today happy with their representative in the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to rise today and welcome everyone to the gallery as well, definitely Carleigh MacLeod and Dr. Stewart Clark, good to see you, and everybody who is here today.

I also wanted to thank the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for on Friday mentioning the death of Allan Ling, and I wanted to send my condolences out to his immediate family and his extended family, especially his wife, Jan, and his brother, Melvin, and his wife, Debbie. He was, of course, a great advocate for agriculture on the Island, a great farmer, but also just a great community person. We had several political conversations and he always had good advice to give me. He will be much missed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to welcome everyone here in the gallery and everyone watching at home. I wish I would have stood up last week to make this greeting, but I'd like to say that Isabel MacDonald, who was a great member of our community passed away and her funeral was yesterday. She was a first cousin of my father's, but she was a great advocate for anything of her Scottish heritage, including the Belfast pipe band. She watched the House every day. She loved to see the goings on and she always had a great comment about that; 94-years old. If she missed it on Eastlink she watched it on her iPad.

She'll be greatly missed in our community and for her support of the Scottish heritage. She's the one who told me the story about the original funding for the Belfast pipe band came from a grant from Rothmans cigarettes, and imagine that happening nowadays. I think it was \$5,000, but she was a wealth of knowledge and she'll be greatly missed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Amish Community

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

I rise in the House today to recognize a group of folks who are making a tremendous impact on our Island.

Amish villages in both Dundas and Summerville show entrepreneurship in its truest form by producing and selling their own products, such as baked goods and agriculture commodities, and to do so with no electricity.

There are over 200 members in the communities combined and are continually growing, both in population and production. These families hail from Norwich and Millbank in Ontario and displayed interest in moving to PEI almost four years ago.

Typically, it takes about five years for an Amish village to get up and running but both Dundas and Summerville have exceeded expectations and are running at an impressive rate. Between the two communities, there are close to 30 families. These villages are flourishing beyond any comparison and allow the communities around it to boom economically as well.

Many residents in Eastern PEI have expressed their gratitude for their innovative way of life, and believe that when the Amish businesses are doing well, all businesses are doing well.

Although the Amish may live a different style of life than we do, they certainly contribute more than their share to our province and our economy. I am optimistic for their future on PEI and wish them all the best.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Aspin Kemp & Associates

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I am going to speak about Aspin Kemp & Associates. They have offices in Stratford, Montague and Pooles Corner.

Today, I'd like to stand and recognize the terrific work being done by a firm fairly new to PEI, Aspin Kemp & Associates. It is a marine technology and engineering firm which began in Ontario, but since 2014 has relocated to Prince Edward Island. They have offices all over the world, including Owen Sound, Ontario, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, as well as Singapore and China.

Aspin Kemp & Associates is leading the charge in industry growth across Canada with their innovative engineering solutions. They have created many jobs for Islanders, especially at the manufacturing plant in Pooles Corner. Though there are various industries and issues that Aspin Kemp are involved in, they are mainly focused on oil and gas, marine power, green energy, automation and industrial services.

Most importantly to the firm is to do everything with integrity and take no shortcuts. They have achieved great success through hard work and honesty and its had a huge impact on the local economy due to their leadership. Our environment and marine life is so important to our Island and Aspin Kemp is certainly helping foster and preserve it by introducing new technologies every day.

This is a prestigious company, who is doing great things, both economically and environmentally and we should celebrate all they have done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Kensington Senior Surfers Open House

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise today and recognize the Kensington Senior Surfers for their open house they hosted on March 20th, to showcase the homelands and cultures of Island immigrants with different information boards on six countries.

The seniors' group took the initiative to meet with six speakers, who presented to us

about their home country, its traditions, cultures, music and lifestyles.

Louise Weeks, one of the organizers of the event said: It was also a partnership with the newcomers association. We had speakers from China, Iran, Nepal, Palestine, Kuwait and India. They told us about their journey, and also taught us about customs, artifacts, history of their country, politics, traditional dress and clothing.

Some even wore traditional clothing. Once they had completed their meetings, they were able to put together the six information boards on each of the countries and its speakers.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Kensington Senior Surfers on their open house and thank them for, firstly, thinking of our newcomers, and secondly, reaching out to learn from them and welcome them.

As we know, our population is growing, and diversifying, and taking the time to reach out and getting to know our newcomers can only help us as a province.

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.

Last week, the Charlottetown youth advisory board released a very eye-opening report on youth housing here in Charlottetown. The report states: that accessible, affordable housing is a crisis for young people in the greater Charlottetown area.

Affordable housing crisis for Island youth

Question to the Premier: What is your government doing to respond to the issues raised in this report about the affordable housing crisis for Island youth?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We believe that affordable, appropriate housing is one of the most important social infrastructures that we can have in our province.

Last year, we launched a housing strategy. We're doing that in collaboration with our community partners; with developers and with our co-ops. We are looking forward to the results of that action strategy coming out in June.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Charlottetown Youth Matters surveyed over 850 young Islanders between the ages of 16 to 35 years about the issues that they're facing to find and keep affordable housing options.

What they heard was that 56% of respondents were spending more than 30% of their pre-tax income on housing. That exceeds affordable housing standards set out by the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation.

Government and affordability challenge

Question to the Premier: How is your government dealing with the affordability challenge?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

We are well aware of the work of the group that was looking at the housing for youth; congratulate them on that work. In the course of their presentation and the presentation of their results they, actually, acknowledged the work that the province is doing in taking an initiative in creating a housing task force and putting in place a commitment over four years to have units of affordable housing; and, in working to create employment for young people in this

area. I think that's really the number one point to take from this is: we have a lot of young people in our city and in our province who have new opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Again, I'll go back to some of the statistics that came back from this report; 58% of the youth surveyed reported earning less than \$35,000, while, 40% of youth reported earning less than \$25,000.

Of course, low wages were identified as a huge barrier by this report.

Question again, to the Premier: How can we create an environment for our youth to thrive if they simply can't afford to live here?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we are, indeed, working on the housing supply and we believe that's really the number one front on which to address the housing issue. But, let me comment to the income issue. In our budget for those young people, who have student loans, each of them has the opportunity to have a \$3,500 debt reduction, tax-free –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Premier MacLauchlan: – so we use the numbers – if we use the numbers that the Leader of the Opposition presented, we're looking at putting in the hands of those people immediately resources that are well in excess or on the order of 20% of their income. That's a big move, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of it.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

I think the Premier has completely missed the mark on the question that I just asked. We're talking about 40% of youth reported earning less than \$25,000.

I'm not talking about student loans because, unfortunately, many of these youth probably didn't even have the opportunity to take post-secondary education so they may or may not even have student loans.

The report also noted that the rental market in the greater Charlottetown area is actually tighter than Vancouver's for available supply. Even if a young Islander can afford good housing, the available supply is simply not there, or is extremely limited.

Affordable housing crisis for Island youth (further)

Question to the Premier: Unless we find ways to address this affordable housing crisis, won't retaining and repatriating young Islanders become even more difficult?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: We believe in our young people, and we believe that they're here, in our province because there are futures, because there are opportunities and because they are building lives here; which, really, was the point that comes out of the work of that group, and of that work that goes back to Fusion Charlottetown.

We have committed to 1,000 units of affordable housing in our province over four years. That's a big commitment. Further, we are working with the Housing Supply Task Force and they are starting with an inventory of work that is underway today and in this construction season. I believe we will be very impressed by the amount of work that is going on in the construction sector to meet that need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It would be very enlightening, perhaps, to learn what this Premier considers affordable housing.

Demographics, the growth of the sharing economy and immigration are just some of the key factors at play here. This problem simply isn't going away.

Demands on rental market in PEI

Question again to the Premier: What is your government doing to keep the rental market from overheating even further as we've seen in Vancouver and other cities across Canada?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, in a word, 'supply.' We are proud that there is demand for housing in our province and what that reflects, in term of what young people are experiencing in opportunities, in growth and in building community and culture.

We want them to be in our province. We recognize that and applaud it. Very precisely, it is on the supply side that we have committed and that we did commit in creating the Housing Supply Task Force, and what we know is taking place in the construction sector, last year. We had a 66% increase over the previous year in terms of new housing. We know that it's expanding again at that rate this year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After years of neglect, the issue of land ownership and speculation is finally beginning to see a hint of attention from this government.

Last fall, with opposition's urging, our Legislative standing committee began to look into this issue and hear from groups concerned about it. Our committee heard from groups like the Federation of Agriculture and the National Farmers Union, with several others on the witness list.

What we heard was that government was being negligent in addressing the issues of land ownership and speculation.

Addressing issues on land ownership

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Why has it taken government so long to wake up to this issue?

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

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

I have, in my hand here, Doug Boylan's report, 1990. Doug, at that time, outlined a number of issues, similar to what we're discussing today. One of the reasons I've been hearing what the opposition have been hearing – concerns about Island land and Island land ownership and the need to protect our farmland here on Prince Edward Island because I believe our farmland on Prince Edward Island is a natural resource like any other natural resource across this country. We must protect it at all times, Mr. Speaker.

That is why I've asked IRAC to do a report on non-resident land ownership as they done in 2005 and I want that report updated.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister should know this is not just about farmland. In the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* any non-resident or corporation that wants to own more than five acres or more than 165 ft. of waterfront needs to get approval by the Premier and Cabinet through an official Order-in-Council. In any given year, the vast majority of Orders-in-Council approved deal with land sale approvals.

Volume of land approvals

Question to the minister: What concerns did the volume of all these land approvals raise around the Cabinet table?

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm bound by Cabinet confidentiality.

Thank you.

Mr. Myers: It's okay to say you're scared.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment embrace openness and transparency.

As of last week, Cabinet has approved 222 Orders-in-Council so far in 2018. One hundred and thirty four of the 222 were land sale approvals.

Two-thirds of Cabinet decisions re: land sale approvals

A question to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment: Are you surprised to know that almost two-thirds of all Cabinet decisions to date in 2018 are land sale approvals?

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

Mr. R. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I've attended a number of meetings across Prince Edward Island and this issue has been coming up at meetings all across Prince Edward Island and I defer to BC's report that they've done a tremendous report out in BC in terms of land ownership. We are a beautiful province. People want to come to Prince Edward Island to live and enjoy Prince Edward Island. We look forward to some of these non-residents moving here permanently to make our Island an even better place to live.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At standing committee, we had ministers and former minister that are more than

happy to speak openly about this like the Minister of Finance or the Member from Montague-Kilmuir. In fact, the executive director of the federation of agriculture got some pretty stiff pushback over their concerns.

The federation referenced on set of numbers from government on ownership levels, while the Member from Montague-Kilmuir quoted an entirely different set of numbers that he said came directly from government – I don't know how he got them. Government appears to be quoting one figure on land ownership levels to groups like the federation of agriculture and government is quoting another figure to government MLAs. The minister says he doesn't even know what the number really is.

Question to the minister: What are the real figures and why don't you know them?

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

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

As I said earlier, non-residents can buy property here on Prince Edward Island. Five acres, 168 shore footage. They can then move here and decide to stay here, which many of them do, Mr. Speaker. So there's a transition period that – that's why I've asked IRAC to review the numbers, to get us the final set of numbers, and from the data that comes back from IRAC we'll be able to make decisions based on our land ownership and the requirements.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, the minister is taking some action and, yes, going IRAC to find out how much land is owned by non-residents and corporations and if anyone is breaking the rules legislated in the *Lands Protection Act, PEI*; however the *Lands Protection Act, PEI* does not limit land ownership of parcels less than five acres.

Review of landownership by non-residents

Question to the minister: Will this review include a breakdown of all the land owned by non-residents and corporations including those that own property less than five acres?

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

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

We are working with IRAC, but we're also working with the property tax assessment department.

As you know, any non-resident has to pay double taxation when they're a non-resident of Prince Edward Island and owning a cottage or owning a piece of property. So, we're working with the assessment department to determine those acreages that are under five acres.

We will get a comprehensive review through this report and then from the facts, we will then move forward on what we should be doing in terms of land ownership on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over here, we want the facts. Islanders want the facts. It's refreshing to hear you phrased that as double tax. The former minister of finance said: No, no, people don't get double taxed – the non-resident – everybody else gets a 50% rebate, Mr. Speaker. So it's good to hear you being a little more transparent.

We have seen Canadian cities like Vancouver with skyrocketing real estate prices, mainly caused by non-resident property for speculative investment purposes – purchases of that. Here in PEI, we're seeing similar trends. Fortunately, with action, I believe we can still nip any potential problem in the bud, so let's learn from the experiences of others and act now.

Review and evaluate *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*

Minister: Will you commit to having your department review and evaluate the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* with respect to the current pricing and land ownership trends on PEI to ensure that it is adequate?

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

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

That's the reason we are working with the property tax section – our department – and we've asked IRAC to review its datum in order to ensure that we have proper data in front of us when we go to make decisions and that we have the proper facts in front of us. I only hope, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition can handle the facts when they get them.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Next week begins another busy season for the Wood Island ferry and I'm reaching out to all Islanders, businesses and organizations – any individual who wants to join me on the first crossing. It's May the 1st, next Thursday, 6:30 a.m. I know there will be a lot of questions to me about where we are with the long-term ferry contract and the federal government.

Negotiations for Wood Island ferries

If the Premier could give us some answers as to where we are with that negotiation.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, it was announced at the end of 2017 that Northumberland Ferries or Bay Ferries would have a two-year contract to operate that service and that, in the range or against the recent history, is some cause for confidence that we have that two-year commitment.

The larger frame, as the hon. member implies by her question, is that laid out on May 5th of last year, where the federal government is in the process of seeking a

multi-year commitment on the order of 20 years and they are engaging with – as I understand it – the various bidders who might provide that service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all know that the ferry is a vital link for both transportation and tourism.

Conversations with federal ministers regarding ferries

I'm just wondering, Premier, if you could fill us in on any conversations you've had with the Prime Minister or federal cabinet ministers recently regarding the ferry.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I was in Ottawa in November and met with transport minister Marc Garneau. I've had conversations more recently with minister Lawrence MacAulay and I don't think I have to tell anyone in this House that this is a very high priority for Minister MacAulay that the federal government in all of the discussions and all of the discussions I've had with them is very cognizant of the importance of that ferry service to the entirety of our province and notably to the eastern part of our province, in our economy and tourism and the ability of people to move back and forth and we're doing everything we can to encourage them in that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, I think you attended the federal Liberal convention in Halifax on the weekend.

I'm wondering if you had any commitment from your federal counterparts at the convention on the weekend regarding the ferry.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, that particular subject did not arise in discussions there, but I can assure the members opposite and members of this House, and Islanders, that the federal government is pursuing the course of action that was laid out in May of last year and that was really historic to endeavour to have a 20-year commitment with the provision of new ferries or ferries under a certain age, and to encourage an approach of innovation in the provision of that service.

We're very optimistic that they will go through with that commitment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all know it's an important issue and in November 2016, I introduced a motion on the floor of this House. It was unanimously supported to create the Wood Islands Ferry Taskforce.

Report on Wood Islands Ferry Taskforce

Question to the Premier: Why hasn't the report on the Wood Islands Ferry Taskforce been made public?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I have to say I'm surprised to hear, but if it's the case that it hasn't been made public we're very happy to do that immediately.

That ferry taskforce was appointed in February, met or received upwards of 50 submissions, made a report in March of last year and it seemed like – or maybe it was April – seemed like it was almost shortly thereafter that this historic commitment was made so we were very happy with the results of that work.

But as I say, if it's the case that their report, which I seem to recall seeing in this House, if it hasn't been made public then that will be done right away.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The taskforce was made up of respected business people and community leaders from the eastern end of Prince Edward Island and it's, I think, close to a year since the taskforce did their report. I'm glad to hear that you'll commit to releasing that. I appreciate that.

But, another question I had brought forward before was the fact that we still do not have a long-term contract from the ferry. We have to get through to that point, and I think it's really important that the taskforce remains intact and that they continue to do the work that needs to be done.

Commitment for taskforce

I'm wondering if the Premier could make the commitment to ensure that the taskforce continues the work that needs to be done for all Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, the taskforce went right to work when they were appointed. I met with them. They had, as I said, upwards of 50 submissions and prepared a report. When we appointed the regional economic advisory council for the eastern part of the province, there's some overlap in the membership between that and the ferry taskforce, and indeed the Regional Economic Advisory Council has identified the ferry service, it's important to the region and tourism, the economy, and the growth and population development in that part of the province, and strong communities.

I'm confident that that work is being carried forward through the Regional Economic Advisory Council and in all of the relationships that are involved, notably the responsibility of the federal government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In PEI, clients seeking social assistance must liquidate all financial assets, that's assets excluding things like a house or a car or RESPs, for examples; all financial assets greater than \$50 to be eligible to apply for short-term assistance and any assets greater than \$200 to apply for long-term assistance.

After their assets have been reduced to those levels, they are then told that they are expected to take advantage of opportunities that will lead towards or establish financial self-sufficiency. At the same time, the program objectives clearly state that the program shall provide timely and appropriate services to prevent social dependency.

Objectives applying for social assistance

A question to the Minister of Family and Human Services: How do you reconcile the program's stated goals with the requirements that applicants must be utterly destitute before they can apply?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We believe in the power and potential of every human being, and ending poverty is going to start with seeing the potential and the power in people.

When I was appointed two years ago, I took an undertaking to review all of our social programs. We started with the *Child Protection Act* review. We went on to the disability support review. The Child Care Subsidy review was then reviewed, and we are currently undertaking a collaborative and comprehensive review of our social assistance programs.

I look forward to very shortly being able to roll out some of those changes that we've made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PEI has the lowest financial asset exemption levels in Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the eligible level is \$3,000, and in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the level is \$1,000.

Financial asset exemption levels in Canada

A question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: How can you say that you're caring for the most vulnerable Islanders while refusing to help anyone who has more than \$50 to their name?

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

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, to look at one aspect of a program and determine that that is how the whole program works – we are working very hard with many of our clients that are facing multiple barriers. We deal with them in a compassionate and caring way, and we have made several investments.

This budget alone is historic in comparison to what has been done in this department over the many years. This department is transforming. I'm proud to stand here today. I'm proud of the investments that we have made in this department, and I couldn't have done it without each and every one of my colleagues on this side of the House that believe in this department, and we will see changes. We are seeing changes, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed, to the minister, that you did not address this disparity among the Atlantic Provinces in your most recent budget. After all, the economy is on a tear.

Review of exemption level and increased rate

Minister: Will you commit to reviewing the exemption levels and increasing the rate to at least \$1,000?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It does give me great pleasure to rise on my feet and address that, which I did in the first – when I answered the first question. We are reviewing our programs. We will be rolling out some details in the coming weeks and coming months.

But, take a look at our Budget; an historic budget when it comes to caring for those Islanders who have less than most. We have made investments in free tuition for low-income Island students. We've increased the shelter budget; \$17 million that we will invest over the next two years for housing. These are all things that are done in collaboration and in combination with other programs.

Just to single out one investment and to say –

Speaker: Okay, that's enough.

Thank you.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Social assistance income support recipients, of whom there are over 3,700 families in PEI, are encouraged and supported to work. Yet, when they do find employment, almost every dollar of their social assistance income is clawed back, leaving them in perpetual poverty. In fact, single clients are only allowed to keep the first \$75 of any money they earn every month and 10% of any subsequent earnings each month.

Claw backs of social assistance

A question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: How does clawing back their earnings encourage and empower Islanders on social assistance to move out of program dependency?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad that the hon. member feels that she knows the program so well. Maybe she might want to take a look at the pilot project that we launched last year, the Harvest and Prosper pilot project that was directed to our social assistance clients.

We went out and we collaborated with our partners in workforce and advanced learning, and in ag and fish, and we had 20 or 30 of our social assistance clients that went out there to work. They received life coaching. They received training. They received work clothes if they needed it, and transportation, and they were allowed to earn up to \$3,000 without one cent being clawed back.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale, this is your first supplementary on your second question.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, if 30 clients have received that fantastic support, that leaves 3,670 who didn't.

According to the Canada's social report, Welfare in Canada 2016, which I'll be tabling later, PEI has the lowest claw back threshold.

Review of social assistance claw back levels

A question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: When has government last reviewed these clawback levels?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This year.

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

Ms. Bell: Perhaps since that review is happening this year, we -

Ms. Bell: - must review these claw back levels.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This year.

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

Ms. Bell: Perhaps since that review is happening this year, we can look to both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, who have some of the lowest claw back levels, which is still higher than ours, at \$150 and 30% of remaining wages. I look forward to hearing from the minister. Perhaps you could advise us when this year we'll be hearing about that increase in rates.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we have details, I would be pleased to stand in the House and release those.

We have been working hard behind the scenes; we have an exemptions and exceptions committee that are dealing with our clients on a one-on-one basis. So, if somebody approaches us and they have something over and above what their need might be directed under policy, we take that and we look at it and we say: Is this something that government should be involved in? And if it is, we take care of it. We take care of our clients. We are working hard to make sure that they live the best and successful life that they can. We are removing barriers that are attaching them to the workforce. It's not all just about income. There are many, many variables when it comes to poverty and our clients and we are dealing with them, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

My question is for the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment.

Mr. Myers: Good luck.

Mr. McIsaac: That's what I'm hoping for.

Number of licenses sold for sports fishery

Nine days ago the stories began and now that the warm weather has hit, I'm sure the tall tales will surely start coming in even more so. I know the size of the trout that are caught may be somewhat exaggerated, but the places where they are caught are never even divulged. I don't know how many great stories we're going to hear over the summer, but I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how many licences for the sports fishery are sold each year on PEI?

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

An Hon. Member: Tell some fish tales.

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

We sell over 6,000 licences during the year, but I want to remind a lot of people on Prince Edward Island, we have 530 family fishing licences. But people 16-18-years old and 60 and above get a free license, and that's about 2,700.

So I want to encourage each and every person to take advantage of fishing on our great rivers, but I also want to thank the watershed groups for providing those great river experiences for fishers all across Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

This is a sport that both, myself and my wife really enjoy. It is a sports fishery and one that many, many people across the province enjoy and a lot of the fish that are caught are actually released. Sometimes they're still allowable for the barbed hook to be used.

Use of barbed and barbless hooks

Minister: Can you tell us if the barbed hook will be done away with, or the barbless hook

will be the only that they'll be allowed to use in the near future?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Barbless hooks are an excellent conservation measure for our fishermen here on Prince Edward Island. Currently, we do barbless hooks on the Trout River and the Morell River in Kings County.

By the way I was on the Morell River the other day – Monday. It's a beautiful experience out there to go up and down the river and to see people there, especially families. When you look at the fishermen sitting there in their boats, contemplating and relaxing, I would recommend that you buy eight boats for the opposition here and put them on the Morell River for a day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Leader of the Opposition: Before you were just buying votes, now you're buying boats.

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

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

The sports fishing industry is something that our youth really enjoy and I think we'd like to encourage a lot more of it. We saw on the floor of the Legislature last week, a young fellow here who was with the hunting and we talked about encouraging that as well. But it is such a good sport for the youth and one that we want to encourage and maybe to do that – I was just reflecting on the fact that every year there's a premier's cup given out for the largest tuna that's landed in the province.

Minister's trophy for largest trout caught

I'm wondering if we could come up with a minister's trophy for the largest trout that may be caught and kept or caught and released – just take a picture of him before hand.

Mr. Myers: Dynamite trout.

Mr. McIsaac: If that would be a possibility.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Brownie Bowl.

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

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

That's a great idea, but I think we should restrict it to people under 16-years old because it would be far too many stories of how big the fish was that they caught – anybody over 16, so I think it would be a great idea and I recommend that any young person sends in photos of their fish and where they caught and I think that'd be a great, excellent idea that we'd probably implement next year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A free press and the citizen's right to speak to the press is a fundamental to our democracy.

Premier, at a backbench member meeting, I was sitting quietly, not saying a word, and your chief of staff, Robert Vessey, started shouting at me that I had a bad attitude. I asked him why and he said I talked to the press and I was not allowed to do this without party permission. My reply was that I would talk to the press anytime I wanted to. I then left the meeting; other members of the meeting were visibly upset.

Citizen's right to speak to press

Premier: Were you aware that I was ordered to your office – principal's office – for behavior modification? Probably to pump up my Liberal values.

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of that, but let me remind the House that on Tuesday of last week, there

was a question with a long preamble. The whole premise of which was that recap was only available to Liberal members and by the end of the week we learned that that work had been distributed in ridings throughout the province, without regard to political stripe, and I expect that that's exactly what we may find is the problem with the question that's being asked today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Well, I mean, that's coming from a person that lost three members. Premier: Were you aware I was ordered to your office – oh, I've got the wrong question.

Premier: Do all Liberal members need to have party permission to speak to the media, or just backbenchers?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: I go back to what I just said. We started out the week last week with being told that certain things about our Liberal caucus and about phone calls that were made and I'm proud to say that by the end of the week, it seems that they whole premise on which those questions were being asked was shown to be, in the light of the facts, something that we can be proud of as a government and then that's how we approach everything. We work together as a team and we're happy to do that and we continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Premier, we're kind of getting away from whether your members can speak to the press or not.

Premier: Can your members speak to the press, or does Robert Vessey just give you executive deniability?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, as far as I can tell, our members – private members and ministers – regularly speak with media; they speak on public platforms; they speak with each other; and they speak their minds. I'm very proud of that and I believe that the people of Prince Edward Island see that and benefit from it and we are very proud of how we conduct ourselves in our public comments and in our openness and transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in the House we talked about privacy of data and data that was breached and we have more of the same this week.

Safeguarding of information

Question to the finance minister: What was the weakness that was exploited by hackers yesterday?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, we take any safeguarding of Islanders' information very seriously and we're living in an age now – we're seeing it right around the world that these types of situations are bound to happen sooner or later, no matter where you are, what business you're in, or whether it's government, or municipalities, or private sector. What we can do as a government is try to ensure that we minimize those potential risks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Over the last number of years, government has been encouraging Islanders to interact with them through their website by adding additional services there all the time. A lot of private information is now captured and held on the government website.

Addressing data breach on government website

Question to the minister: How will government address or be addressing this serious data breach?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as minister responsible for ITSS and the hon. member used to work for ITSS; he knows full well that we take every precaution possible to minimize these situations, but we're living in a world where technology is a force. The ransom malware that was produced yesterday, we shut it down immediately and there was no information released on Islander's private information.

It's becoming a relative issue right around the world. If we just look at Facebook and what has happened there. The US, whether it be the elections in the US relevant to Russia; there are all kinds of things happening. I think we've got a great team with a public sector, the ITSS group. We'll continue to monitor the situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like the minister may be blaming Russian hackers, or Donald Trump. I'm not really sure what he's talking about. This is a serious data breach. For him to stand in this House and say no data was stolen. They came in and they replace your website with ransomware. You have no idea what happened. You have absolutely no idea what happened. If they were able to get that far, then you do not know what else they did.

Possible private data breach

When will you be notifying Islanders who could have had their own data breached?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: There is no indication that there was a breach of data. So, we've been

consulting with our staff many times over the past two days, including today. There has been no indication that there has been any data breach.

You know, these cyber-attacks are going to happen. We have to be prepared for it to the best of our ability, and ensure Islanders that their information is as safe as possible and continue to build on those platforms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pretty laissez-faire attitude by this government that hey, this stuff is just going to happen. It's the day in age that we're in and hackers are going to hack and hey, you're data is okay. This minister stands in the House and tells us: No, no. I can guarantee you. I talked to my staff and they said there was no data breach.

I'm not sure where the minister – how the minister possibly thinks this is happening considering some of the events that have happened in the world, as of late, with data.

Seriousness of data breach

Question to the minister: How come you're not taking this serious data breach much more seriously?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see the hon. member acknowledge that this does happen around the world, like I said in my previous statements.

There's no indication that private user data was breached. What we're doing is we're trying to eliminate any or minimize any possibilities of this every happening again.

The vulnerability of this happening again, from what I'm told from the ITSS people, is that it won't happen again, and they've looked after it. We're going to continue to work with ITSS and the people that know this information best and try to minimize these happenings in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems to me that the minister isn't taking this as nearly as serious as he probably should be. He probably doesn't even know what data is actually stored on the server. He's relying on staff to tell him.

Request to privacy commissioner to investigate breach

Question to the minister, because I believe this is a very serious thing, and I don't trust that any politician is going to give an answer to Islanders whether or not their data was actually breached. Will you call in the privacy commissioner and have her investigate this and ensure all Islanders that their data is safe?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: The vulnerability of this attack, Mr. Speaker, has been resolved. I think, as minister, for the hon. member to stand over there and say I don't take it seriously, is completely false. I do take it seriously. I will continue to take it seriously and so does my staff take it seriously. We take all these breaches of any form of malware attacking Prince Edward Island and Islanders very seriously. If we didn't, we wouldn't necessarily be the good human beings that we want to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

I know that the minister didn't answer my question. I do hope that he takes it into consideration.

For my final question, I want to ask a question to the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism.

Irvings and Georgetown shipyard

Last week, he misspoke in the House in talking about the Georgetown shipyard, but, in a very serious question: When was the last time you had negotiations with the Irvings about (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll go back to when I was economic development minister. Yes, we did have discussions with the – in the past three years with the Georgetown shipyard. We've made some major moves down there with East Isle fabrications and another company. Let me say, for the House, when Peter MacKay was minister, a federal minister, and if he wrote up the contract for the shipbuilding in Nova Scotia, he put the (Indistinct) of the shipbuilding in Georgetown.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Myers: Robert Ghiz wouldn't underwrite the loan. You guys know this, you know that. Robert Ghiz left him out to dry (Indistinct)

Statements by Ministers

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

Small Business

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Small business is the backbone of our provincial economy. They represent the engine that is driving the strongest economy in our province in many years. They are major employers, providers of essential services, and vital contributors to our community and culture.

In our government's third consecutive balanced budget, we sent a signal that our support for small business is as strongest it has even been. We know how challenging it can be to run a small business. We want to create the conditions to ensure every business has the chance to be successful.

With that in mind, we are implementing a tax cut that will save small businesses across the Island up to \$2,500 a year. This is

money they can use to reinvest in their business or support their bottom lines. This tax cut is not the only measure we have taken, in this Budget, to support entrepreneurs.

Others include our new small business investment grant that will save businesses up to \$3,750 a year on a \$25,000 business investment. The elimination of the provincial portion of the HST on electricity and certain forms of home heating, and an increase in the basic personal amount for all Islanders.

All of these measures, combined with our already robust support for small business, will help put them in a position to succeed like never before. We are already seeing results from the excellent work of entrepreneurs across the province.

Together, we have added 2,700 new jobs since March, 2017, and over the past five years, our province has led Canada with growth in manufacturing sales of more than 34%, which far exceeds the national average of 10%.

These are both clear signs that our economy is performing well. One of the reasons we are the mighty Island is that our smallness connects us; allows us to focus on what matters most, such as helping each other succeed.

Thanks to our dedicated business community and entrepreneurial spirit, there are more jobs than ever before and Island products are being recognized around the world for their quality. I believe our new tax cut will help our ambitious, hard working, small business owners continue to do big things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately for the minister, I've been around this political game long enough to have witnessed what you've done.

Back when this government brought in HST, they used small business and they marched

the small business out and said: No, we need this for our investments in our own company, and we'll get it back and we can't compete with the rest of the country, and we can't compete in Atlantic Canada.

The minute they got it in, what did they do? They raised the tax to 4%, so a 3% raise from where they were –

Mr. Fox: 400%.

Mr. Myers: – it was 400% on the backs of small business.

They took every single cent that small business could possibly have and took it back and put it in their own pockets. Now, they're saying, 0.5%. At a time where you raised your spending by what? Like \$24 million this year? You give a piddling 0.5% back to business, who you guys say is the backbone of Prince Edward Island.

Listen, at least Tories believe that. When we're in government we take action to help business. What you guys are doing is, you don't even have them back to when Wes Sheridan stole all the money out of the pocket when he gave them the HST.

That's not even talking about our small business tax rate here on Prince Edward Island, which is the smallest, or the lowest in Atlantic – the highest in Atlantic Canada, sorry. This government needs to do more to help small business.

I know they're talking and they use stats like how we're performing against the rest of the country. When you're talking about some of the provinces where there are 10 million people and we have 150,000, sometimes you're only talking about a handful of jobs. If you use the actual numbers instead of crazy stats against the rest of the country and be honest with Islanders, Islanders would see it for the picture that it actually is.

I know lots of businesspeople and I came from a business family on both sides, my mom and my dad, and I understand full well the challenges of small business here on Prince Edward Island. It's unfortunate; I don't think this government does understand those challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Hon. member, I just want to remind you that you did accuse a former minister of stealing and I think you should temper your language. Okay?

Mr. Myers: Thanks.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will, perhaps with a little more careful language, echo the concerns about the scale of the tax cut. But, it's a tax cut and so as a small business owner and one who works with small businesses, we appreciate the effort and hope that it continues with the next promised cut and then further as we go through over the next couple of years.

The small business investment grant is something that holds a great deal of promise for small business owners for a couple of reasons. One of them is that it appears to be inclusive regardless of sector, and something that we've heard strongly from the small business owners across the province, particularly the ones that I have worked with in the past who don't sort of work in what we call, perhaps more sexy sectors like aerospace, bio, green energy and IT, but in things like coffee roasting and arts and crafts, musicianship and retail, that they are also small business owners.

To see something that's been put together that recognizes the work that they do and the investment they're making in their business a success is really very positive. I would strongly encourage our government to, perhaps, when its website is a little more stable, to think about providing some practical, clear information about who is eligible and what is required to meet the eligibility, because one of the concerns that the small business owners have had, particularly around red tape, is some of the challenges of meeting eligibility requirements.

We're kind of cautiously optimistic that this program will be one that some small business owners can benefit from and I look forward to seeing future programs with that same optics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Organ Tissue Donation

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, just over two weeks ago our country was shaken by the tragic bus crash of the Humboldt Broncos hockey team.

As a country, we mourned together and we celebrated the lives of these athletes and their supporters. One of the athletes who lost his life was Logan Boulet. Logan was 21 years old, and only months before he died he had made the decision to register as an organ donor. Because of Logan's decision, through his death he was able to provide organs, both to science and to six individuals who had been waiting for a transplant.

Logan's selflessness has emerged as an inspirational story amid the tragedy surrounding the bus crash. Across our entire country we have seen an increase in the number of people signing up as organ and tissue donors.

Organ and tissue donations save many lives across our country each and every day. Right now, there are 18 Islanders who are waiting for a transplant. Today, I am pleased to be launching two new videos and online campaign entitled Make it Zero.

We would like to have every Islander register to be a donor so that, together, we can reduce the number of people waiting for a transplant to zero. Transplants save lives and improve the quality of life for people in need.

In the gallery today, I am pleased to welcome Carleigh MacLeod, a cornea transplant recipient, and her mother Donna MacLeod, and as well Angela Carpenter, our provincial organ and tissue donation and transplant manager for the Province of PEI. It's great to have you all here with us today.

Some Hon. Members: [Applause]

Mr. Mitchell: Thank you for joining us here today, and particularly I want to thank Carleigh as well as Gordon MacFarlane, who unfortunately could not be here with us today, for sharing their personal stories and

being an inspiration to our Island community.

Last year here in PEI, we launched a new interactive online intent to donate registry, and I am pleased to say that we have had over 29,000 Islanders sign up to be organ and/or tissue donors. It's very important for Islanders to take the time to register their wishes and have the discussion with their families so that they are not left making the decision during a very difficult time.

There are few things mightier about Prince Edward Island than Islanders' kindness, compassion, and willingness to help one another, especially at their darkest hour when it is needed the most.

Organ and tissue donation is life saving, and I encourage all members of this House to take time to register online and make your wishes known.

Thank you very much for this, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the minister for this statement. It's wonderful to hear. I didn't realize 29,000 people have signed up. That's fantastic. The online campaign is working. We obviously need to keep it going.

Welcome to the special guests in the gallery as well. We just had a benefit last week in Morell for Darcy Barry who was a recipient of an organ transplant as well. Upstairs in our office, Crystal Ogden who works there, and her and her husband, Corey, their daughter, Candence Ogden, is also an organ recipient and received a partial liver from her mother, Crystal.

It's simply amazing. The minister talks about these stories and getting that message out there about what can be done; it's amazing what can be done. Crystal giving, I think it was 37% of her liver to her daughter to save her life and now she's functioning off that. These stories are scientific miracles, and it's wonderful to hear.

I encourage everybody to sign up and as the minister says, please make your intention

known to your friends and family so that we can, as he said, get down to zero.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Becoming an organ and tissue donor allows you to create something beautiful out of a tragedy, and the Humboldt Broncos incident that you referenced at the beginning of your statement, minister, is exactly that sort of incredible thing which can happen at a time of awful tragedy.

There are so many Islanders who have benefitted from organ donation. This was not an Islander, but I remember watching a really moving story of a gentleman who was standing next to another person who had received the heart of his deceased daughter and he, for the first time, listened to his daughter's heart beat in somebody else's chest who had just finished a marathon. It's just incredibly moving stories.

This morning I was told of an incident where an individual received a kidney from a person who had already received that kidney as a donor. So, that kidney was working in its third person. It's just extraordinary gifts that are for giving here.

Registering to be a donor is an act of charity that we can all do that costs nothing. The Make it Zero campaign is an incredibly worthy goal, and it's something that each and every one of us in this House and gallery and on this Island can very easily make happen. We're a small community. We're a generous community. So, let's make it zero. It's a great goal and we can all help to make that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

New Water Well Field in Milton

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

I was pleased to attend the launch of the City of Charlottetown's new water well field system in Milton yesterday with the Premier and the deputy speaker.

The city deserves recognition for securing a new sustainable source of water for the residents of Charlottetown today and into the future. The city has come a long way in both metering its water requirements and reducing its consumption.

As minister of environment, I issued the city an extraction permit in 2010. Our department worked closely with the city to meet the guidelines of that permit. Mayor Lee, the council and the staff deserve recognition for their excellent water resource management.

I also want to thank the city workers in the water department. They're the ones that keep the water flowing no matter what time of day and what type of weather. I noticed during the winter, they're inside some trenches in the ground in the middle of a blazing storm, frozen water all over them. They work extremely hard for the residents of Charlottetown and I want to thank them for their work.

Through water metering, fixing leaks, rebates for water saving devices, the city has successfully engaged in actions to reduce water consumption in the City of Charlottetown. They've reduced their consumption by 15%.

I would like to thank the city residents also for their efforts for reducing water. As minister responsible for the Climate Change Action Plan that will be released soon, I'm also pleased to see the use of renewable energy used at the well head site to pump water from the ground. They have a battery of solar cells out there, which is good for the environment. It's good to see that the city is using the sun to pump the water for the residents of the City of Charlottetown.

This will be important in our efforts, as a province, to reduce our greenhouse gases. Charlottetown has taken big steps in this new well field.

It will balance water extraction from the surrounding watershed areas. It's really important. The watershed areas around the

City of Charlottetown were under pressure from the amount of water the city was pumping. With this new system, there is a 25% increase in the water supply. They will be able to balance the new well heads with the other well heads in the other watershed areas.

That will keep those watershed areas, their rivers flowing into the future, which is, again, an excellent thing for the environment.

Investments in infrastructure helps support our local communities, our primary industries, our environment and our people. The Province of Prince Edward Island will continue to support investments that are essential to our growing our economy and improving the quality of life in communities across Prince Edward Island.

This was a great effort between the federal government, the provincial government and the municipality, all working together for the improvement of water resources in the Charlottetown area. This was phenomenal cooperation in all terms. There were public consultations in the area. In terms of this, all people were involved. This is a good news story for both the City of Charlottetown, its residents, but also a good news story for the Queens County area and the watershed areas.

I'm proud to be a part of this government that has worked with the City of Charlottetown and its residents in order to secure their future, but also to thank; to take steps towards improving our environment. We only have one environment, and if we don't protect it, Mr. Speaker, we will not survive as a civilization.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's clear that, of course, our municipalities, especially our large municipalities, like Charlottetown need water, and the industry within the city needs water. When it comes to high-capacity wells, they are an efficient way to do that.

It's really interesting because this is one of the first major well projects that's going to fall under the mandate of the new *Water Act*. I'm hoping this is designated as a well field protection area, and that it is very closely monitored for the amount of water that is being taken from there.

Of course, the moratorium is still on place for high-capacity wells for agriculture, at this time, but municipalities are able to take this out. It is very key, as the minister said, and kudos to the work he did on this, I want to thank Eddie Rice, from the City of Charlottetown for all the work he did on this, as well.

Take the pressure off the other watersheds that are currently supplying the City of Charlottetown. The Winter River watershed, in particular, was in dire straits with, the head waters of the stream really starting to dry up and these sorts of things. That's key.

Another point that the minister made and it's great to see solar panels are being used to provide power to the pumps. Hopefully, not only be just environmentally friendly, but also save the province and the city money when it comes to that. I believe it is fiscally responsible to do that, too, so that's good.

One thing that the minister also mentioned was the City of Charlottetown taking conservation measures to reduce the amount of water used. That was something that I didn't feel was really emphasized enough in the *Water Act*, as you know, I voted for. I wanted to see it passed for this very reason so that it could be used to manage and monitor these kinds of projects.

I just wanted to announce to the House that I do plan to bring a private members' bill to the floor. Hopefully, table this sitting, with some amendments to the *Water Act*. One of them including encapsulating conservation in the legislation.

I'm glad to hear the minister agrees with me on this, and I expect all your support when that private members' bill comes to the floor.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I, too, want to thank the minister for his work on this, and for the hon. member for his devotion to, and his acceptance of, the importance of water in our lives. I mean, water is the essence of life. Unfortunately, too many of us take it for granted, but if you were to be living in Cape Town, South Africa, you would not be taking it for granted; a huge city, a huge urban city, which is almost literally down to its last drop.

When I hear about cities here in North America, like Charlottetown taking proactive, preventative measures to make sure that we don't end up in that situation, we should all be very grateful for that.

Congratulations to the minister for his part in this, to the City of Charlottetown, to everybody who contributed to making this happen. Hopefully, this will take some of the pressure the hon. member mentioned on the Winter River where the three other wells that supply the City of Charlottetown are located, and which has been a chronic overdrawing of that particular watershed, so this is great.

It's also great because a third of the power is, as the other hon. members have mentioned, for pumping this water into the city is going to come from approximately, going to come from a solar array. Yes, that's great for the environment. And yes, agreed, with the hon. member that will provide economic savings to the City of Charlottetown, as well.

Of course, when it comes to water and the balance of water and needing water, it's not just supply, it's demand, as well. That being mentioned on both sides of this House about the importance of conservation measures.

I want to, particularly, thank Ramona Doyle, sustainability coordinator here in the City of Charlottetown, who has been instrumental in that 15% reduction that we've seen in the last 10 years in the City of Charlottetown. This is great, so many people working together with a long-term vision. This well head is meant to have a lifespan of 100 years. I wish that we made more decisions with that sort of timeframe in mind. This is a

lovely story and congratulations to all involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions

Tabling of Documents

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table, it's a letter from the fire chief in Georgetown in reference to the minister of transportation's comments about getting back to people and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you for getting (Indistinct)

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a report from The Caledon Institute of Social Policy titled Welfare in Canada, dated November, 2017 and I move, seconded by the Honourable Leader of the Third Party, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Bell: Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the report I referenced earlier during Question Period. It is the 2018, Charlottetown Youth Matters Youth Housing report and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table written questions to the Minister of Rural and Regional Development and the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

Introduction of Government Bills

Orders of the Day (Government)

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 1, Consideration of the 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 32, Department of Communities, Land and Environment.

Just as we have been doing with the other budgets, I will read a section and then we will open the floor for discussion on that particular section. I would ask your cooperation in that.

Also, permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Chair: Good afternoon. Could you introduce yourself and your title for the record?

George Mason Director: George Mason, director of finance.

Chair: Welcome, Mr. Mason.

Minister, do you have an opening statement and do you also have handouts for our members?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes. The handouts are there. The copies are there for you. I did give the handouts to the critic in both parties earlier on so that you could get – and they're in two formats. They're in the formats of the code, the expense, and then they're in the format of the section and the expense.

I just want to say, first of all, Madam Chair, I want to thank the staff of the department right across the board. They're excellent staff. They're out there each and every day protecting water courses, protecting the environment, and protecting properties for the Islanders from one end of Prince Edward Island to the other. I think without the staff and the members of the department that are out there each and every day working hard on behalf of all Islanders, this is one of the main reasons we have a great environment in Prince Edward Island and this is one of the reasons we have great tourism for Prince Edward Island and economic development in Prince Edward Island because of our great environmental stewardship.

Thank you.

Chair: Minister's/Deputy Minister's Office

“Appropriations provided for the operation of the office of the Minister and Deputy Minister.” Administration: 18,200. Equipment: 6,500. Materials, Supplies and

Services: 8,000. Professional Services: 10,000. Salaries: 335,300. Travel and Training: 24,500. Grants: 10,000.

Total Minister's/Deputy Minister's Office: 412,500.

Total Minister's/Deputy Minister's Office: 412,500.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking at the gross revenue for the department. It's actually on the opening page and there's a fairly significant increase – by \$6.5 million or so, or \$6.3 million. I was just curious as to where the additional revenue is coming from.

Mr. R. Brown: We've been in negotiations with the federal government for the last year in terms of a climate change agreement between the federal government and the provincial government and you will be seeing it in more detail offered in the climate action report. This is a \$24 million agreement between the province and the feds – \$24 million in from the feds, \$24 million in from the province in order to finance and make good on our environmental commitments in terms of climate change in reducing our carbon footprint on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Trivers: So, just to be clear, this entire \$6.3 million is going to be put towards mitigation and planning for climate change?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, and you will see that between the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and myself. We will be presenting a climate action report that will outline how we are going to meet our targets and the feds have signed an agreement with us in terms of \$48 million over the next five years.

Mr. Trivers: So this is over five years, \$48 million, and this is the federal portion only – that \$6.3 million?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Municipal Affairs and Provincial Planning

“Appropriations provided for the oversight of municipal government and administration of land, land use policy, planning, development and control, including Equalization and other grants to municipalities.” Administration: 31,500. Equipment: 5,000. Materials and Supplies: 6,800. Professional Services: 260,000. Salaries: 1,396,900. Travel and Training: 44,700. Grants: 6,239,300.

Total Municipal Affairs and Provincial Planning: 7,984,200.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Chair.

Under grants, when I go to your handout – and I just want to make sure that I'm not looking in the wrong spot here but I don't have a calculator right in front of me, but your grants have gone up a fair bit over last fiscal year. When I turn to your handout on the grants page, can you tell me if the totals between municipal affairs and provincial planning; forest, fish, and wildlife; and forest protection services – if all of that actually comes up to the \$6.2 million? Or are there more grants somewhere?

George Mason Director: The simple answer is no. What's causing you an issue there is most of the – almost all of the \$6 million is equalization grants to municipalities. Last year those grants would have been in the Department of Finance. So it's recast or restated so the equalization grants give you a good idea of what they were this year and last year, but it switched departments.

Leader of the Opposition: So can you tell me without me having to get a calculator and go through all this, can you tell me what the totals are for the grants on page 12 of your handout?

George Mason Director: Sorry, I'm going to have to ask which handout. I have two versions myself.

Chair: Which handout, hon. member?

Leader of the Opposition: Communities, land and environment permanent positions staff list is the cover page and it's page 12 of that handout package.

George Mason Director: Yes.

Mr. R. Brown: So, yes, page 11 and 12 – it should add up to \$5.44 million. These grants that are shown in your handout – are these for 2018 and 2019, yes. Go ahead.

George Mason Director: You're looking at grants of \$6.2 million I believe is what you're asking me about? The total grants?

Leader of the Opposition: Well, in your budget book, it shows \$6.239 million –

George Mason Director: Yes, exactly.

Leader of the Opposition: – and I'm just trying to verify the handout that the minister provided to our critic back last week. I was going through the grant page on that on page 12 of that handout and you've got federation of municipalities listed there – federation of PEI municipalities in a government committee on urban and regional research. Then under forest, fish, and wildlife, you've got pretty much all of the watershed groups listed there.

George Mason Director: The watershed groups come in a different – in the next division, so you're looking at two different divisions, I believe. Watershed groups come under forestry. I think there's two parts to the question.

Leader of the Opposition: Oh, okay.

George Mason Director: When you're looking at the handout, the handout is, of course, last year's expenditures because that's real expenditure and the question on the \$6.2 million is actually this year's budget, so this year's budget and last year's expenditures don't quite match, but the \$95,000 for federation of municipalities would be the same last year and this year.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

George Mason Director: The municipal training grants would be the same this year and last year and there are some other small grants in there that may not be the same this

year. And, of course, the lion's share of last year's expenditures is \$5.3 million in equalization grants.

Leader of the Opposition: Sorry, I'm just – I'm still a little bit confused because I have the handout that the minister provided last week, and then one of the Pages just passed me another handout –

Mr. R. Brown: Update, is it?

Leader of the Opposition: – I don't know if it's updated or not. I haven't had a chance to – maybe this is why the minister did it in such a way, to give us an outdated document last week that we –

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Leader of the Opposition: – (Indistinct) then actually give us some more realistic facts today. I might have to have a little bit of time to decipher this.

Chair: Would you like me to go onto the next person on the list, hon. member?

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Of course, as you know, minister, this is the section of the budget that deals with municipal affairs and provincial planning, which is a hotbed of discussion right now.

In particular, what your department has done, and you've gone out and you have asked municipalities to lead the way in putting together proposals for amalgamation.

I was wondering how much funding you have budgeted to help with the feasibility studies and preparation of proposals for amalgamation that you expect to occur?

Mr. R. Brown: You'll see a line item there; \$260,000 budgeted for this year.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: That's the money that will help assist municipalities.

Mr. Trivers: That's good to know. Is that broken down in the handout further?

Mr. R. Brown: No.

Mr. Trivers: That entire amount is set aside for people who are proposing amalgamation and annexation to use for preparation of feasibility studies?

George Mason Director: I would say, we have a budget for professional services. It will not, necessarily, be used just for municipalities. We have other needs like legislation, but we can draw on up to that amount to help with municipalities. If we need more, we would try to find it somewhere else in the budget.

Mr. Trivers: One thing that I'm hearing from many of the smaller municipalities, under the *Municipal Government Act*, in fact, they're going to have to either grow or get phased out over the next several years, is they are really struggling to meet the additional burden or requirements that are imposed on them by the new act, the MGA.

Things like, I talked to one administrator, who has had to more than double the amount of hours that she spends. I talked to another municipality that did their budget and it's gone up five times the amount because of the extra work they need to do and they're not sure if they can afford to pay the person. In general, a lot of them are talking about dissolving because they don't think they can meet the requirements.

I was wondering if you've budgeted any extra money to help out these smaller municipalities so that they can comply with the rigorous requirements of the new MGA and not have to dissolve.

Mr. R. Brown: We'd be using this pool of money, in order to assist municipalities, but we are working with the Federation of Municipalities to work together and help communities across Prince Edward Island that are having challenges with the new *Municipal Government Act*.

I want to assure you, and the municipalities on Prince Edward Island, we want to work with the municipalities. If there are issues with the timing, with the amount of hours that the *Municipal Government Act* requires them to have or other requirements, we're

willing to discuss those issues with the municipality, in order to see that they continue to stay a municipality they continue to support their communities.

I want to make sure here that the act is guideline. If municipalities have some challenges in terms of meeting it, we're willing to work with them in that area, but it's a guideline. We're not going to shut down any municipalities because of the *Municipal Government Act*. We will work with the municipalities.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, minister for that. I'll definitely relay that message on to the people I'm talking to.

Who in your office should they contact?

Mr. R. Brown: The director of municipal affairs and we'll channel them through.

The municipalities are having a meeting Monday and there will be more information at that event in order to see how we can work with the communities. We've been taking your advice and listening to the opposition and the third parties with the concerns, as we are listening to all our MLAs here in the House.

We want to make sure: the legislation is a piece of legislation, but it's the maximum I consider that is required. If municipalities think they can get away with doing less then let's talk about it.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you for listening.

Thank you, I'll expect your support on my private members' bill in the amendments there, as well.

Mr. R. Brown: I've given up.

Mr. Trivers: The other question I had, in the debate on a bill that was on the floor, we had talked about provincial planning and the responsibility of the province to do land-use planning in unincorporated areas because, of course, there is no other layer of government that exists.

You said that you'd have no issues with building permits to the attention of the local MLAs, so that they could reach out to community members as needed and help the

general community understand what the building permits were.

I was wondering: does this budget hold any funding to help ramp up your planning staff so that you can support land-use planning and real and professional land-use planning across the unincorporated areas of this province the way you committed to?

Mr. R. Brown: We're committed to land-use planning across Prince Edward Island. As I said earlier today – and with your questions earlier today concerning the non-resident land purchases and the corporate purchases on Prince Edward Island, we've been hearing it, all MLAs have been hearing the concerns. There have been letters to the editor, Facebook, discussions and it is an issue, that's why I have asked for a report to be done.

The staff at the planning section does a tremendous job. The Island economy is booming, not only in Charlottetown, but right across Prince Edward Island. We see permits in, according to question 50 or 52 from the opposition, you've seen that permits have gone up 39%. Those permits are in, not the city or planning areas that issue their own permits. There is a lot of pressure on the staff. That's one of the reasons that the City of Charlottetown is looking for a new permitting system. The province and the City of Charlottetown is going to work together in reviewing these permitting systems and hopefully, we can have a new and modern, up-to-date one pretty soon.

Mr. Trivers: Are you hiring new planners to help with this land-use planning this year?

George Mason Director: We're not hiring new planners, but we do have a half-time consultant in the department and we have funding for another fulltime consultant, being that it's likely going to be a shorter term. Or, at least, we have a shorter term issue to resolve.

Mr. Trivers: Is the funding for those consultants coming out of that professional services line, the \$260,000?

George Mason Director: Yes, it would be.

Mr. Trivers: Do you believe that's enough money for the amount of land-use planning you'll need to do to properly plan in the unincorporated areas? And, at the same time, as you already mentioned, fund feasibility studies for amalgamation and annexation?

It just seems that – \$260,000 is a significant increase over last year, but I'm not entirely sure, myself, given the scope of planning that needs to be done and the number of feasibility studies that I think are going to have to come forward, that's going to be enough.

Mr. R. Brown: We will be prioritizing the planning areas that want a proper plan put in place. With the building permits going up and the increased revenue in that area, probably, we would be able to secure more money in order to meet those requirements.

Again, we want to work with the municipalities. We want to work with individuals across Prince Edward Island because we feel it's extremely important that all of Prince Edward Island is well-planned.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

I was just opening up the handouts when you passed the first section there, so, with you and the minister's indulgence –

Mr. R. Brown: Sure.

Mr. MacEwen: I'm curious. The professional services fees for blind trust, is that for the minister or deputy minister's blind trust?

Mr. R. Brown: Who's that from?

George Mason Director: That's your blind trust.

Mr. R. Brown: That's my blind trust.

Mr. MacEwen: Sorry, I (Indistinct) –

Chair: He didn't hear you.

Mr. R. Brown: That's my blind trust.

Mr. MacEwen: Your blind trust. So –

Mr. R. Brown: How much is that?

Mr. MacEwen: – is that common? Like, is that right across the board with all ministers and deputy ministers that the government covers the fees for blind trusts?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. MacEwen: It is?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: I appreciate you putting that in there, because it's the first time I've ever seen that.

So does that mean all the other ministers have that somewhere in their department, just under their expenses, or are you just more forthright with yours?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct) blind trust.

Mr. MacEwen: Pardon?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: True. Thank you for putting it in there, Minister.

Mr. R. Brown: Thanks.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I want to follow up a little bit on the questions of the member from Rustico when he talked about the grants that were available to help people organize for amalgamation. How much money did your department provide the Three Rivers group in their planning process?

George Mason Director: If I may just comment, there's a FOIPP request on that particular item, so I wouldn't want to differ with the answer.

Mr. Myers: Okay. I didn't put it in.

George Mason Director: But last year, we estimated about 140,000 to date and it's about 140,000 to date by my estimate still.

That does not include the funding that TIU would have put in.

Mr. Myers: I appreciate that answer. I actually don't really have any issue with it, to be honest; but what I'm wondering is in the cases where there's organized entities who don't want amalgamation as you move through, will there be funding available to them? Because I work with a group out home, and really it's – there's no money. There's none at all; and it's hard to get access to the type of resources you need to do some of the studies and the work if you don't have that resource.

I'm wondering if, as you move on, is there even small pockets of funding to help groups? To rent a hall to have a meeting, even, could be limiting in some cases.

Mr. MacEwen: Or a plebiscite.

Mr. Myers: Or a plebiscite.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you. Thank you for the question. The Three Rivers areas already have a tremendous resource in yourself.

Mr. Myers: I don't have any money, though.

Mr. R. Brown: I think that's a question that could be put – the process is before IRAC right now – that's a question you could put forward to IRAC, and if IRAC makes a recommendation back to the department, we'd kindly entertain it.

Mr. Myers: So I think that – I appreciate that, and I mean, will probably bring it forward in my submission to IRAC –

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, good.

Mr. Myers: – and as you know, I wasn't in the position where I was trying to get sucked into the middle of this. I think part of the reason I was, was that there was no resources and ability to get some of these things done.

I think I helped out a little bit and some people reached in their own pockets so we could have a plebiscite, to pay for halls and that kind of thing. Not that I mind, and not that the other people minded, but when there are groups – democracy is democracy.

Whether or not it's saying what you want it to say, it says what it's supposed to say at the end of the day. Or at least that's what I believe in.

I don't think that any of the work of the people in the unincorporated areas were disruptive in any way, or meant as such, and it's just people looking out for the things that they believed in. They organized themselves and stuff like that, so I think it's important for other groups, for other places as you move down the line, for people to know that if you're going to help organize the people who want it, that there should be an opportunity for funding for people who maybe don't want it or maybe who view things differently, or maybe want to do studies for other smaller municipalities.

Because if you look at the Three Rivers one, there's maybe people who would believe that that one is much too large, but something smaller might be more palatable. But, they can't do a study because there's only one group that got money.

Anyways, I just wanted to urge you as you're moving forward you really should consider it because it never needed to be a big fight. Unfortunately, it turned into one. But, if there were even small pockets of funding available for opposing views, their research and data that might go with that might make everybody sing the same song at the end of the day anyways.

Mr. R. Brown: I'd have to agree with you, hon. member.

If IRAC – the interveners that are in front of IRAC, if IRAC feels that some funding should be put towards some research for those organizations, I'd entertain that.

Thank you.

Mr. Myers: Okay, that's good.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'll follow on from the questions of the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

You just told us that approximately the cost of the Three Rivers Wood study was

\$140,000. I assume there were other – it wasn't just the Wood study, there would have been other elements to that. I see that you've budgeted \$260,000 and you did say that that's not a hard number, and it could be increased.

But, basically you're saying there's enough for one and a half, two maybe, studies of that size across the Island. So, how many growth management studies are you anticipating in the next year? I know there's one ongoing in my own district in district 17 so I know of at least one. How many are you anticipating?

Mr. R. Brown: I'm informed that we have up to three right now that are looking at doing studies and seeing how they can work together and manage together. They would be no where the size of the one in the Three Rivers area, and I think that, again, we're willing to work with the communities and we believe in strong communities right across Prince Edward Island.

If there's a need for additional financing, I, as minister, will go back to Treasury Board and see if I can get it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Are you willing to tell us what regions those three are in? Again, I know that one of them is in the West River region in my district.

George Mason Director: Yeah, there's one out in Evangeline.

Mr. R. Brown: Evangeline, Pleasant Valley or the North Shore there.

George Mason Director: (Indistinct) Bideford.

Mr. R. Brown: Bideford.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: There are people that think that – they're not only out to meet the requirements of the municipality act; they're out for the betterment of their community.

We're all talking about these restrictions in the *Municipal Government Act*, the people that are joining here are asking for these studies have their community first and foremost, and not the requirements of the

legislation. That's why I'm willing to – I made a commitment. I'm willing to sign – if it's not \$4,000 and \$700 million or \$200 million and it wants to go to IRAC, I will sign the application to move forward on any community that does its studies and want to – I'm not going to impede people that want to work together to build a better community. I will ask IRAC to review each and every one of them.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate that commitment, minister, very much and I have to agree again with the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters that this didn't need to – should not have ended up as a big fight.

I think the big mistake that was made was that the unincorporated communities – you say you want to work with municipalities, and that's great, but, you also have to work with areas that are outside those municipalities, and that's an awful lot of Islanders.

I'm wondering whether there is provision in those studies, in those growth management studies, for funding for the engagement of unincorporated communities to be part of that discussion right from the very beginning, because that to me was the problem with what happened in Three Rivers.

Mr. Trivers: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: I thank you for your question, and you're right.

There has to be room for the unincorporated areas. It's just not a matter of a municipality growing bigger into an unincorporated area. They have to have opportunities in order to have their input, and I'll commit to you that that will be done.

If communities come together within an area, they should be out reaching to their unincorporated areas and I understand that in the Three Rivers area that was done. If an incorporated area wants to annex some outside area, they have to be fully engaged in the people in the outside areas.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I can only refer to the situation in my own District 17 because I'm familiar with all of the municipalities that are involved in that and those that are not.

Contiguous to the area is a large swath of unincorporated areas.

Now, currently, as far as I'm aware, none of those unincorporated areas are part of this discussion. This is entirely between the incorporated municipalities.

In wondering, in the study that's ongoing there, if any funding, at all, has been set aside for engagement of those unincorporated areas, so that they are part of this discussion from the get go so we don't end up with another Three Rivers?

Mr. R. Brown: That's a good question. I'll have you an answer back.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Great.

Mr. R. Brown: I agree with you. Do you have any ideas how, who? Somebody from the unincorporated area would come in and say, I want to be represented. Would they have to organize, in your opinion, or how would you see it working? Just in discussion.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's part of the problem –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – of course, is there is no designated leadership within unincorporated areas beyond the rural MLAs that serve there.

I wouldn't want to proffer a –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, okay.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – solution to that now but I think that's something that has to be carefully thought of because we do want to avoid another Three Rivers debacle, to be repeated across the province.

On the salaries line here, how many planners are currently employed by the department?

George Mason Director: Sorry, I just have to count them up, as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure.

George Mason Director: It's basically, a few.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So, I guess –

George Mason Director: Not a very good count, is it?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – that where I'm getting at is, do you think that there are enough planners in the department to cope with the – somebody asked, I can't remember who it was, about Island-wide land-use planning, which we know is coming.

Maybe the first question is: what is the timeline for implementation of Island-wide land-use planning?

Mr. R. Brown: There's a definite requirement for more planners. I'd agree with you because as again, as I said earlier, we have a 39% increase in permits right across Prince Edward Island, which is saying there is a lot of development going on right across Prince Edward Island, which is good for the economy of Prince Edward Island. The staff is under a lot of pressure because planning issues are very hard issues to deal with.

I know when I was on the city, and the deputy speaker would also know, a tremendous amount of time is spent in planning because you're trying to bring people together, and you're trying to make – there's differences of opinions on various people in the planning. How they want to see their area.

When we get the report done from IRAC on the non-residential and corporate land ownership, we'd be moving right on to a provincial planning. From now on, the department has been saying that basically, instead of going out and zoning everything right away, that the current use of the property is, to me, I would consider the zone. If it's agriculture, it's agriculture. If it's commercial, it's commercial. If it's residential, it's residential.

If anybody wants to convert from agriculture to commercial or residential to commercial, we are requiring public meetings in the area we want the permit. When the application comes in for a redevelopment of a property, in a particular area, we want to make sure that we engage the area, not only with a letter sent to them anymore, saying this proposal is in, this is what they want to do.

If I don't receive anything back, we will go ahead with the permit. We're just going to put an extra step in there that there are some engagement with the community.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Following on in that comment you just made, minister, and I appreciate that.

For a new shale pit to be opened on land that is currently zoned as agricultural, is there a change of use required for that shale pit to be given the permit?

Mr. R. Brown: From my perspective, yes. Is there one going somewhere?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I don't know, but there's talk of one in –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – my district –

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – I just want to get some information.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh no. Look, we'd never change it, agriculture to a shale pit without proper consultation with the community and they would have to get a permit for that. I think everyone is understanding that if they're changing the use of their property they have to apply for a development permit.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: If there was sufficient community opposition to that, minister, you would certainly take that into account in whether or not you would issue a permit for that land?

Mr. R. Brown: Definitely.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, okay.

Mr. R. Brown: I can assure you, if any pits are going in like that, they'll have to have a public consultation for the area.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Great.

Mr. R. Brown: Then, you know, if the permit is issued they'll have the recourse of appealing to IRAC. They'd have a rough time getting a permit.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, back, let me bring this up here. Back in January, I submitted a question to your office –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) we get back to you –

Mr. Fox: – in regards to – and you got back to me, yes, you did. In regards to building permits across the province.

The answer come back and it said that we don't issue building permits. Then, it came back, in the second part of that and it said that we only issue subdivision permits and something else.

I guess the first question is: Does the department issue building permits, yes or no?

George Mason Director: We get into a bit of terminology, which I get into trouble with, myself. A development permit, in my view, allows you to put a building on a lot; so, you (Indistinct) building to build something. A building permit, normally, allows you to put on a building, which is then inspected as it goes on and it falls under the building code.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

George Mason Director: So –

Mr. Fox: Did you write the answer?

George Mason Director: We don't issue building permits, is correct, but it's perhaps being a little technical.

Mr. Fox: There you go, okay.

With that –

George Mason Director: But –

Mr. R. Brown: I can assure you, we are reviewing the regulations. There are gaps in procedure and we're formalizing those procedures a lot better for Islanders.

Mr. Fox: With that, I asked for a breakdown of building permit applications by the following headings: building permit number, date of application submitted, date of application reviewed, date of application approved, and whether or not IRAC was involved. I never got that answer.

Where I'm going with this is, what I'm being told by contractors, is that that office needs more staff. It's very simple, as simple as that. If you put in a building permit within a city or a town, or within Charlottetown, the contractors are saying they can get an application back approved within two weeks to three weeks. Apparently, up in Prince County, it takes up to two months, six weeks to two months.

Can we look at getting more staff and resources in there to ensure that these building permits can get out the door and construction starts?

Mr. R. Brown: There are some vacancies that I've asked the deputy to fill ASAP. Again, you know, over the last three years, the economy has been booming. The permits are up 39%, 40% and we just have to catch up to the permits. I've been hearing it. I've been listening. And, we're out, you will see that we are out trying to get more officers, planning officers.

Mr. Fox: That would be great.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to follow-up on the scene that the Leader of the Third Party was on. There's a plan for three new municipalities, but we keep hearing from government that there's too many municipalities.

How many do you and the Premier think there should be?

Mr. R. Brown: The Carver report made recommendations that we're putting to a section in the *Municipal Government Act*, but there is a section there that the minister has the authority to sign-off on any

municipality that doesn't meet the Carver report recommendation.

As I said to the Leader of the Third Party, any group of people that want to get together on Prince Edward Island, and to work together in order to make their community better, if it doesn't meet the requirements of the Carver report or that section, I will sign-off on that permit to go forward, or that application to go forward to IRAC.

Are we looking for 25 small, or 25 super municipalities? No we're not. That was a recommendation in the Carver report. Someday, 30, 40, 50 years down the road, that may be the case, but in the policy right now is any group of people that want to get together to provide services in their area or to provide planning in their area, we're willing to work with that community. If it doesn't meet the Carver standards, I'm willing to sign-off on it to go to IRAC.

Mr. Myers: It's not just the Carver standards, it's your own legislation that it has to meet the requirement of.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Myers: So there's that.

The second thing is that many of the small municipalities out there, now, feel like they're a target so their office has to be open more days a week, and they have to offer more services and they have to offer more services and there's a lot of confusion out there about whether or not they can continue to exist as an entity.

So, whether you want to call it forced amalgamation or not, a lot of them are feeling like their hand's being forced and that they have to go talk to their neighbors because they can't meet the requirement of the *Municipalities Act* that you brought forward. So there's two things: You're not having any hand in planning or no hand in what this might look like and anybody who wants to talk to one another, you'll let them come forward with an option and you'll sign off on it and let it go to IRAC.

But if you're doing that, there is no – I don't know how it's all going to piece together and I don't know how it's going to be any better than what you have and I don't know

why it's so important. The feeling out in the ground is that there is a bigger plan. I'm just asking: Would you tell us what the plan is?

Mr. R. Brown: The plan the government has is to – first of all, we're not forcing amalgamation. If the people of the area want to amalgamate, or if some people in a particular area say: Look, we're under a lot of pressure here. We should have our own planning area. We should take charge of our area here and we want to determine what we want in our community or our area. We're encouraging people to get together to talk about their particular slice or piece of Prince Edward Island and their planning requirements in that area – we're encouraging. Again, like I say, we're not forcing any amalgamation.

Mr. Myers: So you bring up some interesting points there. You respect the wishes of the people and whatever they want is what you want. Who do you side with: the town councils of Georgetown and Montague who opted out, or the rogue committee who put forward the report to IRAC? Which one of those, do you think, speaks for the people in their jurisdictions?

Mr. R. Brown: Again, the communities came together. They worked for three years seeing how they could make their interpretation of making their community better. Close to the end of it, the municipalities started – Georgetown decided not to continue on, but the reports were done, the committee said: we still want to go forward with this. Montague was a close vote, but the other communities wanted to move forward. The process is set up in place to allow that process to go forward and the reports, as you've seen on the IRAC website, are available and IRAC is moving forward with the requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*.

Mr. Myers: I just want to clarify again. Number one: You're evaluating the vote as close and I don't think that matters in a democracy.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, sure.

Mr. Myers: Your vote to sit in that chair was close, too –

Mr. R. Brown: Yes it was.

Mr. Myers: – and no one's questioning whether or not you should be there. So, the vote's the vote and they voted against it.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Myers: So Montague is an incorporated town and they chose not to go ahead with this. Georgetown's an incorporated town and they chose not to go ahead with this. Then there's the unincorporated community who voted overwhelmingly to not go ahead with this. By my estimation, Georgetown, Montague, and the unincorporated areas alone would make up 75% of the total area, so how is it that you're siding with the people if you're not siding with those people?

Mr. R. Brown: I read in the news there this morning that Montague will be filing an objection and the vote was six-zero. I hope the *Municipal Government Act* and the procedures outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* in terms of IRAC's procedures to move forward – at this point in time, there's an opportunity for IRAC to appoint a mediator because the objection will be filed and I hope that a mediator will be hired and that they will meet with the particular areas down there and if they come up with a plan to move forward, we will move – and the communities agree with it, there's an opportunity here to rethink this.

Mr. Myers: I guess the frustrating part for me as a representative in that area is that no one's going to agree on it and that's kind of the – I know you inherited this, so I'm not –

Mr. R. Brown: No, no.

Mr. Myers: – trying to blame you directly, but you inherited it and the feeling on the ground out there is that it was thought up out in Covehead Bay and it's the Premier's baby and he wants it. So, I'm just saying: that's the way people feel out there and I'm not, of course, advocating on the Premier's behalf one way or another, I'm just the representative and I'm in the middle of it.

Do you understand why the communities of Georgetown, Montague, and the unincorporated areas feel let down by government over this? They feel like they voiced their say and that because the act allows any group to move forward that

there's a group moving forward even though they said they don't want this. Do you understand where that frustration is borne from?

Mr. R. Brown: I can see the frustration in some people, but I also can see the enthusiasm of other people that are putting the plan forward. We have two groups of people in the area and they have difference of opinions on how they want to see their area grow and I'm just respecting the people that have met for three years and that worked extremely hard over the last three years to put together a plan for their area to move forward.

Mr. Myers: I noticed in one of your expense claims you took the group out to lunch. Who was it that you met with for lunch that day?

Mr. R. Brown: I met with the chairman of the committee and an heir and all they wanted to do at that time – I was appointed the new minister – they called my office and they just indicated to me that they wanted to update me on the processes that were occurring. I met with them and my comments to them at that time were: Thank you for the information you provided and thank you for your input. There is policies set out in the *Municipal Government Act* and I will be following those policies.

Mr. Myers: Based on the conversation we're having here, I'm led to believe that – well I know for a fact 77% of the people voted against it, so I have that statistic because it's fact and because a small group of people who met for three years don't want to let it go, they forced us now to go to IRAC and that IRAC could bring a mediator forward to give the 77% of the people what they want, or to give the 23% or the 22% of the people who are the minority, what they want.

Why is it that the majority needs a mediator when they already know what they want? They don't want it. They don't need a mediator. They've told you what they want.

Mr. R. Brown: I guess it's an opportunity to take one more look at the data for the area. It's one more opportunity to see if the will of the committee can be met. It's an opportunity – a group of people have come

together, they've worked hard, they have a plan together, and it's an opportunity to have some further discussion on it and if a mediator is appointed by IRAC and can come out with another solution, we're willing to look at it.

Mr. Myers: I know you're the minister responsible for this and I know you inherited it. I've also followed your career since you've been elected, so I knew who you actually are, you're a man of the people. If this issue was happening down here in the east end of Charlottetown, you not only would, but you have, been front and center to fight for the people and what the people want.

What changes now that you no longer want what the people want, surely a little bit of a raise in your salary doesn't make you not a man of the people anymore?

Mr. R. Brown: No. I agree with you there and an H-O-N doesn't give me a PhD either. I look at it this way: When amalgamation happened in the City of Charlottetown there were a lot of issues and concerns about it. As a leader, or an elected person for the area, I looked at the amalgamation plan for the City of Charlottetown and I came to the conclusion that it was good for Charlottetown; it was good for the local residents. There was opposition against it, but I felt that it was important. It was better for the City of Charlottetown to do this.

I am from downtown Charlottetown. I went back to my residents and tried to address their concerns in terms of this. When the amalgamation did occur, 80% of my district, my new district, was in Parkdale and Sherwood, and I'm proud to say that I won those polls.

It was amazing because the people said: we may have real concerns about it, but at the fundamental principle of it, it was good for the community.

I think, I've taken these – that experience into this process and said: let's see if something can be done for the betterment of the community or any communities across Prince Edward Island. Because when a community gets together and puts its mind toward something, and want to work together, great things happen.

No way, would we, if it wasn't for amalgamation in the City of Charlottetown, we wouldn't have the waterfront we have today. We wouldn't have the complex at UPEI, we have today. We wouldn't have the ditch in filling that we have in a number of areas.

At some point in time, an elected person – and you know, you represent the people – but at some time you have to say: okay, this is good for my community. I think it's good for my community. I've looked at it. You know what? I've got to out on a limb on this one and make it happen.

I did it in Charlottetown, and I still think it's the best thing that happened.

Mr. Myers: To my understanding, what you say is that you believe in amalgamation and that with your will you want to go out on a limb and make this happen.

If that's the case, I guess that's fine. If that's the case, can you just tell Islanders that? You're making them fight amongst themselves. If it's your will that this is going to happen and you think it's for a better tomorrow, tell people that. Don't make us fight with one another over it.

Mr. R. Brown: No. What I said was in my constituency, my residents, when I was at the city. I made an analysis in that. I went back to my constituents and explained what amalgamation was, what it was about and how it was going to make our area better.

I think it's up to the local people that are elected in that area to determine that. I did it for my residents. There were a lot of negotiations and discussions taking place. At some point in time, if you think it's good, you have to go with it and, quite obviously, if you don't think it's good, you have to go with that, too.

But, you know, if there's a willingness to come together to make things better – and that's an interpretation between yourself and your constituents – that's your decision. I went to houses that people said: I'll now vote for you if you do this, ended up voting for me.

Mr. Myers: I guess, when you look at the sheer size of the Three Rivers amalgamation process and the size of the towns that are involved in it, they're good sized, healthy rural towns. Their proximity is, well to Panmure Island from Georgetown is 25 minutes? I would drive to Charlottetown pretty near as quick as I would to get to Panmure Island, and that's going to be part of a mega municipality.

If that's the case, will it be the will of this government to amalgamate Tignish, Alberton and O'Leary together, which would be a very similar geographic and town-sized space?

Mr. R. Brown: We are adamant in our position that we are not going to force amalgamation on anyone in the province. It has to be community-driven, community-approved, or community-negotiated.

Mr. Myers: Except for Montague, who voted against it and Georgetown, who withdrew from it. They have a dually-elected council and suddenly they don't matter.

I guess I'm – I've struggled to understand how people, who went door-to-door had elections and were named councilors in their area, have zero say, and somebody who lives down the road says: no, guess what? We're taking you.

How do you explain that?

Mr. R. Brown: Hon. member, the community will have its say through the IRAC process. The process is outlined. I believe it's a good process. It's the same process that's used across the country.

I've been reviewing legislation across the country. Nova Scotia, it's basically the same procedure there. The only –

Mr. Myers: What would lead anyone to believe that a mega municipality council would get any more respect from you than the ones that you've discarded already?

Mr. R. Brown: I haven't lost respect for anybody. I haven't discarded anyone. The process has been laid out in the *Municipal Government Act* and we're following the *Municipal Government Act*.

It's a process that outlines engagement of the community. There are difference of opinions in the community right now. The process is outlined in IRAC. Further information will be made available, I assume. Each and every person in the affected area will have their voice said or heard.

Mr. Myers: Except that they did. Here's where the confusion lies, is you're saying the communities of Montague and Georgetown, who have voted against this and all the unincorporated people who voted against this will get to have their say, because you don't think that they already did.

I'm going to set the record straight: they already did and it's been disregarded. And now you're saying, no, no, the place they're going to get their say is IRAC. But, I know IRAC is a recommending body. It's you that has the final say. After it goes through the IRAC process, we're still going to have lobby you to get what we want.

The issue that I have and I want you to answer this for me. The unincorporated area people have been told: no, no have this because it'll give you a voice. What kind of a voice did being a municipality give Montague or Georgetown in this process?

Mr. R. Brown: There is a process outlined in the *Municipal Government Act* and we're following that process. Montague will have a voice at the IRAC hearings.

Mr. Myers: But why didn't they have a voice as an incorporated municipality?

It stems from – do you see the comparison? If your elected councils' voice didn't matter to the minister responsible for communities, what difference is the size of your municipality? Right?

So we're going to make a bigger municipality for you to ignore? How big of a municipality do we need to be for us to be able to have your attention?

Mr. R. Brown: We didn't ignore anybody in this process. The process was grassroots driven by community-minded people in the area. They got together, requested the province some funding to do some analysis.

That funding was provided. The analysis was done, and presented to the communities down there. The analysis is on the table. The procedures are in place. Montague voted against it. The unincorporated areas, or the vote. I know that IRAC will take that vote into consideration when it makes its recommendation to government.

To say, in the middle of the process, one party wants to leave the process and just say, okay, let's shut her all down. I think that would be unfair.

Mr. Myers: I think lots of people would think it was also unfair that they were drug into it, because they were drug into on the basis that this was just a discussion. It started out: it was just a discussion.

Then, after a while, it was like, we're going to present this to the people. Nowhere did anybody ever think that they didn't have an opt out clause. So, nowhere did anybody think that somewhere down the road they're going to say, no, we don't want this.

I'll tell you that the councilors in Georgetown that I talked to never once thought that they were going to be completely disregarded when they opted out, and they opted out a long, long time ago. They didn't follow this all the way down the road. The people from Montague, their council has voted against it. With the same metrics, Lower Montague, the people voted against it and the town voted for it. One of the other communities voted against it and their community council voted for it.

The whole thing is a complete mess, in my opinion. It's a mess, and it's a lesson of how not to do democracy, in my opinion. I don't care if you spent 10 years coming up with the report. If people don't want it, then you don't get to have it. It would be like saying that your government worked really hard for the last 10 years to win the vote of the people and lose the next election and you say: Well, hold it now. We worked 10 years for it. We deserve it because we worked 10 years.

It doesn't work like that. People have to have the say because otherwise, there is no fairness and there is no democracy in it. I'm wondering, again – I don't think you've answered the question: How would people

expect that if they were in a bigger municipality their voice would get more respect than it did in the smaller municipalities, which was zero?

Mr. R. Brown: I disagree with: They got zero.

They're being heard quite loudly. You organized a plebiscite and you've got your constituents to voice their opinion and that's good, and that information will be forwarded to IRAC and in the discussions out of IRAC, hopefully a decision can come out of that. No, well a decision has to come out of it.

But, in the interim, when Montague is now filing an objection, a mediator will be appointed and that will be an opportunity to maybe let's take a rethink and see what we can do.

Mr. Myers: Why have you waited to intervene? You know this is all going to happen. Montague is going to object. Several others are going to object. Probably, like several, several others are going to object. There's going to be miles of them coming.

Why haven't you intervened and just say: Whoa, we have to stop this. And find a way that we can mediate our way out of this way before you let it blow up into what it's basically become, where it's pitted sides.

Quite frankly, I'm not even sure that – I think it's pretty one-sided. I don't think you're going to find there's much of a for side by the time this is all said and done because that's generally what fighting does. There's only one victor, and they usually wipe out the other side. That's basically what's happening. I live there. I see it every single day. I don't hear anybody saying anymore that it's good, because no one would ever say that out loud out home anymore. They really wouldn't. They would not say it out loud anymore because you can't go through the grocery store without people talking about it.

It's funny; I was pumping gas this morning and a lady who was a constituent of mine was next to me and she said: They won't really put this amalgamation thing through, will they? I'm like – they don't think you'll

do it. You know why? Because they still believe in democracy, and they feel like they had a voice. They're looking at the government saying: The government won't force this upon us because well why would they? We've had our say.

How can you possibly move forward? How can you possibly do anything but stop this right now, when your own reputation and the reputation of democracy are at serious risk?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, and that's the game of politics, that you, as an elected person, you weigh your constituents and you weigh the policies or the arguments or the issues of the day that are coming up and you fight for them.

The process – I'm respecting the process that was played out for the last two-and-a-half to three years. I'm hoping that some sort of reconciliation or some sort of area could come out of the discussions to (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: I might disagree slightly on the politics. I think that you wholly weigh it on what your constituents want and that's what you used to do.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, I do.

Mr. Myers: That's what Ronnie MacKinley used to do. I think that's what you're still capable of doing and I would hope that you would go back to your own roots as a politician and remember a time when you used to put all the people before policy, and what the Premier wants you to do, or what you're being forced to do as a minister, and really reflect on this from the point of view of when you started in politics and how you viewed this.

Because if you viewed it the same way today as you did then, you would be agreeing with me completely and saying: Let's stop this and go out and have a discussion. You can come next Thursday night and say it right in front of a group of hundreds of people, if you wish, at Kaylee Hall and say: Look, I'm going to use my power as minister to stop this and go back to the grassroots. And say: Let's see if there's a better way. Let's not fight. Let's show the leadership that we're capable of showing

right now and see what the people need so that it works for everyone, or doesn't work at all and we move on.

Mr. R. Brown: Thanks.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Forests, Fish and Wildlife

Division Management

“Appropriations provided for the management of the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division, as well as the financial support to community-based organizations through the watershed management fund.” Administration: 22,100. Equipment: 3,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 3,100. Professional Services: 10,000. Salaries: 377,400. Travel and Training: 19,800. Grants: 1,210,000.

Total Division Management: 1,645,400.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking at the salaries line here and there's a bit of a seesaw when the budget estimate from last year in the forecast are different and now we're back down again.

Can you explain what happened there?

George Mason Director: I should be able to.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

George Mason Director: It actually is the same little seesaw every year, I'm afraid, and that is we keep all of the funding in watershed groups, but part of that funding is actually salaries for the students. So, when it comes to the forecast, those salaries get moved from the watershed grants to the casual salaries where they're paid from.

The reason for that is in the budget we try to keep the watershed – the funding of watersheds whole, but when we actually pay it out, a number of the students, all of the students, in fact, get paid out of the salary line. So that's why you see the salary line

going up and you'll see the watershed grant going down, if you look at the couple of lines below.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Just to investigate that a little bit further, so this would be the Jobs for Youth program, presumably you're talking about?

George Mason Director: I don't believe it's Jobs for Youth.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, some of them –

George Mason Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: It's some Jobs for Youth and it's some EDA.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Mr. R. Brown: Look, I agree.

I think it's instead of when the watershed group comes with its plan to the department, I think we'll have to do some consolidation on that plan and that plan then gets approved by the department of environment, and in it would be the Jobs for Youth and the jobs EDA and JCP, because it's a great opportunity for some people with barriers to go through the watershed group areas and they do an excellent job, at not only fixing rivers and streams and buffer areas throughout Prince Edward Island, but they do a tremendous job helping vulnerable people get a chance at employment, and plus students to get a chance.

I agree with you. It's time that we put the application all in one and to say: Instead – okay, we'll give you this much money, now go over to this section and get this much, apply there and apply here. Maybe it's time to just have them one application and then we'd be the lead department and try to get it approved through the others.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That makes a lot of sense to me, and particularly if this is an annual event where the budget line is taken from somewhere else and then – it just doesn't really make a lot sense to me, so I appreciate that, minister, I hope you have initiative to fix that.

On the grants side, I'm looking at the woodlot owners and the forest enhancement

program – fantastic program and three quarters of a million dollars approximately – a little bit more than that. I'm wondering – because that program has changed a lot of the (Indistinct) –

Mr. R. Brown: I think you may be in a different section.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Oh, I'm so sorry.

Chair: Can you hold that –

Mr. R. Brown: Hey, I won't talk about it now. It's quarter to five.

Chair: No worries. Are you good hon. member?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry about that. I am.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Minister, I know there's a program out there and I can't think of the name, but I believe it's if you're over two and a half acres for a certain cost, government will go out and plant trees on a property.

Are you familiar with that program?

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. MacKay: What is it called?

Mr. R. Brown: Forest enhancement?

Mr. MacKay: Oh, that's all – that's what he's – okay, I'll wait for that section too.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: It's a great program.

Chair: Shall the section carry?

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks.

I was just wondering if you've made any progress – along the same lines as the questions from the Leader of the Third Party about providing the ability for watershed

groups to go and get their students earlier on instead of waiting until this budget estimate process is over which can be later on because they typically need to look in April, right? Or even earlier just to get the students that they would prefer. Have you made any progress with that?

Chair: Approve this right now and we can.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes. If you approve it right now, we'll get to work on it right tomorrow morning.

No, you're right. The application process for the watershed groups – the watershed groups have evolved over time. At one time, they were a bunch of community-minded volunteers out there. We've organized it. It's a much better process. We've injected some funding into it, but there is three pots of funding – or maybe four at some points in time: the watershed money itself, EDA, JCP, and students; it's a time to bring it together and to get it approved at once.

Mr. Trivers: As a former minister of workforce and advanced learning and now Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, do you talk about this in Cabinet? Do you have a plan, or is this still at this point just talking to us in budget estimates and saying –

Mr. R. Brown: You'll be there in 10 or 20 years.

Mr. Trivers: – talking to us in budget estimates and saying: yes, it's a great idea – like we hear every year. Is there actually a plan in place for this to happen (Indistinct)?

Mr. R. Brown: We're working together. It has been identified through this department and through the watershed groups that there's some organization that needs to be done.

Mr. Trivers: My question is on the grants. I'm looking at the Maritime Lumber Bureau grant for support funding of Atlantic WoodWORKS! I probably should know what this is, but I don't. What is that?

George Mason Director: It is a program they have to promote wood construction.

Mr. Trivers: Sorry. They have to –

George Mason Director: To promote wood construction.

Mr. Trivers: Promote wood construction.

George Mason Director: And particularly very modern wood construction. It's also tied into climate change initiatives. So the wood construction displaces or can displace poured concrete and steel in buildings.

Mr. Trivers: So where do we see that? I don't –

Mr. R. Brown: Well, when you see the new national building code that's coming out and you'll see the climate change plan that's coming out is saying that wood is a better option and today they are building buildings up to 10 or 11 stories with wood right now – with the new composite wood components you can purchase today, sometimes wood is stronger than steel.

Mr. Trivers: So just to be clear, Atlantic WoodWORKS! is a company –

George Mason Director: I would call it a program of the Maritime Lumber Bureau and each of the Atlantic Provinces, I believe, provides them with a grant.

Mr. Trivers: It sounds like a great program. I just wasn't familiar with it.

Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, and you'll see that through the climate change initiative that wood is going to be a big part of that and woodlot owners is going to be a big part of our meeting our targets because every time we can convert to wood, it's carbon neutral, as opposed to burning oil. I'd love to see that we are a province that is sustaining itself and wood is our option.

Mr. Trivers: Yes. I think that's great. It should be, maybe, of help to Jamie Larkin – he's trying to get his 5,000 new housing spaces built. Anyway, thank you.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Forest Fire Protection

“Appropriations provided for the costs associated with forest fire prevention and

suppression on private and public lands.”
Administration: 15,500. Equipment: 8,000.
Materials, Supplies and Services: 14,900.
Professional Services: 1,500. Salaries:
80,100. Travel and Training: 34,500. Grants:
8,000.

Total Forest Fire Protection: 162,500.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Can you give us an update, minister, on where we stand with our replacements of the old forest trucks?

George Mason Director: Yes. As you know, we purchased the large truck for hauling our Bombardiers last year. This year, the plan is to buy the first of the six replacement fire trucks that will go in the fire department. There’s been a little bit of a delay in the one this year, so we won’t get it until later this year. We originally had hoped to have it by the beginning of the fire season.

Mr. Fox: So, does the province pay for fire departments – their members to be trained on those trucks or that equipment?

George Mason Director: I don’t know the answer to that, actually. We’ll get you that.

Mr. R. Brown: I hope so.

Mr. Fox: Same here.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Fox: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: I just want to take the opportunity to – I’ll ask myself a question.

Chair: First time for everything. But do you know the answer?

Mr. R. Brown: No. The payroll’s gone from \$85,000 to \$211,000.

Mr. Trivers: You stole my question. You’ll ask it way better than me.

Chair: I can’t wait to hear the answer.

Mr. R. Brown: Do you have the answer?

Chair: Hon. member, could you just ask the question?

Mr. R. Brown: Okay.

Why did the budget for last year forecast go from \$85,000 to \$211,000?

Ms. Biggar: Why?

Mr. R. Brown: That’s because of our tremendous forest fire fighters that were called upon to go to BC to help them with their forest fires and all reports are – a tremendous job done by our staff and it just goes to show that PEI, although we’re small, we can step up to the big times at any time. I just want to thank all of the firefighters (Indistinct).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Great answer.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

You alluded to a minute ago about the Bombardier. What are you talking about? That’s the first I’ve ever heard of us having an off-road track vehicle.

George Mason Director: We have two, in fact. Two Bombardiers –

Mr. Fox: Okay.

George Mason Director: – and a tractor-trailer to haul them with.

Mr. Fox: Where are they stored?

An Hon. Member: The jetty.

Mr. Myers: They’ve been locked inside the jetty (Indistinct).

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) garage.

George Mason Director: There’s one I believe is at Beach Grove maybe?

Mr. Fox: Pardon me?

George Mason Director: One, I believe, is at Beach Grove. I’m not sure where the other one is.

One's at Upton Road, rather and the other – they're both at Upton Road, but I believe that one of them they moved towards where there's fire risk.

Mr. Fox: Okay. Thank you for now.

Chair: You're good?

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Production Development

“Appropriations provided for the production of trees and shrubs for forest management on private and public forest lands, Carbon Capture, watershed enhancement and local landscape nurseries, as well as the tree improvement/seed production program.” Administration: 31,500. 12,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 274,500. Professional Services: 146,000. Salaries: 751,800. Travel and Training: 18,500.

Total Production Development: 1,234,300.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm looking at this division and I see that carbon capture is part of the division description.

Can you tell us what activities are included in that?

George Mason Director: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: No, go ahead.

George Mason Director: The majority of the activity will be tree planting for hedgerows and that sort of thing, or land that's not valuable for other use so that the plantations, as they grow, will capture carbon.

Mr. R. Brown: It is a big part of the climate change action plan and, as a matter of fact, you can see the data over the years that how much carbon is absorbed by the forest in the world. Predictions are if the forests heads down, that carbon will not be stored in the atmosphere and heat up.

It's very important –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: – that – as much as we can do.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I absolutely agree, minister.

I'm looking at the line of professional services, which is considerably – well, it was \$2,500 last year, and now it's \$146,000. What's going on?

George Mason Director: That's part of the same project. You'll find there is about 160,000 in this Budget, which is related to growing trees and that's part of that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: The carbon capture.

George Mason Director: Essentially, 43,000 of it is the professional services. Sorry, 101,000 is professional services.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm just wondering, do you have an estimate of the amount of greenhouse gases we're capturing with this program?

I mean, I know that will change with increases as years go by.

Mr. R. Brown: When the climate action change report comes out, we have to – we will be setting a target, in the plan. We will be explaining how we're going to meet that target and the forest is a big part of meeting that target. It's a tremendous big part.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Clearly, the planting of trees or hedgerows, or whatever shrub of greens we're talking about will capture carbon, and we have – I'm wondering whether the province owns any land on which, or manages any land on which they're doing this, or is this all on private property?

George Mason Director: It could be any type of land. Obviously, the private woodlot owner, or landowner would have to participate if it's on private land. If we have government land that's not productive for other purposes, which would typically be fields, if you're going to get some carbon capture, then we would be planting on that land, as well. It can be both. It would likely be both.

Mr. R. Brown: I can assure you, Kate MacQuarrie, if there's any land she can plant trees, she would be planting. She's a great person.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I guess, on the same track, with that program, am I right in saying that the province can be hired on to plant trees, at a certain cost, for residential lots, as well?

Mr. R. Brown: That's a good question. We'll get back to you. It's a good idea. I think it's great.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, minister.

My question I guess, from what I can tell, is, at a cost, they can do up to a 2.5 acre parcel. One thing, I'm hearing, is people with less acreage, so an acre, an acre-and-a-half or less, would also like to be offered the same, it's not free, it's a cost. I didn't know if it was a supply and demand issue or so forth. If we can make it the easiest way possible for people to plant trees, I think, for the better. I was just more curious if they looked at downsizing the scale from the 2.5 acres down to a smaller sized plot.

George Mason Director: I think it's fair –

Mr. MacKay: And minister, you can take that back.

George Mason Director: It's fair to say that this is not the private land program, as you know and it's not completely designed, yet.

Mr. MacKay: Okay.

George Mason Director: Those things can certainly be considered in trying to achieve exactly what you're suggesting.

Mr. MacKay: Okay, thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

Minister, sometimes over the last two or three years is, do we need or should we be looking at having a reforestation plan across the Island.

I think, one day, I made a comment that it takes 20 years to grow a tree, and you agreed with me.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes

Mr. Fox: I'd really like to know what our status of our forests are in PEI? Should we be looking at thinning projects to get rid of dead growth and to get some of the trees out of production or, maybe, into production and replanted with new? Any thoughts on that?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: I agree with you, we need a – what?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Oh.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: You had a question?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Reforestation program on Prince Edward Island. The department has been doing and the division has been doing a tremendous job in this area. But, as the increased requirements are going to be for biomass, as outlined in the Energy Strategy, which the minister will explain, we need a constant supply of chips in order to do that work in that area.

Just going up the Morell River, the other day, last Monday, I noticed a lot of trees falling down. I think, the general population, I think a lot of people believe that trees can grow for 300, 400, 500 years. Sure they can. The ones in California, but the tree stock here on Prince Edward Island has a lifespan and they fall down.

Mr. Fox: That's right.

Mr. R. Brown: If we don't do something with it, we're wasting that resource.

I'll pass the rest over to the minister of energy.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, minister.

Anytime, I can talk about our biomass program, certainly I will take that opportunity, if given.

I just want to explain about our biomass whole program that we're involved in. There are 29, right now across PEI. We're expanding that as part of the energy strategy.

I want to make it clear to all Islanders that when we enter into any kind of a biomass project, the contractors that are doing that, they're private contractors, first of all, that we engage with, but they are required to have a sustainable forest plan, that, in fact, does use the scrub, what they call the scrub wood, as opposed to cutting down those trees.

I would encourage anybody to go in and look at the one at Prince County Hospital because on the wall, you'll see there, a model of what a tree looked like before there was thinning around it; how much growth actually occurred by those trees, and the whole process. It is a very unique project. We are displacing oil use, and saving GHGs.

Without getting into any more detail, I just want to also note that the clear-cutting you see, any clear-cutting is not associated with biomass. That is a whole different process that some people engage in to clear land but it's not anything to do with biomass or hurting the forestry.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora, are you –

Mr. Fox: Thanks –

Chair: – do you have another –

Mr. Fox: – I'm very –

Chair: – question?

Mr. Fox: – familiar with that whole concept.

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Fox: But, I'm not too concerned over that. It's good that the contractor must ensure there's the product to supply the biomass.

If you take a drive down various sections of Prince County in, I'm going to say the 225, or Highway 10 or out the Freetown road, and see the amount of clear-cutting that's being done, the contractor might be able to provide your biomass, but I'm saying we're taking out hedgerows and we're not putting new growth back into the hedgerows. We are clear-cutting land that's being put into farming production. I've got no problem with that, but areas where we cannot grow crops, we should be looking at a reforestation plan to encourage growth of trees in other areas, minister?

Ms. Biggar: I just want to make sure there's not a correlation between what you said and the biomass. For everyone's information, the piles of wood that you see, or the clear-cutting that you see, on the hedgerows going, has nothing to do with biomass.

Mr. Fox: I know that.

Ms. Biggar: Okay. I just want to make sure everyone knows that.

Thank you.

Mr. Fox: We weren't talking about biomass –

Chair: Thank you, the hon. Borden –

Ms. Biggar: We are now.

Chair: – Kinkora, do you have another question?

Mr. Fox: Minister, can you – are we looking at – have we ever done a scan of the Island in regards to how much cutting is actually being done and where our forest industry is on PEI?

Mr. Roach: Call the hour.

Chair: Hon. members, the hour has been called.

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

Thank you.

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration the grant of supply to Her Majesty, I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The House will now recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Orders Other Than Government

Speaker: I will call on the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, I would like to thank the House leaders of the opposition for allowing me time to present this bill.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the 25th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 25, *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act*, Bill No. 113, ordered for second reading.

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

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that the said bill be now read a second time.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (E. Doiron): *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act*, Bill No. 113, read a second time.

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

Mr. Dumville: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, 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.

Hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, are you going to chair this bill? Okay. I will ask you to come forward, then to chair the Committee of the Whole House.

Chair (Perry): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intitled *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford, pardon?

Mr. McIsaac: I'd like to move an amendment to the bill.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. McIsaac: I have copies here they can (Indistinct) –

Can I have the podium, please?

Chair: Hon. member, would you mind if we did just a quick overview, first, and then, maybe, we'll just read that section?

Mr. McIsaac: Sure.

Chair: Then, we'll put the amendment back on.

Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition: Chair?

Chair: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: (Indistinct) number of the bill?

Chair: It is Bill No. 113.

Leader of the Opposition: 113, thank you, Chair.

Chair: You're welcome.

Now, I'll ask the mover of this bill to give an overall – some remarks on the bill, please.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Chair.

This bill came to the Legislature – originally Edwina Arbuckle's class from Montague made a fantastic presentation to the committee on education and economic development. The committee recommended the bill, and it was adopted unanimously by the Legislature.

The intent was that we had a flower and we had a bird, but we had no animal. The class presented the argument for the red fox to be named the official animal to be known as the red fox – adopted as the emblem of the province.

Chair: That's it?

Mr. Dumville: That's it.

Chair: I'll read the clause and then, I'll ask you, okay?

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

1. The Provincial Emblems and Honours Act R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. P-26.1, is amended by the addition of the following after section 1:

1.1 Animal emblem The animal known scientifically as *Vulpes Vulpes* and popularly known as the red fox is adopted as and shall be the animal emblem of the province.

I'll now give the floor to the hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to move an amendment to Bill No. 113. The amendment is moved by myself, seconded by the hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir:

Removing the words of 'Vulpes Vulpes', popularly known as the red fox and;

Replace with 'Bos Taurus', popularly known as a Holstein cow.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for bringing this debate to the floor of our Legislature. What we decide here on this topic will last for many years to come. We will be openly declaring that we are fully aware of this animal's past, its present benefit to overall community, and how it is seen by those who visit our beautiful province.

The decision, once made, cannot be changed on a whim, or with a simple-mind change of the proposer a few years down the road. On this point we must be clear.

The proposer has recently recanted his support for the red team in our province, changing his mind after 11 years of strong support to strike out on his own. I would ask the proposer that he ensure this House that he is firmly committed to the red fox and that he will not return in several years and announce that a change must be made.

But, why, I ask, should we consider only one choice in this debate? Shouldn't we put this before the general public, first? I'm sure if we were to survey the Island population, we would receive many nominations for this distinction.

From my travels throughout my district, I can tell you that the golden lab or the Shih Tzu or the doodle would garner a lot of support. As well as the standard bred horse, or the silver fox would receive many accolades for its place in our Island's history and its contribution to our economy.

Why only the red fox? Do we really know this animal? The red fox is definitely beautiful from a distance when it has its full winter coat. However, many times a year, it

is shaggy and ragged looking.

We are also warned the following of the red fox: do not allow pets to run free. Keep cats indoor, particularly at night, and small dogs on a leash and under close supervision at all times. We are also warned to protect livestock. Foxes will prey on small livestock such as; ducks, chickens, rabbits, and young lambs.

We are also warned do not feed the foxes. Do we want that to be the tagline for our provincial animal?

If you happen to be a golfer, whether are a local or a tourist, and you're playing on any of our world-class courses here on the Island, you will readily admit, the red fox is not your friend. They lie and wait for the golfer to hit his finest drive of the season down the centre of the fairway, and then the red fox charges out to capture his prize and deposit your ball in the depths of the woods.

However, hon. member, if this occurrence was reversed so that when one's errand stroke were to end up in the thicket and was retrieved by the red fox, and deposited in the middle of the fairway, I would more likely be here today giving full support to your bill, but that is not the case.

The red fox *Vulpes Vulpes*, is the largest of the two foxes and one of the most widely distributed members of the order carnivore; being present across the entire Northern Hemisphere from the Arctic Circle to North Africa, North America and Eurasia, so its existence here on the Island is not really all that special. As well, the red fox has already been chosen by the State of Mississippi as their animal designate.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. McIsaac: The range of the red fox has increased alongside human expansion, having been introduced to Australia where it is considered harmful to native mammals and bird populations. Due to its presence in Australia, it is now included among the list of the world's 100 worst invasive species. Is this then the species we want to consider as PEI's official animal?

As I stated earlier, if we were to survey the Island population for their input on this

topic, I am sure we might be inundated with many great suggestions, each which would be accompanied with ample support for their serious consideration. For this reason, Mr. Chairperson, and in all seriousness, I would like to put forward the case for the noble bovine.

I know I will be pushed to be more specific, for the sake of this discussion today, I will select the most abundant of the bovine species here on PEI, thus championing the case for the very beautiful, highly productive, and economically superior Holstein cow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McIsaac: The Holstein cow (*Bos Taurus*) is by far the most numerous of all the breeds in Prince Edward Island, comprising over 90% of our dairy herd.

It is unfortunate today that bringing this forward as seeing on the news today, it was one of the lead topics and I want to send my regrets and condolences to Ivan and Wendell Dunbar as they lost their dairy herd today. A barn fire, when you lose your cows, it's unbelievable. You're losing part of your family, it's that devastating, and a topic I hated to see on Compass or any place at all. I hate to hear that.

The history of the Holstein breed is based on selections made by our early pioneers who recognized the strength of good type. J. Walter Jones, a former premier and minister of agriculture for our province, had the stated goal of developing a herd with a high standard for type and high-fat test. Island breeders have always realized the advantage of being able to sell animals of superior type. They have been successful with this model since the beginning of the development of the breed in PEI. The selection for type was so engrained in the Island history that the results showed through clearly to today.

Looking at the Canadian Dairy Network statistics for provincial averages shows that PEI Holsteins excel genetically for all of the major type traits. This is a testament to the work of all the breeders throughout history who worked diligently to achieve their breeding goals.

In 1882, the Holstein breed was introduced into PEI and has continued to develop and improve ever since, with the careful management of our Island breeders.

The first group of breeders that introduced the breed in the early years were innovators and leaders of the community. They were often well respected businessmen. Most of the early imports and breedings were done as individuals without much group organization. As the breed became more popular, they began sharing or selling services of their sires. This early group did not have the advantage of roads and vehicles to move animals around. They had to be moved by train, boat or on the hoof. To consider the early breeders brought the original animals from Europe, was quite an event in itself.

In 1919, newspapers noted what a great innovation it was that there were now trucks that could transport animals. This made it much easier to move sires around so they could be used in neighbouring herds. It's hard to visualize moving the large bulls up and down the roads by leading them from farm to farm.

One year at exhibition time, it was noted that a special ferry was added to bring the 21 head of Lea and Clark from Victoria to Charlottetown. Even with these challenges, these breeders persevered and continued to grow the breed here on PEI.

The Master Breeder Program, which we've talked about several times in this Legislature because of the success we've had with Holstein's on the Island, is the most prolific accolade awarded by the National Holstein Association.

Each year since 1929, Holstein Canada has recognized breeders from among our membership for their cumulative breeding efforts. This award is the pinnacle of success for any Holstein Canada member. It is possible to win more than once, but the member or farm is not eligible to win their second or subsequent shield for a period of 15 years. The award is calculated by using a multifaceted and complex formula that rewards animal excellence.

Master breeders are recognized for having mastered the art of breeding balanced, high-

cattle production and outstanding confirmation with great production, health and longevity. It is the most coveted and prestigious honour presented by Holstein Canada. It is a great incentive for breeders to strive towards.

In January of each year, 20 breeders from across the country – which is about 10,000 breeders in total – 20 receive notification that they have won. The award is presented at an impressive ceremony at the National Holstein Convention which is held in various cities across the country.

The Holstein Canada Convention for 2019 will be held here in Charlottetown for only the second time in a 136-year history of the organization. What a lovely occasion to announce the Holstein cow as our provincial animal.

Some of the master breeders over the years have included J. Walter Jones with his Abegweit herd in 1930, Colby Lewis and his Lynvenith herd in 1945. In 1962, Cyril Jones and his Crown Point herd; 1976, saw Parker Newson with Diamond Hill herd win the award; 1998, Freeman Simmons with the Wilsim herd; 2000, Athol Craswell with Crasdale; 2001, Wilfred Stewart with Gardenvale; 2004, Dean Craswell with Idee Holsteins; 2005, MacBeth Farms with Goldflo.

In 2006, of the 20 winners across Canada, Prince Edward Island had three: David and Wayne Dickieson of Birkentree, Guy and Bloyce Thompson of East Side, and Garth Frizzell from Valleyville Holsteins.

The next year, Jamie and Scott Lewis with Lewisdale won the master breeder, and the following year Abe and Elaine Buttimer with the Abelaine herd.

The year after that, Blair Tweedy with the Tween Bay herd. In 2011, Elmer Weeks with the Weeksdale. 2015, we had two winners again out of the 20 across Canada when Gene, Jody and Cheryl Smallman with their Alexis herd was a winner, as well as John, Janet, Jeff and Amy Bysterveldt with Winterbay. This year, as was noted in the Legislature earlier, Allan and Coleen MacQuarrie with the McTalla herd.

J. Walter Jones in 1930 with his Abegweit herd was the first private breeder in Canada to be given a master breeder shield. More than any one man, he put Prince Edward Island on the map as a Holstein breeding centre. His herd originated in 1918 and he had a continuous record of performance from 1922 to 1973. His herd held ROP milk and fat production records in the Maritimes including all breeds for a 365-day average for the following years of 1924, 1925, and 1926.

Some of his top producers were Countess Abberkerk Hiemke, North American champion for milk and fat at five years of age. Elizabeth Schuling Abbekerk at five years had records of 25,423 pounds of milk, 9,021 pounds of fat for a 4.02 average.

Another cow, Abegweit Window VG was a very good nine star brood cow and Abegweit Milady Ex with two consecutive world records, Abegweit Stardust VG, a very good five-star cow had a nine year old record of over 26,000 pounds of milk and 13 of fat for a 5.03 test – absolutely fantastic.

J. Walter Jones, he milked his cows three times a day since 1922. He did not use box stalls except when calving and the cows were turned out daily, irrespective of the weather and fed roots generously. Over two thirds of their ration consisted of home-grown grains.

According to Mr. Jones: Success has been achieved by holding on to the best females and breeding to sons, nephews, or grandsons once good type had been established. Cows that are not gold medal or very good or excellent are not retained long in the herd. The low testers are also sold. We do not sell a cow until her blood is capable of being brought into the herd through her son or brother. We do not purchase many outcrosses and only to secure some feature of improvement such as type, test, or popular strain while advertised. We retain individuality and occasionally attend good exhibitions and consign to national sales.

Mr. Jones' animals were the most prolific winners in Holstein cattle at the fair in Toronto for a number of years and this earned him great respect. So let's jump ahead 80 or 90 years and see how this thought process has played out and paid off

in our Prince Edward Island Holsteins of today.

Take this example from our national magazine a decade ago: She is long, leggy and classy. Her frame is all smooth lines and voluptuous curves. Every beauty contest she enters, she wins. In short, she is the Claudia Schiffer of the milking parlour. Her name is Eastside Lewisdale Gold Missy – she goes by Missy for short – and is worth \$1.2 million, gaining her entrance to a pantheon of million-dollar North American cows that contained only four previous to her. That makes this three-year-old cow the new gold standard in an industry where bovine genetics have attracted growing interest among farmers looking to better their herds and boost their profits. Missy is the Miss Canada and Miss America of Holsteins. She produces 50% more milk than your average cow, a whopping 50 kilograms a day. She was bred in Prince Edward Island and she is, in the words of our farm's marketing manager, "...extremely tall, long and stylish. She walks on great feet and legs and has a great mammary system. She's ideal for milk production. She's a good example of the breed."

When she sold at auction, Missy came with all the necessary requisites of a good cow - a flawless pedigree, magnificent genetics and a string of champion showings - plus something perhaps more important: she had up to \$3.23 million in presigned contracts. If Missy can generate the volumes of embryos her owners believe she can, and if her progeny are as world-class as she is, she can be worth even more.

"You don't run across these kind of cows very often in your lifetime," said Morris Thalen, the owner of Morsan Farms Ltd. "She did all the right things, and that just adds to her value."

Though she has already been considered one of the top cows in the world, her thoroughbred-class price tag has cemented her as a glittering symbol of what's possible for dairy farmers. Better cows typically have better stamina, have fewer health problems and produce more milk – all of which makes them more profitable. The milk output of Holsteins has already doubled in the last 30 to 40 years, but Missy is an example of what's still possible. Where the average

Holstein produces about 9,700 kilograms of milk in a 305-day lactation, she is projected to do 14,600.

The other advantage of having good cows: the rest of the world wants them; though milk is the main commodity for Canada's dairy farmers, the country exports between \$8 and \$9 million a year in dairy cow embryos, \$178 million in semen and a further \$100 million in live dairy cattle.

The Island bred cow, Eastside Lewisdale Gold Missy, went on in 2011 to become the supreme grand champion of all dairy breeds at the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin, which is the largest show in the States. She was also supreme dairy champion at the Royal Agriculture Winter Fair in Toronto, which is Canada's biggest fair. In 2012, she was named Holstein Canada's cow of the year.

It is worth noting as well that between 2002 and 2011 three different Island-bred cows were declared the grand champion cow at the Royal Agriculture Winter Fair. Not bad for the smallest province in Canada, but this only adds to our need to consider the Holstein cow in this debate. Besides all the genetic benefit of the Holstein cow to our province, we need only to look at the latest \$19 million expansion to Amalgamated Dairies Limited. To get an even bigger picture of their value, without the Holstein cow, which produces well over 90% of the milk on PEI, there would be no big expansion, nor, would there be 260 jobs at the plant.

Dairy production has become highly specialized and mechanized. Quality standards are very high. Rigid inspection programs cover every phase of production, from the health of the cow, through to the finished product. There are approximately 165 dairy farms on Prince Edward Island with milk cow herds ranging in the number from 20 to more than 300 cows. Annual milk production exceeds 110 million litres – 15% of this production is used to supply the fresh market and the balance is manufactured into butter, cheese, ice cream, and other dairy products.

As already mentioned, breeding stock is sold to farms across Canada and internationally. The Holstein cow is not only of great

economic value to our province, but she is a fan of all Islanders young and old who love to get up close to this humble bovine. She is no threat to our smaller animals or pets. We are encouraged to feed our Holsteins and she, in return, returns that favour by feeding us with what is considered nature's most close to perfect food.

I should not for all present that the Holstein cow also comes in red and white and there is nothing she likes better than eating lush, green grass under a bright blue sky.

Mr. Chairman it is for these reasons that I move this amendment to Bill No. 113 to adopt the Holstein cow as the animal emblem for Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Perry: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For those who know me, the son of a lobster fisherman, standing and speaking to this motion might seem a little bit off.

First of all, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the students from Montague Consolidated School who brought this forward initially. I know that they did a tremendous amount of work. I've talked to many of them about it and certainly a proud moment for them to come in to see government officials and do that.

I guess in speaking to this – pretty hard to follow with what the Member from Vernon River-Stratford has just said to us all, but I did find out that the Holsteins originated in the Netherlands and the very first that were imported came to North America from Holland in 1881. Back in the early days, there was an awful lot of the breeders that were extremely skeptical of the black and whites, but the Holstein did prove their worth and became popular during depression years when the economics of feed conversions were critical.

There are seven different dairy breeds in Canada, with Holsteins being the most at 94% of the dairy herd in Canada. Approximately one million cows can be found in Canada, meaning about 940,000 are Holsteins, spread across close to 13,000 dairy farms.

A healthy Holstein calve weighs approximately 90 lbs. at birth. A mature Holstein cow weighs about 1,500 lbs. and stands, approximately 58 inches tall at the shoulder. The average cow produces 30 litres of milk daily between two milkings.

I did, however, as a young fellow, I did have the opportunity to have a family member of mine, who was married to a farmer, I had the opportunity to spend many, great, young – as a young-boy times on the farm, and, certainly, helped to milk the cattle and cows. Back, at that time, it was by hand. It was very interesting.

I also had the privilege, during the 1980s, to visit, probably, about a dozen dairy herds throughout the province of Ontario and followed that by attending three days at the royal winter fair.

The big privilege that I was given was I had the opportunity to assist in showing a Holstein herd that had won the best herd at the royal that year. That was quite a thrill for me. But, certainly, in speaking to this, I do remember, as a young guy growing up in a small town that about every tenth car that drove through town had a fox tail tied to the antenna of the car. I don't know how many would remember that, but for those us that do, that was a common sight here on Prince Edward Island.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) you were cool.

Mr. Roach: Well, I didn't – but certainly, and I have to agree with the member and his comments, when we see, in particular, in this province, what the Holstein cow and the dairy herds have brought to our economy. This is year over year, constantly.

I think the bigger note in here, for me, is that this is just another perspective on what the animal should be on Prince Edward Island that we're going to choose to be, the animal that's going to be recognized as the animal of Prince Edward Island.

I really do, again, want to thank those students from Montague Consolidated, but I think this shows that it's, kind of, more than just for us to stand in here and try to make a decision. I think it's only fair that all Islanders are given the opportunity to weigh

in on this in a more public forum and a more public way; to hear what other people have to say.

What I'm asking for is unanimous consent of this House to have this brought before the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment, and have this entire question brought to the public of Prince Edward Island so that they can weigh in on this, similar as they did with the bird that's named for Prince Edward Island, and that sort of thing.

Mr. R. Brown: Good.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's all my comments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: Maybe we can put it on the ballot.

Chair: Hon. members, and member, with your motion to move it to committee, that motion would have to be asked, or requested once the Speaker returns to the chair.

At this time, we can continue on with debate and discussion on this, or we can –

Ms. Casey: Call the Speaker –

Mr. Roach: Call the Speaker.

Chair: – if that is the wish of all hon. members.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Myers: Let's (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: I want to speak to (Indistinct)

Chair: We'll continue with debate.

Speaking on the amendment, we have the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

I was a little surprised to hear some of the remarks and see the amendment here. I've seen something for the first time; an absolute all new low for this government. We had children come in and present to us.

They sat in here, scared, some of them shook. We had great conversation and talked about all the great work they had done on this to bring forward.

Members from your government were on that committee, and everybody was quite in favour and positive of these children coming in. To come in here and make a complete fool out of them and of the bill, you should be ashamed. If you have got a problem with somebody that left your caucus and you want to take a run at it, there's a time and a place. This isn't. It's an all time low.

These kids, right now, they worked awful hard and they deserve to be treated a lot better than this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chair: Are there any other hon. members wishing to debate this motion? Other discussion?

The hon. Member from Vernon River-Stratford.

Mr. McIsaac: This was in no way anything against the children in any way, shape or form. I thought this is something that should be given to the general public to look at. I brought forward my opinion on it. As far as the children's position was, that's absolutely fine. But, to just decide because some children brought it in, that we go with that? Why can we not have a discussion across the province? If it ends up as the red fox, that's fine and dandy. But, I think we should all have a say on what the animal might be and put it to the general public.

An Hon. Member: Carry that once the recommendation ends.

Chair: We now have the mover of the bill – oh, sorry. The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's why I made – and I take exception to some of the comments that were made across the floor from that particular member.

It was my information, and that's why I specifically mentioned the youth from Montague Consolidated School, and wanted

to make sure that they were heard. It was my information. If there was anybody there who can correct me if I'm wrong, that's great. It was my information that the whole idea was, after the children came in, that this was going to be brought to the public for discussion about having the red fox named as the animal for Prince Edward Island.

As far as I know, that's the way that it, kind of, ended. That's why I had no difficulty in seconding the motion, just to make sure that everybody in Prince Edward Island had the opportunity to weigh in. From my point, it had nothing to do with the Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: I'll give the floor to the mover of the bill.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Chair.

I don't see it that way. It's a symbol, in defense of the red fox. It's a symbol recommended by the committee. It's a symbol adopted unanimously by the Legislature. That didn't look like it was heading towards committee. The Legislature gave the youth the impression, from Montague Consolidated School, and their teacher, that the presentation was well accepted, and due to their efforts, it, in all likelihood would succeed. That's the impression we gave them.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. Dumville: All likelihood. I would say. Possibly the cow should be the emblem of Quebec because they have almost 50% of the milk quota for the entire country.

The fox is already on the coat of arms. I don't know what the cow would look like on the coat of arms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chair: Thank you. Just give me one moment, please.

The hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. MacEwen: Chair, (Indistinct) exhausted the list?

Chair: I asked if there was any other discussion on it, and I –

Mr. MacEwen: No, I didn't hear you (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Plus, we didn't vote on the amendment.

Ms. Compton: We didn't vote on the amendment.

An Hon. Member: We didn't vote on the amendment.

Chair: He's adjourning.

Mr. MacEwen: But we didn't vote on the amendment.

Chair: I know, but he's adjourning.

Mr. MacEwen: Do I not get a chance to speak?

Chair: We will next time we bring it back on the floor.

Mr. MacEwen: You're adjourning?

Chair: Yeah.

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Chair: It has been adjourned, and the Speaker has been asked to come to the floor.

Mr. MacEwen: Who made the decision? Did he make the decision, or did the (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: I'm just curious. Who made – you or the –

Chair: He (Indistinct) if you were listening, paying attention, he asked that the chair, the Speaker come back to the chair –

Mr. Myers: Yeah, he made him read it, though –

Chair: – and that we report –

Mr. Myers: – you shoved the book in front of his face and told him to read it –

Chair: No –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) this bill.

Chair: No, no, it's procedure.

Mr. Myers: How come we can't ask questions on it?

An Hon. Member: When it comes back you'll be able to ask questions –

Mr. Myers: Why? Because these guys made a mockery of the Legislature tonight and you'll (Indistinct) it off, to try to save face –

Chair: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the –

An Hon. Member: Why did you pull the bill?

Chair: – Committee –

Mr. Myers: This is ridiculous –

Chair: – of the Whole House –

Mr. Myers: – the works of you. You should be –

Chair: – having had under consideration –

Mr. Myers: – ashamed (Indistinct)

Chair: – a bill to be intituled –

Mr. Myers: – Grade 6 (Indistinct)

Chair: – *An Act to Amend the Provincial Emblems and Honours Act* –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Chair: – I beg leave to report that the committee has made some progress and begs

leave to sit again. I move that the report of the committee be adopted.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

I'll call on the hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River.

Ms. Compton: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, that the 18th order of the day be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Order No. 18, *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 2)*, Bill No. 111, in Committee.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Hon. member, we need somebody to chair this bill.

Mr. Trivers: Who would like to chair? Anyone here want to chair?

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Mr. Speaker, can you recommend somebody to chair, then?

Speaker: Yeah, sure I can.

Hon. Member from Belfast-Murray River, would you like to chair the Committee of the Whole House?

Chair (Compton): The House is now in a Committee of the Whole House to take into consideration a bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the committee that the bill be now read clause by clause?

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, may I call a stranger to the floor?

Chair: Absolutely. Permission granted?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: If you could please read your name for the record?

Dave Pizio: Dave Pizio.

Chair: Thank you.

An Act to Amend the Municipal Government Act (No. 2)

1. (1) Clauses 15(1)(a) and (b) of the Municipal Government Act R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. M-12.1, are repealed and the following substituted:

(a) subject to subsection (2.1), the Minister;

(b) subject to subsection (2.1), the council of a municipality; or

(2) Clauses 15(2)(a) and (b) of the Act are repealed and the following substituted:

(a) subject to subsection (2.1), the Minister; or

(b) subject to subsection (2.1), the council of a municipality

(3) Section 15 of the Act is amended by the addition of the following after subsection (2):

Petition required

(2.1) Where the new or restructured municipality proposed by the Minister or the council of a municipality under subsection (1) or (2) respectively includes an unincorporated area, the proposal shall have the support of at least 30 percent of the persons who reside in the unincorporated area and would be electors of the new or restructured municipality, whose names appear on an accompanying petition that contains the information required in clauses (6)(a) to (d).

Shall the section carry?

Ms. Biggar: Question.

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

Ms. Biggar: A couple of questions here about the petition process, I guess.

Is the petition you're proposing also – do they also have to meet the requirements of subsection 15 (7) with the way your amendment is worded?

Mr. Trivers: Sorry, section 15 (7)?

Ms. Biggar: Fifteen-bracket-seven.

Mr. Trivers: That was not, necessarily, my intention, but let's see here, let me just check the wording of that.

Actually, it specifies in section 2.1.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: That the "... would be electors of the new or restructured municipality, whose names appear on an accompanying petition that contains the information required in clauses (6)(a) to d)."

So it doesn't include number seven explicitly for this petition.

Although one might be able to argue it could include seven, and indeed the intent was to have a process that's similar to what the council – or not the council, but to what an unincorporated area would have to use if they wanted to initiate incorporation. I believe section 7 does apply to them. So, if that's the way you want to interpret it, I'd be interested to hear your comments on that.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, no, I just –

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

Ms. Biggar: So under this – I guess I just have a question, rather than getting into a debate with you – why does the petition propose under 1.(3) of this amendment act only apply to residents of unincorporated areas? So what you're saying is you believe that future residents should have the authority to decide if a proposal should move forward. So then, shouldn't the residents of municipalities also have to sign that petition? Isn't this kind of contradictory

and divisive of only those that outside the municipalities should have to sign a petition and not those inside as well?

Mr. Trivers: That's a good question. Let me just look at the wording again here.

Yes, so the intent there – and indeed, the other wording is that at least 30% of the persons reside in the unincorporated area and would be electors of the new or restructured municipality whose names appear on an accompanying petition.

The idea was to engage the unincorporated area only, because the minister and the councils of the municipalities already have the elected authority to speak for the people within the municipality, for example. Right now, unincorporated areas don't have anyone to speak for them other than the elected MLAs. So the idea was the municipalities would, as elected representatives of their constituents, be able to represent them and they wouldn't need to sign the petition.

But the idea is to engage the unincorporated areas because they don't have an elected representative other than the MLA, and that wasn't represented in the initial MGA.

Ms. Biggar: Just one further question: So – and I want to make sure I have this correct –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: Is it correct that if one person, if just one person objects out of hundreds or thousands of possible residents, that IRAC would be required to hold a public meeting because of one single dissenter?

Mr. Trivers: That's correct. If there's any objection at all – and again, the objection has to be filed pursuant to subsection (1), then IRAC would have to hold a public hearing. That's correct. (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: So if you have 4,000 people and 3,999 all said yes to the proposal and one person said no, then you would want a process, a whole public process, to go to IRAC for further – obviously, there have been consultations if you had 3,999 sign a petition in favour of it – but only one of those, and then you want to go and have

further public meetings? This would require that, is that what you're saying?

Mr. Trivers: That's right. If there's any objection even by one person, then I would like to see it require a public hearing. Because what we're talking about here when we're restructuring a municipality, what we'd refer to as amalgamation or annexation under the old act, is a very important and significant thing; and if one person objects, then I think it's worthwhile to have the discussion.

One of the problems with the current process is – and you say: Well, what if 3,999 people were for it. But in the process, you don't engage people to vote for it right now. There's no process for either the municipality or the minister or the unincorporated areas to be engaged to say: Are you for or against?

We're adding in, of course, a petition. So you could potentially have, if they were all in unincorporated areas, 3,999 people sign a petition; but if there's even one person against, I believe that amalgamation or annexation, restructuring a municipality or forming a new one, is such an important thing that I believe that that person's objection deserves to be heard. When it comes to a public hearing, I think that based on what I understand of a public hearing, the expense would not be prohibitive.

Ms. Biggar: So you don't believe in majority of anything in that case?

Mr. Trivers: Maybe I should clarify here what we've got is a proposal.

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Right? And the first question you asked was about a petition. That's just to make the proposal go forward. Once the proposal is there and people can object to the proposal, it doesn't mean that it doesn't go through. It just means they get a public hearing to publicly discuss their objection and be heard.

It doesn't mean that the proposal doesn't pass. It just means there's a public hearing, and – you probably have the flow chart that Dave Pizio and I put together, thanks again Dave, and I sent out – and then you can see

after the public hearing, that's when IRAC issues a report with a recommendation and that goes through and they make a recommendation.

Obviously, if there were 3,999 people that say they'll sign a petition or all showed up at the public hearing and said: Look, we're for this; or even if just the majority did, then IRAC would take that into account in making their recommendation.

But I really strongly believe in allowing people to have their voices heard, and I really don't think that a public hearing is too onerous, even if there's just one person that objects.

Ms. Biggar: Okay. So you mentioned there about the cost of this. Have you gotten any information on what something like that would cost to do, of these proposed plebiscites that you're proposing to have as part of this?

Mr. Trivers: I have not actually calculated the cost myself, but of course the costs are referred to in the existing *Municipal Government Act*. It's in section 17(5): that the costs incurred by the commission to hold the public hearing are the responsibility of the person or persons who initiated the proposal.

So it's not actually IRAC that pays the costs for the public hearing. So if the minister did or the council of the municipality did or an unincorporated area did, they would have to bear the costs of a public hearing.

Ms. Biggar: But if there's only one person objecting, which then clicks in the mechanism of having the public hearing –

Mr. Trivers: Yes.

Ms. Biggar: – and nobody else is objecting, is that one person the one then that should bear the cost alone? Because nobody else had any objection to it.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah. Well, it's a really good question, and what I'd like to do is come back to you with the costs of a public hearing; but a public hearing, I don't think the costs are prohibitive, but I would like to get that information. I don't – Dave, are you

familiar with the costs of holding a public hearing?

Dave Pizio: I have no idea whatsoever.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, and then you also mentioned the cost of a plebiscite? Which is a separate issue, and in fact, within this bill, a plebiscite is still optional. The minister has to have a significant public interest. The reason for that is the cost of a plebiscite – although I don't have those estimated costs either – are potentially too much if there's not significant public interest.

I tried to make this bill very reasonable and making sure that people had a say, but still not take all of the power away from IRAC or the minister.

In the end, if you look at the bill, indeed we don't take all the power away from the Lieutenant Governor in Council. They are still the ones that have the final say and in fact, the only really feedback that I received on the bill was that – it was from people in unincorporated areas was I'm not making it stringent enough. Instead of the 30% threshold on the petition, people said: you should have 50% plus one and you should always have a plebiscite, it shouldn't be optional and you should completely take away the power of Lieutenant Governor in Council. But working with Legislative Counsel and as well as considering the responsibilities of government, I tried to make this a very reasonable bill – allowing people to have a voice, but still keeping intact the integrity of the original MGA.

Ms. Biggar: Just one final question and I'm sure there's some other questions possibly.

We have a mechanism in most communities, I think, that we all respect and that's our fire districts and the organization that many of our brigades have in place already for – it is a great structure. Have you considered that the fire districts themselves could be a vehicle for a community voice because they already have a structure in place for choosing the fire representatives in their brigade? I know when we've engaged in my community with different – if you're choosing – we chose our health foundation and it was made up of representatives of 22 communities, but that's a structure that's

workable. But the fire districts themselves – they already have a structure in place for having a voice on behalf of the people. Have you considered that would be a great mechanism or vehicle for people to – instead of another layer?

Mr. Trivers: Yea, I mean, I agree, I think the fire districts are absolutely a great way to engage the unincorporated areas. In fact, I think that if, for example, the minister or a council of municipality wanted to go out and they wanted to put a proposal together and they wanted to get 30% of unincorporated residents on a petition, the first place they should go is the fire districts. I do think that they shouldn't just go to the fire districts. I don't think we can be in a situation where it's just the fire district reps that represent the unincorporated areas, but absolutely, they provide a great voice.

I think that's one of the points of the bill is we want to get people to buy into the proposal so that it can move forward – at least 30%. I think going to the fire districts would be a very, very key step in that.

Ms. Biggar: You want 99.9% to buy in, you said. You said: if there's only one person dissents –

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so look at the process again, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. If one person objects, it just means you have a public hearing. It doesn't kill the proposal.

Ms. Biggar: Yes. Okay.

Mr. Trivers: IRAC still gets to take into account – but it does allow them to have a public voice. It's not like: you're the only person that objected. Sorry, you don't get a chance to have your day to convince others. We have a public hearing. You get to have a voice.

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

There was a statement made just before we ended the last session with this and not sure exactly who stated it, whether it was the

member or a guest, but stated that the CIC had worked extremely well for the last 40 years and it worked fine; whoever wants to answer the question. But during the past 40 years, have you observed any changes or things that have happened that you feel could have been addressed if it were other than a CIC?

Mr. Trivers: That is definitely outside the scope of the bill, but Mr. Pizio, if you'd like to speak to that, feel free.

Dave Pizio: For myself, I'm speaking for Greenmount-Montrose. Over the past 40 years, there has been different situations that occurred that was handled by the council. People were able to come to the council. Access to the council members was never a problem. The close-knit community knows who is the mayor – well, in this case was the chairperson – and the council members and when there was issues, it was discussed. So, I never saw anything – and again, I've only been there in a short while, but prior to that, the longstanding members of the council for the CICs, what they've done to this point – an excellent aspect of the administration of the communities. One of the points that – with the new MGA – is the passage of the responsibility for building permits.

As I said before, for my own small community, in the past approximately 18 years, there were 34 or 35 actual transactions. So, you're looking to create a bureaucracy of a substantial cost for very miniscule amount of work.

But at the same time, as I said before, hon. member, is that the expertise for all of these things currently exist through our Access PEI and the professionals in that aspect and we're still going to have to adhere to that. So the only thing that's occurring now is another level of bureaucracy for administrative purposes at a cost, municipal-wise, with no return of investment other than putting that layer in there.

When something is going to happen in the community in the way the change of the demographics, be at annexation or amalgamation, it's such a tumultuous aspect that when people don't feel that they have been given the opportunity to participate in the process – and this is what has happened – I've talked to different people – they feel

the anxiety with it, the unknown aspect of it, hearing things through the media, all these different aspects of what is the actual process that's occurring.

What I see is the CICs did extremely well. We are now considered rural municipalities. There's no reason why we can't carry on, however, the new MGA has removed an aspect of voice, which is one of the key issues for governance – is who has a voice in the decision-making.

When I was asked by the hon. member to come, as I looked at the amendment, the idea is is that this is to provide more voice for the process. I think there's a lot more should be added to it, but when you asked the question, hon. member, of the CICs, they did an excellent job, they met all the problems that we had – whatever they were – they handled them and now we're at this state and we're still in the same aspect, yet we've increased the administrative bureaucracy for no return of investment in my opinion.

Chair: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Just to kind of – it was a long explanation, but just to back up to the beginning of it a little bit. Would you say then that the small towns that have the planning, decision-making now that they have that authority to make those planning decisions now, would you say that there's a good voice in those small towns that have that for their community people to come forward and to be heard?

Dave Pizio: You're talking of the existing towns with the councils with the residents of the town being able to affect rezoning, all these aspects?

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Dave Pizio: I have to make the assumption that the process is the same in the town. If they want to rezone, something's put forward – making notification – the next meeting that's coming up, they're going to talk about rezoning and the residents have the opportunity to have input to it.

Mr. Roach: And so if we had a – I'll just pose theoretically – if you had a couple of

small CICs that came together and formed a small community, do you think they'd still have that same ability to come forward and have a voice?

Dave Pizio: We have that now without joining the others. We, as the council for the rural municipalities, we have that ability. We had it before because we could see what was going on, and we could take action as necessary. Now, but there's been another added level, and also an increase in responsibilities that are administrative in nature.

Again, not to be a broken record, but it's an administrative cost with, what I see, as no return of investment.

Mr. Trivers: I wanted to respond to that, as well.

Although, bringing this bill to the floor has been a great opportunity to discuss the merits of amalgamation, the bill, itself, is really not here to question whether amalgamation is good or bad or how – it's just making sure that unincorporated areas have a voice in it. That's what the intention of this bill is.

Although, that is a broader debate that I do welcome on the floor, if you want to continue with it. Because I think it's an important debate to have.

Mr. Roach: Again, I'm not debating. I never said it was good or bad. It could be either –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: – it's not what I'm saying. When I ask those questions, I'm just trying to find out, in terms, of if you have larger communities now that make the decisions about when it comes to rezoning, for example. The CICs, you tell me they can't do that. They have to go to Access PEI, and do it through that. Is that what you're telling me?

Dave Pizio: Prior to the new MGA, anything that was going on within, in the way of building permits, subdivision, would be going to Access PEI. With the new MGA, that responsibility has been passed to

the rural municipal councils. We are, in effect, to issue the permits.

But, in the issuing of those things, you still require the centres of expertise in regards to environment, other – all other aspects; water, First Nations, all those things have to be adhered to and looked at.

Regardless, yes, we have the responsibility to issue the permits, but we still have to refer back to the centres of expertise, which is through Access PEI, with the people working for the government that will have to do this.

One other aspect, as well, with the fire districts remaining intact, unless there's massive amalgamation, all of those things still have to be in place because the only place for the fire districts, the unincorporated areas, if they want a building permit, everything has to go through Access PEI through that process.

It's still going to be there, but the new, small, rural municipalities have to take on the responsibility, but simply really be a post office in that sense, with the permits, building and subdivision.

Mr. Roach: We've certainly had some great discussions, some great debates over the last couple of years with respect to the land ownership, and to the new *Water Act*, and now this act.

I believe that all of these things, these discussions come from a changing demographic on Prince Edward Island. Things are changing in many aspects. I understand change is difficult.

I guess my question would be: Do we feel that, looking forward, with all the changes that are taking place on our Island, that we can remain the same, or do we have to look at doing things a little differently, looking to the future, or do we just remain exactly the way we are?

Mr. Trivers: I can answer that.

Mr. Roach: Whoever wants to answer, be my guest.

Mr. Trivers: We both will. I think Mr. Pizio has some really good insights because of his work with the CICs.

Based on my conversations with the Department of Communities, Land and Environment, with constituents across the province, I think that people do embrace change and they realize change is needed to improve.

What I am hearing though, is they don't necessarily think we need another layer of bureaucracy to do that. It may be appropriate in some cases, but they feel that if the province took the reins to do things like providing land-use planning at the province level, and then engage communities through people like their MLA, that might work.

That's a solution that I'm throwing out there for debate. Again, it's outside the scope of the bill, but I talked to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment on the floor and he seemed to think that was doable.

When building permits are requested from an unincorporated area, there's an MLA responsible for that area. They'd know that a building permit is coming through, as an MLA. Now, I can go and I can talk to people who might be adjacent to where the building is; let them know that it's coming down the pipe, then they know what's going on. I can work with the province.

The province, indeed, can actually ramp up, and the minister said that's the plan, is ramp up the number of planners in the province so he'd actually have zones in unincorporated areas where this is, plan, we're going to plan for this to be residential or this is going to be commercial.

I think you can do that. This is my opinion. That you can do that without having to add in that extra level of government, in many cases. I'm not saying all cases, but in many cases.

I don't know, Mr. Pizio –

Dave Pizio: Change is not a bad thing. People will embrace change when they see the positives of it; where they see it's going to make things better. But the aspect of the changes that are coming – again, I'm talking

strictly in regards to the MGA, the new MGA, and the small, rural communities, mainly our six communities up west – is the changes on the economic development, we don't see anything occurring in a positive way, except a financial burden.

The aspect of making all these things work, it's a question that I've asked before to say: Tell me, first, what are the services that are not being delivered that the small, rural communities are asking for because there is a cost to doing services?

If we knew which ones are being asked for, we could look at that. But, right, at this point in time, as I talk to the people in our own small communities, the only services that they really want, at this point in time, are the fire services, which they get; outstanding service from all fire departments across the Island. There's no problem. What are the added other services? We can't compare the services in the small towns or the cities.

Again, I ask the question, hon. member: What are these additional services that are deemed to be a positive change for the small communities that are not going to be a financial burden on the small communities?

Mr. Roach: To the Member from Rustico-Emerald, when you were putting together the act to amend the MGA, did you have any conversations with the PEI Federation of Municipalities? Because that's quite a broad group that they represent.

Mr. Trivers: What I did, was I emailed out the draft amendments to them asking for feedback, and they didn't respond. I don't know if you have heard any feedback from them, or not.

I assume by no response means that they were fairly happy with the amendments.

Mr. Roach: That's a pretty big assumption to make.

Did you actually pick a phone up and call anybody?

Mr. Trivers: From the PEI Federation of Municipalities, I did not talk to anybody on the phone, no.

Mr. Roach: I wouldn't want to assume that response each and every time that – because nobody responds they agree with it.

Again, to the Member from Rustico-Emerald, had you had any conversation with any of the larger urban municipalities, like Charlottetown? Stratford and Charlottetown and West Royalty, they, kind of, have been through this back in the 1990s, the mid-1990s. Had you had any conversation with them with respect to when you were preparing the amendments, the act to amend the MGA?

Mr. Trivers: I didn't really. I just engaged through the Federation of Municipalities, who they are all members of, but I didn't reach out to the mayor of Charlottetown or the mayor of Stratford to see what they thought of the idea. No.

I was very focused on, again, the purpose of the bill: giving unincorporated areas a voice.

If you have heard any objections, I'd love to hear it because I certainly haven't –

Mr. Roach: No, I'm just –

Mr. Trivers: – heard any objections –

Mr. Roach: – asking questions.

Mr. Trivers: Of course the bill has been on the floor now, this is the third time I think, and I published it and I've sent it out and emailed several different groups and haven't had a lot of feedback on it, really.

In fact, even on the floor here tonight was the first time we've actually got into debating the bill and I thank the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy. As far as I can tell, there's been general agreement with the bill. I haven't heard any dissent so far, so if you have some problems with it, I'd love to hear them.

Mr. Roach: I'll have an opportunity to vote on the bill, the same as everyone else.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. Trivers: Chair?

Chair: Sorry.

Mr. Trivers: I would like to address any concerns you have, Member from Montague-Kilmuir. So, if you do have concerns please bring them up on the floor because I'd hate to have you vote against the bill without fully understanding what it's all about and all of the clauses and what they mean.

I really do believe – I strongly believe, that it's a solid bill. I don't think that it changes the intent of the MGA. I think it gives unincorporated Islanders a voice and I really think it'll make the MGA better and stronger and it'll really help improve our province.

So if you do have a concern, please bring it forward to the floor.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

It is fascinating to hear the debate on amalgamation that's been happening on this bill for quite some time. Those of us that have read the bill know that's not really the point. I'm to and for amalgamation and I had mentioned this before. I don't like when it gets turned into an: Are you for or against amalgamation talk. I know you guys keep getting questions on that. Although, it's interesting to hear the for/against it.

In fact, if you were dead set against amalgamation, you probably wouldn't be all that in favour of this amendment because what it does is still gives a voice and lets the process go through, which it helps even more so with amalgamation, it gets more people involved. I commend you, again, for doing that and I encourage people, that even if you're very much for amalgamation or very much against it, this bill allows you the opportunity to voice both, and I commend you again.

I'd like to get reading the actual bill so we could actually debate the bill rather than debating amalgamation.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, member.

I appreciate that. We did have some great questions from the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy and some good questions as well from the

Member from Montague-Kilmuir about consultation on the bill, so I hope we can continue forward. I think we're at – where are we, clause three, Chair?

Chair: Clause two.

Mr. Trivers: Clause two.

Mr. MacEwen: Let's let her rip.

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

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

I've been listening to the debate over the last couple of days in this file. We have to understand that the *Municipal Government Act* is enabling legislation to allow municipalities. Municipalities may establish committees or may establish services to their – it doesn't say 'shall'. It doesn't say 'shall' in the terms of: You have to do a bylaw officer; you have to do planning resolutions and all that. It says: If you want to, you have the capacity to. If you don't want to, the government will continue to do it.

But with all due respect, we have the process in place right now going forward at IRAC in terms of several municipalities that are looking and are filing applications to IRAC for amalgamation or for restructuring. I think we owe it to those communities that have been involved in this process to allow that process to continue on and to see what we can learn from that process before we go around gerrymandering the current process.

I move that we vote on the bill right away as a whole, and I, as minister, will be voting against this bill because I think, as I indicated earlier and my department believes it, that the process is in place. Any restructuring of the bill at this point in time would send a signal out there that what they're doing is wrong, and I don't think what they've done to date is wrong.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, minister.

I really – for clarifying that point, your very first point you made there about you don't have to put bylaws in place and some of the other requirements in the MGA.

When we were on the floor during budget estimates earlier today, you made that point as well and I was very relieved, and I know there are a lot of people in small municipalities that will be relieved; people who are, as I mentioned during budget estimates, seeing their budgets balloon to five times their amounts because they're trying to do all these different things in the MGA.

So, thank you for that and hopefully be able to communicate that out to the CIC so that they know that they're not put in a position where they feel like they need to dissolve, because I think that is a key issue that I'm hearing.

In terms of changing the process while it is underway; as far as I'm aware, you're right. No new amalgamations or annexations, no municipal restructuring or creation has actually been initiated under this new process. Any ones that exist right now were actually initiated under the old *Municipalities Act*.

So, I would like to change the act now before any new processes begin, to make sure – and this is why I think it's so urgent – that's why I wanted to bring this to the floor as soon as possible – to make sure that unincorporated Islanders have a voice because right now, I feel that they're getting shortchanged in the current process.

I strongly believe – that's one thing I do believe, and I think to ask to have a vote on this without even considering the entire bill would be a disservice to unincorporated Islanders across this province who may be impacted by the municipal restructuring or creation process.

Ms. Biggar: Call for the question.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Question on the bill.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks, hon. member.

That's such an important point to make. You talked about the process, that it's already in IRAC and how it was actually started under the old act and this is a great way to improve the current act. Going back, again, to our many comments of if we could actually just discuss the actual bill and get into the details of how good this is going to make things.

The plebiscite in section two, that's what we're on, right?

Chair: No, actually we haven't finished this – I haven't read section two yet (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Oh, we're still back there. All right, I'll wait til that section.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

The minister had just spoke and said he'd be voting against this bill. Why do you think, in your opinion that the minister is against giving unincorporated areas a voice? What's your opinion on that?

Mr. Trivers: Well, I mean I wouldn't want to put words in the ministers' mouth.

Mr. MacKay: I'm just wondering in your own opinion.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Wow.

Mr. R. Brown: First of all, explain where in this bill incorporated areas are denied access (Indistinct)

Chair: Excuse me, but the hon. Member from Kensington has the floor.

Mr. MacKay: Thanks, Chair.

Mr. Trivers: I mean, I don't know –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) where under this bill are they denied access?

Mr. Trivers: Would you like me to answer that question?

Mr. MacKay: Yeah, I would. Yeah, respond to that.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so right now when a proposal is initiated by a municipal council or the minister, there's nowhere in the legislation where there has to be any consultation with unincorporated areas at all. Zero. Zip. Zilch. Nothing.

Mr. R. Brown: Public meeting – IRAC can hold a public meeting. That's access.

Mr. Trivers: No. Get out your flow chart here, minister.

Mr. R. Brown: That's access.

Mr. Trivers: Get out your flow chart.

Mr. R. Brown: That's access.

Mr. Trivers: It starts off –

Mr. R. Brown: You've been misleading the people.

Mr. Trivers: It can be – minister –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Minister, I have the floor.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) there misleading the people.

Mr. Trivers: I am not misleading – you are misleading the people. I think you should learn your processes in your own department, minister, because you certainly don't know what's happening right now.

Chair: Order, please!

Mr. Trivers: Now minister, the restructuring or initiation of a municipality can be initiated through three ways: By the minister –

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: – the municipality –

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: – or an unincorporated area.

If it is initiated by the minister or the municipality, they can create a proposal and submit it to IRAC without any public

consultation. In my opinion, that's – I think they should have a voice and you're setting – not only that – I believe you're setting yourself up for failure later on.

If you want to talk about Three Rivers, because it seems you want to, I think that's what happened with Three Rivers. I think you set yourself up for failure because you didn't engage the unincorporated areas soon enough. I want to make sure the legislation does that. That's exactly what I mean, minister.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: It's your process right now.

Chair: Minister –

Mr. R. Brown: “The Commission, in respect of a proposal...” may hold a public meeting, “...where an objection is filed pursuant to subsection (1)...” There's where they had their (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Okay, so –

Mr. R. Brown: – you've been misleading the people –

Mr. Trivers: No, listen –

Mr. R. Brown: – you can't tell me that –

Mr. Trivers: – listen to your own words –

Mr. R. Brown: – no access –

Mr. Trivers: – minister –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – listen to your own words.

Chair: Order!

Mr. Trivers: You said they may hold a public hearing.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah –

Mr. Trivers: May. They may hold a –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – public – that is my second change in the bill: is you shall hold a public

hearing so the unincorporated areas have a voice.

Right now, at Three Rivers, they do not even have to hold a public hearing if there's an objection –

Mr. MacEwen: Sometimes, other people have good ideas.

Mr. Trivers: What's that?

Mr. MacEwen: Sometimes, other people have good ideas. He's not against you. He's (Indistinct) the middle.

Mr. Trivers: The other part, I mean, we could continue to read through the bill, but the unincorporated areas do not have a legislated input right up until they can place an objection. Up until that point they do not have to be involved, at all.

Now, I'm not saying they wouldn't be –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) objection (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – like the –

Chair: Excuse me –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) the plan is –

Chair: Order!

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) IRAC (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – the –

Chair: Excuse me –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: Excuse me, the member has the floor –

Mr. J. Brown: Don't drag me into it (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: The former minister –

Mr. J. Brown: – go all night (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – of health and wellness, or communities, land and environment, the Minister of Health and Wellness, keeps

saying: oh, of course, they are going to include the unincorporated areas and I agree. Who is going to put a proposal forward without including the unincorporated areas?

My point is, let's put it in legislation so that we know 100% all the time the unincorporated areas are going to understand the proposal, they're going to be involved in putting it forward, and they're going to –

Mr. J. Brown: How many –

Mr. Trivers: – have a voice –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: – instead of waiting until it comes to IRAC.

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct) process –

Chair: Excuse me –

Mr. J. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: Order!

Mr. R. Brown: “The Commission, in respect of a proposal... shall hold a public hearing, in accordance with an order of the Minister, where the Minister has determined there is significant public interest in the matter.”

They shall hold a public meeting –

Mr. J. Brown: Yes, they shall –

Mr. R. Brown: – they will be holding a public meeting –

Ms. Biggar: Now –

Mr. J. Brown: They shall –

Ms. Biggar: – now –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: If the minister decides it's needed.

Mr. R. Brown: They will be holding a public meeting.

Mr. Trivers: If the minister decides it's needed.

Chair: Order!

Mr. R. Brown: If nobody objects and I hold a public meeting –

Chair: Order!

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: Order! Minister. Order, please.

If there are no more questions –

Mr. R. Brown: Question under (Indistinct)

Mr. MacKay: No, we still have questions.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) precedent –

Mr. MacKay: Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you.

Mr. Pizio, I'm curious to, I guess, a lot of the conversation we had is with the Three Rivers amalgamation. I know you're from the western part of the province. What are you hearing from the public in the western part of PEI, right now regarding amalgamation?

Dave Pizio: One of the things that's occurring that people are talking, trying to understand what's going on with this process –

Ms. Biggar: Chair?

Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Trivers: You still have the floor.

Dave Pizio: Oh. They're hearing, through the media. They're also hearing petitions, the people that were in front of the Legislature the last couple of weeks, so they're trying to understand, but what they're hearing is, and one lady said to me: what's the use of saying anything? It's going to happen anyway.

Trying to explain that the democratic process means that there is a voice. Part of the – the impetus of the MGA was the actual governance. They want to see the same governance of municipalities regardless of the size.

One of the main tenants for good governance is who has a voice in making decisions. How are the decisions made and who is accountable?

All I know is, I would like to even more beyond what the member's bill is, but this is the starting point that: yes, who has a voice in making the decisions? If you have that voice at the very beginning, not after the fact, then there's a sense that the people say: oh, okay, I'm going to be part of the process from the beginning, not after the fact where I'm going to have to argue the point.

That's what people are – they're in the unknown. We're not sure exactly what the process is, but we're hearing, what we'll call threads of truth, not intended any other way, but people will hear and they'll take their own understanding.

What I see here is, we're taking a part of the process, adding in a true voice of everybody that's going to be involved, in either restructuring, be it amalgamation, or annexation. In that process, buy-in is going to be, probably, a lot more enthusiastic for the simple fact, you're going to have more people understanding what's going on.

Right now, people feel they do not have a voice of what's going to happen to them. That is what the main issue is. The anxiety in the small communities, wondering, down the road, what's going to happen.

We've been doing everything, accountability, transparency, up to this point, yet, now, we're going to move forward and we're changing the idea that there has to be more accountability, more transparency at a very substantial administrative cost.

Mr. MacKay: In your opinion, what's the best solution that people will feel they have a voice? What do you think can take place from here on out that people will feel comfortable with their voice being heard?

Dave Pizio: The fact that there's recognition of the small, rural communities; now, called the rural municipalities. The recognition that one size doesn't fit all, and that there's a place for the governance of these small communities in line with the larger communities, but respecting the abilities of them. Then, they see that they are controlling their own destiny.

Right now, there's a feeling that the destiny is going to be controlled by someone else. What we want to see is a voice from the beginning of the process, right through and in a democratic way, that, if there's a fifty-plus-one percentage that want to enter into amalgamation, annexation or restructuring, then, there's a buy-in, at least at the initial stages.

Right now, it's only, you object because I never really seen what was going on, other than reading newsletters and these other things.

Mr. Trivers: We're only asking for 30% to buy-in from unincorporated areas, not fifty-plus-one.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Chair.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to speak as an MLA from West Prince, which starts at Northam, not Inverness. I'll make a point of that.

In fact, this week, there are two of the smaller municipalities, rural municipalities, Eilerslie-Bideford and the Lady Slipper, having amalgamation public meetings. I wouldn't want it to be thought that Mr. Pizio speaks for all of West Prince smaller municipalities. I just want to make a point of that. That is happening on its own and those municipalities are having those meetings.

We called for the vote –

Mr. Trivers: Can I –

Ms. Biggar: – I'd like to have a ruling on –

Mr. Trivers: – respond –

Ms. Biggar: – calling the vote –

Mr. Trivers: – to that (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: On calling the vote –

Mr. Trivers: – what she has said (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – I've called for the vote, Madam Chair.

Mr. Myers: You can't have a vote if we're not done (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct)

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

Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so, first of all, I wanted to thank Mr. Pizio for coming in and spending time and yes, I'm sure all hon. members do.

He has told me, many times, that he doesn't speak for all of West Prince. He's giving his perspective on things. I appreciate that.

Also, I do appreciate the fact that there are areas that do want amalgamation. They really do. They want to incorporate, as well. In fact, there are areas in my district, who are actively looking to amalgamate, to be taken over by another municipality, or two municipalities (Indistinct)

Once again, this bill is not meant to stop amalgamation or annexation. It is not meant to. I take offence to that, Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. This is meant to facilitate the process. To make sure everybody is aware from the beginning so we can get it right from the top. Then, we can actually make things happen without forced amalgamation.

All right, I'd like to adjourn debate.

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of a Committee of the Whole House, having under consideration a

bill to be intituled *An Act to Amend the Municipal Government 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: I now request that Motion No. 38 be called.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Bell: Is that the right one? We think it's 38. Is it 38, or is that the wrong one? I've just done it from memory.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct).

Ms. Bell: 37, my apologies.

I'd like to correct that, Mr. Speaker. It's Motion No. 37 to be called.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk: Motion No. 37.

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

WHEREAS oceans everywhere are places of great and rapid change, with profound uncertainty over their future health;

AND WHEREAS there is deep and growing concern over the health of many species in the waters surrounding Prince Edward Island;

AND WHEREAS the right whale population suffered serious losses while present in waters around PEI last summer, and no new babies have been spotted in their calving grounds this spring;

AND WHEREAS according to federal scientists, herring stocks in the waters around PEI have fallen to critical levels;

AND WHEREAS our fisheries occupy a critical place in the Island's social, economic, and ecological health, and are a tourism lynchpin;

AND WHEREAS Canada has committed to setting aside 10% of our nation's coastal waters as Marine Protected Areas by 2020;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that government promote a major study of our entire gulf marine ecosystem, and consider establishing a Marine Protected Area to ensure that the vitality of the ecosystem, all species - and therefore all fisheries - are secured for future generations of Islanders.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's a great pleasure to rise this evening and talk to this important motion. When you live on an Island, as we all do of course, the sea quite literally describes you. It constructs our boundaries and it creates our form. Islands are distinct, they're separate, and they create, I believe, a certain way of looking at the world. Islanders know what Islandness is and they have some of what that means imprinted on their souls.

I grew up on the Black Isle in the northeast of Scotland, just north of Inverness. The Black Isle is not actually an Island, but it's a peninsula. But the presence of the sea infused the character of that little farming village in which I grew up, and also the personalities of so many of the colourful characters who live there.

The history, architecture, economy, and health of everything on an Island is derived from the waters that surround it. Here on Prince Edward Island, our own history dating right back to the indigenous peoples is marked by the sea. From subsistence fishing and canoes, to boatbuilding and Irish moss, to ferries and fixed links, PEI reflects our marine heritage. Today our fisheries remain one of the mainstays of our Island economy, and shaped many of the coastal communities on our lovely Island from tip to tip. It goes without saying that the health of these marine ecosystems is critical to the health of this sector of our economy and of the well-being of numerous Island families and of the rural communities in which they live.

Like so many of the other critical systems that support humanity, marine ecosystems and fisheries are under threat. We have been mismanaging fisheries around the globe for generations, and it is often devastating when things go wrong. The damage when this happens is ecological, it is social, and it is economic. For example, the fallouts from the collapse of the Atlantic cod fishery continues to reverberate throughout our region: 25 years after the stocks collapsed. And 25 years later, those stocks have yet to recover. Countless rural communities have been changed forever and the financial implications to the East Coast of Canada are ongoing.

Monitoring the health of marine ecosystems is notoriously difficult. Firstly, unlike a clear-cut mountainside, the devastation of a collapsed fish stock is invisible. The surface of the ocean looks exactly as it did before the fish are gone, so public awareness, and therefore public concern, is often minimal. Secondly, fish move and they pay no attention, of course, whatsoever to the artificial political boundaries that humans use to divide up the Earth's oceans. Thirdly, accurate estimates of fish numbers are almost impossible to come by.

It used to be that when it came to fishing on the high seas – something you know well about yourself, the amount of fish that was caught was limited by the number of boats and fishers that went out in the water. Nowadays, with almost 90% of the world's fish stocks classified as fully or overfished, the limiting factor is not the number of fishers or boats, but of fish themselves.

Island filmmaker John Hopkins, in his award-winning documentary *Bluefin* – beautiful film and I hope members of this Legislature have taken time to watch it – alarming and beautiful. In his documentary, *Bluefin*, he highlights issues with not only the tuna stock here on Prince Edward Island, but other gulf species that are critical to the marine ecosystem health – species like mackerel and herring.

We shouldn't take for granted the sustainability of any part of our Island fisheries. Let's not forget that there was a time back in the 1890s when the lobster fishery here on PEI collapsed due to overfishing and a lack of regulation.

We cannot assume that the health of the gulf marine ecosystem is well. Indeed, reports from those who regularly travel the seas around our Island suggest that there may be problems – that there may be serious problems. They have seen evidence of unprecedented changes in the seas around our province over the last few years and through the media we know of the latest anomaly – something that has caught people’s attention all over North America and that is the sudden spike in right whale deaths.

But policy and regulation cannot be based on anecdotal or informal reports. We need proper scientific study, evidence, and recommendations. That is why the motion before this House tonight calls for a full study of the Gulf of St. Lawrence marine ecosystem; so we know what is really going on, and can make sound decisions that will protect, preserve, and perhaps even enhance the seas for future generations of Islanders.

As this House well knows, fisheries largely fall under federal jurisdiction and when it comes to studying our seas, the federal department of Fisheries and Oceans provides the resources and the expertise to carry those sorts of reports.

Let’s just look at one species in our gulf ecosystem: herring. Ecosystems are incredibly complex and the interrelationships of all the elements are often poorly understood. Layer on top of that complexity, the fact that our oceans are rapidly changing related to climate change and it’s easy to see how studies and recommendations are fallible. Herring are a critical part of our marine ecosystem around PEI as a food source for many larger marine predators, among them the right whales and the tuna. Herring are also, of course, the preferred bait for lobster traps.

A recent media article based on work done by the department of Fisheries and Oceans suggested that, when it comes to herring stocks, we have some serious problems. The article can be summarized as this: Herring stocks around PEI have been dwindling for two decades. Even if there was a two-year hiatus in the spring herring fishery – a complete shutdown of the spring herring fishery in the Gulf of St Lawrence – there would still be a 90% chance that the fish

stocks would remain at critical levels. The next herring stock assessment is actually due this year in 2018 and I truly hope that the news this time is a little more encouraging.

Now that’s just a snapshot in time of one species in an incredibly complicated ecosystem at a time of great change and I don’t want to suggest at all that this is the definitive word on the health of the gulf or even of the herring stocks. And because of that, that’s why we need a comprehensive study. We need to know what’s going on out there. Despite our relative jurisdictional impotence, considering the criticality of the gulf ecosystem to our province’s welfare, we can – and I say that we should – encourage those responsible to carry out just such a comprehensive study.

I also want to suggest that we promote the notion of creating a marine protected area in the gulf. A marine protected area, or an MPA is part of the ocean that is legally protected and managed to achieve the long-term conservation of nature. MPAs may allow some current and future activities depending on their impacts to the ecological features of the MPA being protected and they can provide many benefits to Canadians, from environmental and economic, to social and cultural.

Canada, as a country, has committed to protecting 10% of our nation’s oceans by 2020 and we already have, actually, a marine protected area here in PEI waters at Basin head. It’s very small, it’s approximately 5 kilometres long, but Basin Head is a unique coastal environment and hence the designation of an MPA. It’s a unique coastal environment that the community, and conservation groups, and both levels of government are attempting to protect for future generations. There are many different types of animals and plants that live in the area within the boundaries of the Basin Head MPA. Again, it’s a very small area where despite its designation, people can swim, people can dive, and we all – what family on PEI has not gone to Basin Head and dived off the bridge or the dock there into the little river that flows out into Basin Head. You can swim, you can dive, you can fish, and you can even use motorized vehicles within the MPA. So you can see that this designation of a marine protected area does not necessarily mean an

end to tourist activities; it does not mean an end to economic activities.

MPAs and MPA networks help to conserve and protect marine species and they lead to improved species resilience. Resilient and healthy ecosystems also help to support sustainable industries, local economies, and coastal communities. In time, protected areas can be a source of young fish to disperse to other areas and a source of larger and more abundant fish for unprotected areas adjacent to MPAs. So we can actually improve the health of a fishery by protecting certain areas and potentially making them off-limits to fishing.

Clearly some activities, however, are not compatible with a marine protected area: fossil fuel exploration for example. This government has stayed out of the discussions on the development of Old Harry, a region just north of PEI in the Gulf of St. Lawrence – an area of potential oil and gas exploration. The license for exploration in this area actually expired last year, but it was renewed in January of 2017 by the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. Even one spill – one relatively small spill – could have devastating impacts on ecosystem health, on fisheries, and on PEI tourism for decades to come. A marine protected area in the Gulf would help protect our province from the dangers of this kind of development.

I feel very heavily the weight of responsibility that our generation carries when it comes to preserving the natural world. Because of the rapid increase in the number of humans from 2 billion to 7.5 billion in one lifetime and the concurrent economic expansion, demanding as a growing economy does, ever more resources and creating ever more waste, there are pressures on the rest of the natural world that have never existed before.

I said last week in this House that it is easy to forget sometimes what our core reasons for being here are, and for me, it has always been the maintenance of a livable world for all of our children. Part of that livable world, and a place which I am continuously drawn back to, is the sea. Indeed, our family's decision to move to Prince Edward Island was principally to return to the sea where

both my Newfoundland wife and this highland Scot grew up.

I encourage all members of this Legislature to support this motion and to do our bit to preserve healthy seas for future generations of Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's a couple of points in this motion that I particularly wanted to focus on and that's the requirement to bring about a major study of the entire Gulf marine ecosystem and then allocate an area or areas for the MPA designation.

One of the things that really resonates with me around this is a discussion that I've had recently with my daughter when we saw the news articles about the death of the last white rhino. What she asked me was: What will happen when none of those are left? Will we only be able to see them in pictures? And then she worried about whether we would ever get to see a whale because we had been seeing the right whale deaths being reported on the news and she's genuinely worried – and so am I – that we may not actually get to see a whale in real life before they're all gone.

I had a conversation with John Hopkins about his film *Bluefin* and about the tuna and he has the same concern. He is worried that his amazing, beautiful film of those incredible, amazing, beautiful huge fish may be the only memory that we have left when all the tuna are gone. It doesn't necessarily mean that that could happen from overfishing or from the impact of our economy, but it could be from something like a major ecological disaster.

The risk of oil spills and damage to the ecosystem beyond repair are part of what happens when we are able to conduct a major study. Part of that study is that we're able to undertake risk assessment and come up with effective plans that allow us to think about how we can both mitigate risk and avoid risk and in some cases, for somewhere as small as us and such a delicate balance of

space – as we are in the Gulf and on the edge of the huge Atlantic – sometimes that means that we need to say that we will not do here what is done elsewhere. We have seen the impact that a huge oil spill can have on a very fragile system on the Gulf coast with major spills in the past on the Pacific coast. Some of those ecosystems have never recovered and never will.

By urging the initial study to not only to identify that ecosystem, but also to think carefully about the risk assessment and the potential recommendations that can be made, I feel that we would actually be making that commitment to, not only my daughter, but to the other children in PEI who would like to be able to see that ecosystem in real life and not only in movies. Whales, dolphins, bluefin tuna, and perhaps less exciting, but just as critical: herring, lobster. What happens under the sea shouldn't be something that we talk about with nostalgia, but should be something that we're able to share as part of life on the Island.

I am really honoured to be able to speak to the motion today and in support of the motion and it would be a really amazing legacy to leave if some of that 10% of coastal waters that the federal government has committed to happened here in PEI first – in the same way that we're making that commitment of designated land space for protected areas in our green spaces on the province and we've exceeded the goals set by the federal government for protection of land area. It would be fantastic if PEI could actually set and be ahead of the curve in identifying those coastal areas that come under that marine protection area before the 2020 deadline. That can begin now by beginning to expand that area we've already found and looking at other areas that can come under that MPA designation.

Mr. Speaker, –

Ms. Casey: Call the hour.

Ms. Bell: – thank you for the opportunity to speak and we will continue another time.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. McIsaac: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 25th, at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The Legislature adjourned until Wednesday, April 25th, at 2:00 p.m.