

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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The Legislature sat at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker's Ruling

Speaker: Hon. members, on Friday, April 20th, the hon. Member for Belfast-Murray River rose on a point of privilege, and cited sections 27 and 31 of the *Legislative Assembly Act*; §75, §93, and §99 of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* 6th Edition; and other parliamentary authorities to assert that her privileges as a Member of the Legislative Assembly had been infringed upon after having received threats of a lawsuit following questions asked during oral Question Period on Wednesday, April 18th, 2018.

Then, the hon. Member for Georgetown-St. Peters rose on a point of privilege and, quoting §99 of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* 6th Edition and Chapter 3 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* 2nd Edition, asserted that his privileges as a Member of the Legislative Assembly had been infringed upon after having received threats of legal action in response to statements that he had made.

Following their points of privilege, both members tabled copies of comments made by members of the public in social media. The members indicated that they consider these comments to be threats, which offends the privilege that members shall be free from obstruction, intimidation, and molestation in the performance of their duties.

Hon. members, I will rule on both matters today, as they are very much related. I have reviewed the assertions raised by both members, as well as the related parliamentary authorities cited, and the documents tabled to support their claims.

Section 31 of the *Legislative Assembly Act* was raised by the Member for Belfast-Murray River; the section says:

“The Legislative Assembly has all the rights and privileges of a court of record for the purpose of summarily inquiring into and punishing as breaches of privilege or as a contempt of court...” – various actions.

While this right of the Legislative Assembly is entrenched in its act, these two matters were raised as matters of privilege and I will be addressing them as such. Pursuant to rule 45(3) of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island*: the Speaker shall not accept a motion that the House take action on a privilege matter unless satisfied that there is a prima facie case that breach of privilege has been committed and that the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity. The Speaker's decision is not subject to appeal.

I do believe this matter was raised at the earliest opportunity available. In terms of whether there is, at first impression, a breach of privilege, I refer hon. Members to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* 2nd Edition, Chapter 3, page 145:

“In deliberating upon a question of privilege, the Chair will take into account the extent to which the matter complained of infringed upon any Member's ability to perform his or her parliamentary functions or appears to be a contempt against the dignity of Parliament.”

The hon. Member for Belfast-Murray River asked questions on Wednesday, April 18th, on the topic of personal information allegedly shared with the Green Party by the PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation. In those questions, the member used the names of the Green Party president and the campaign manager for the Member for Charlottetown-Parkdale during the District 11 by-election held in late 2017.

The social media comments tabled by the Member for Belfast-Murray River included comments by those individuals and others. The social media comment tabled by the Member for Georgetown-St. Peters is attributed to another individual. The Member for Belfast-Murray River indicated that when she arrived at the office the previous day she was: faced with the threat of a lawsuit. If the member received other communication expressing an intention to take legal action against her for statements made in the Assembly, it has not been brought to my attention.

I have reviewed the social media comments that were tabled by the members. The authors of the comments are of the view that

statements made by the members are untrue, defamatory, slanderous or libelous. These comments are opinions. Members of the public have their own right to freedom of speech that allows them to disagree on the factual basis of statements made in parliamentary proceedings. They may also express the view that such statements are defamatory, even though members shall not be sanctioned outside of parliament for speeches in parliament. The proceedings of the Legislative Assembly take place in the public sphere, and members should expect that citizens shall react to and comment on them, especially when they are named in those proceedings. I will direct your attention to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th Edition, §69:

“The Speaker has reminded the House, ‘It is very important... to indicate that something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless the comment actually impinges upon the ability of Members of Parliament to do their job properly.’”

With the evidence provided, I see individuals responding to assertions made in this House; however, I do not see any direct threats to influence the actions of either members in these two matters. As a result, I cannot find that there is a prima facie breach of privilege in these cases.

I will assure you, hon. Members, that if an attempt is made to file a lawsuit against any member on the basis of the conduct of a member during an official proceeding of this House or a duly constituted committee of this House, as Speaker I will defend the privileges of all members. Upon being elected as Speaker, I claimed on behalf of all members, the ancient and accustomed rights and privileges that attach to your parliamentary work, including freedom of speech in debate, and I take this responsibility very seriously.

In preparing this ruling, there are further related matters that I feel it necessary to address:

On matters of privilege, it is my duty is to determine whether, on the first impression, a breach of privilege has occurred. In so doing, I do not invite or consider any

unsolicited documentation or opinion from outside this House when contemplating a ruling and I want to assure members that any correspondence received by my office from outside this House on these matters did not and will not influence or factor into the my decision today or any other day.

Secondly, members of this House have the privilege of freedom of speech in debate. The privilege exists to allow members to be free from inhibitions or limitations on what they can say in parliamentary proceedings. But comments outside of official Assembly proceedings are not necessarily protected by parliamentary privilege. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* 2nd Edition, Chapter 3, pages 96-97 provides some useful examples of how this privilege does or does not apply according to context:

“Members should be aware that [audio malfunction] which are absolutely privileged when made within a parliamentary proceeding may not be when repeated in another context, such as a press release, a householder mailing, on an Internet site, in a television or radio interview, at a public meeting or in the constituency office. Members also act at their peril when they transmit otherwise defamatory material for purposes unconnected with a parliamentary proceeding. Thus, comments made by a member at a function as an elected representative – but outside the forum of Parliament – would likely not be covered by this privilege, even if the member were quoting from his or her own speech made in a parliamentary proceeding.”

In the social media comments tabled on April 20, it appears the original cause of objection by members of the public lies in statements made during oral Question Period on April 18th. Parliamentary privilege definitely applies to those statements, but it is not clear that all objectionable statements were made within proceedings. There is reference to statements made in the media. It appears in tabled information from the Member for Georgetown-St. Peters that an individual is alleged that he defamatory statements. It's not clear in this case whether the individual is referring to statements made by the member within proceedings or in some other forum.

Finally, I would like to point out that freedom of speech in debate is a protection for members, but it comes with an important responsibility. I refer hon. Members to a 1987 ruling in the House of Commons in which Speaker Fraser addressed this subject:

“Such a privilege confers grave responsibilities on those who are protected by it. By that I mean specifically the Hon. Members of this place. The consequences of its abuse can be terrible. Innocent people could be slandered with no redress available to them. Reputations could be destroyed on the basis of false rumour.”

“All Hon. Members are conscious of the care they must exercise in availing themselves of their absolute privilege of freedom of speech.” *House of Commons Procedure and Practice 2nd Edition*, Chapter 3, page 98.

I urge all hon. Members to be mindful of Speaker Fraser’s words.

Thank you, hon. Members.

Matters of Privilege and Recognition of
Guests

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome colleagues here on the floor, those in the gallery, and those watching by television or Internet.

I want to welcome Eddie Lund, who has not been with us a lot recently, but has been a great veteran in the gallery here and is located in a district where the boundaries are shifting and I’m glad to see that Eddie’s located where he is and that he’s here in the Chamber with us today.

We have the Myers’ here – I expect will be spoken about in due course. It’s great to see you folks here. I want to welcome Mary Hughes, who’s been a great contributor in many ways to our province. She has her son Mike and daughter-in-law Sheri with her. Fred Osborne, who’s been head of the school board and contributed in many other ways and I’m sure there are others here who’ll be – Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark, Lorne

Yeo. There are folks here from 3 Points Aviation who will be presented by other speakers.

Last night was a big night for the Charlottetown Islanders – managed to pull even in that series against the top-ranked team in the Quebec league. Now into the third round and tied at the four game mark is a great thing and to win those two games in overtime. I had the good fortune to be there, along with the Minister of Health and Wellness and sport and the Deputy Speaker and Member from Charlottetown-Lewis Point. A lot of hockey experience in that pair, too.

Tonight will be an evening to recognize the culmination of the United Way campaign for 2017 into 2018 and the many good works that are able to be done in our province and in our communities through the United Way and we certainly congratulate everyone who’s been part of that fine effort.

Finally, I want to welcome – and I’m sure we all do – the showers that we’re having today. We’ve been looking for them – we’re looking for more – and, perhaps, even as soon as tomorrow, we’ll know whether April showers bring May flowers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

It’s a pleasure to rise as well and acknowledge some of the individuals that have joined us here in the gallery today; of course the parents of the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, Mr. and Mrs. Myers, great to see you here. Eddie Lund; Susan Hartley; Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark; Lorne Yeo, of course, who had a very special cameo appearance here not that long ago. I’d also like to recognize Mary Hughes, one of the constituents from my district – a very hard working individual in the health care field, particularly around hospice and palliative care – and also her son, Mike and daughter-in-law, Sheri Hughes.

I’d also like to congratulate the Charlottetown Islanders for their overtime

win again last night. I started my evening in Souris, ended up in Belfast – on my way home I did tune in to the game on the radio and I was lucky enough to get home just in time to hear the overtime win, which was just phenomenal. Although I wasn't in the rink, I understood there was a capacity crowd there last night, but I'd also like to say there was a capacity crowd down in Belfast last night, as well, for the nomination for the member for District 4. As I was driving home, I stopped at one of the service stations on the way home, and the individual said to me that they couldn't understand why the car ferry was opened so early. I said: Well, why would you say that? They said: I just assume all the traffic coming west means that we're seeing ferry traffic. I said: No, actually that's just the people coming from the nomination meeting that I'm just leaving.

It was a terrific evening all across. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the proceedings this afternoon.

Thank you very much.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

It's a pleasure to rise, of course, today. I, too, welcome the showers, we always welcome the rain here on Prince Edward Island, especially when things have been as dry as they have recently.

I'd like to welcome Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark, Dr. Susan Hartley, and perhaps, Dr. Eddie Lund, I'm not sure. He certainly has had his apprenticeship. He has put the hours in sitting in this House. Maybe he has a doctor of political knowledge here in the House.

I also would like to welcome a constituent and friend of mine, Lorne Yeo, back again. I hope everybody enjoys the proceedings today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to welcome everybody here today. Especially, like Lorne Yeo, he's becoming a regular. Eddie Lund's first time back. He's, you know, don't let Lorne break your record, there, Eddie.

Welcome, Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark. I follow you on Facebook and your social activity. I congratulate you on your caring for Prince Edward Islanders.

There was a large crowd in Boston last night, too. I'm in a little bit in mourning today. But, I bow my head to the minister of agriculture here, today. He looks awful happy today. Congratulations, minister of agriculture, you're Bruins came through –

Mr. LaVie: Not when I'm through of him.

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know this is an opportunity to get up and speak about something very extraordinary in the House. The Member from West Royalty-Springvale, sort of alluded, a little bit, to the hockey game last night in Boston where the beloved Boston Bruins pulled off a decisive victory, I might add. A 7-4 win.

It's great to know that Adam McQuaid, an Islander from the Cornwall area had a nice celebration afterwards. I'm looking forward to, possibly, seeing the Stanley Cup on Prince Edward Island again. It would be a real nice thing.

The other thing I wanted to mention, too, for those that are involved in the oyster fishery. I can inform this House, there are a couple of people in this House who are probably keenly aware that Eel Creek is now ice-free, and the oyster growers will be out shortly raising their oyster lines, spat lines, to get them up into the water.

It is, also, a reminder that, in the oyster industry, there's lots of risks and hazards. There was a tragic death a few years back in doing that very process. There is a lot of weight and tension on the lines when they're bringing them up as they can get, kind of, sunk into the mud. I urge all growers to

make sure that they exude extreme caution when they're raising these oyster lines and to do it in a safe manner.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, I'd like to welcome Eddie back to the Legislature today. Good to see you here, again.

I'd like to welcome several individuals who are here today on behalf of 3 Points Aviation. Shaine Guitard is the director of operators on PEI. Kent Simpson, Production Manager on PEI, and Dianne Griffin, HR Manager here on PEI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Palmer: 3 Points has some very exciting news, which we'll talk about a little bit later. Again, I welcome them to the Legislature today, and wish them all the best in the growth of their company.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a privilege to rise here today in the House. I had the honour, this morning, of having breakfast with Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark. I want to thank her for the time she gives all of us. She is a fountain of knowledge. Every meeting I have, I leave learning so much more from every meeting we have. I appreciate that.

Also, I'd like to welcome the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters' parents. Usually, when they're in the gallery, we usually get a pretty good performance. I hope that happens here, once again, today.

Mr. Myers: It'll be good.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) the Academy Award.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today as well and to acknowledge and welcome Dr. Sarah Stewart-Clark to the gallery, and to thank her for the very collaborative and informative meeting that we had a few months back. My department is looking forward to a follow-up meeting and to more collaboration as to how we can help partner together in helping the Island's most vulnerable people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Members

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

Royal Star Foods

Mr. Perry: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I would like to recognize a seafood business in my district that is going above and beyond for putting PEI on the map and driving our economy.

Royal Star Foods was officially opened in 1995 as a subsidiary to the Tignish Fisheries Co-op to meet increasing demands of seafood products. They employ over 300 people in peak season ranging in various tasks, with most being in the processing plant.

The impact this business has on a rural area like Tignish is outstanding and without them, it would make it harder for rural fishermen and women to succeed.

Just recently, they held their 93rd annual AGM where they were able to reflect on all that they have accomplished over the years. This past winter, they were represented at the Boston Seafood Show and drove home the fact that we are Canada's Food Island.

Currently, they ship seafood to over 20 countries worldwide with China, Finland, Germany, Spain, and the UK being some of them. This strengthens our economy and our fisheries by allowing the rest of the world to realize PEI has some of the best seafood on the entire planet.

I want to wish Royal Star Foods the best of luck as they gear up for their busy season and to all the fishers who will be tackling the waters in the near future.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

‘Kowboy’ Mike Hughes

Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and recognize an individual outstanding in his own field who gives so much back to the community.

That person is Kowboy Mike Hughes. While Mike is well known as a professional wrestler, with a significant following, it is what he does outside of the wrestling ring on a daily basis that really makes this individual a true Island hero.

Mike, along with Jason Mosher, founded Guys Who Give a blank. The group was founded a couple of years ago with the goal to give back to non-profit groups in need, and they have certainly achieved what they set out to do. They have given out more than \$25,000 to date to non-profit groups in need.

This is not the only group Mike is involved with. He also partners with the Children’s Wish Foundation and works with them each year to ensure that a child is provided with a wish.

In 2014, Mike joined forces again with Jason Mosher to become part of the Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life, Dream Team. Their combined efforts raised thousands of dollars for cancer research and outreach programs right here on PEI.

His other volunteer work in the community involves the MS Society and Island Hospice. He is also a motivational speaker, and quite often speaks to students at schools on fitness, nutrition, and chasing their dreams and never giving up.

Mike’s career outside of professional wrestling is as a resident care worker, where he displays his true passion for helping others. Mike is a huge advocate, like myself, on the mental health and addictions file. He has seen firsthand the needs and supports

that individuals need who suffer from addictions and mental health issues.

Red Rock wrestling is coming to Stratford this Friday evening, April 27th, and it’s sure to be a HUGE night at the town hall. I encourage everyone to come out and support Kowboy Mike Hughes at this event so that he can continue to do his amazing charity work all across Prince Edward Island.

Advance tickets are now on sale now at NATURALLY FIT PEI and Phinley’s Diner & Dairy Bar in Stratford.

I want to thank Mike for his volunteer work in the community. It certainly does not go unnoticed and we are thankful to him and wish him the best at his event this coming Friday evening in Stratford.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Reduction of Plastic Use

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

We’ve been hearing a lot lately about plastic drinking straws and the environmental damage that they cause.

In a recent National CBC story, PEI restaurants were mentioned, alongside Toronto bars and the University of Guelph, as leading the way in proactively and voluntarily reducing their use of straws.

Among the restaurants participating in the initiative are the Red Island Hospitality Group, Lobster on the Wharf and Receiver Coffee house. I find it incredibly encouraging when I read stories of local businesses taking the lead and deciding to stop, or reduce the usage of plastic products, whether that be straws or packaging or carrier bags.

I’m also heartened as I walk around the grocery stores and see so many Islanders, who now bring their own reusable bags rather than take the disposal plastic ones. Those of us, who have been advocating for more environmental awareness and better policies to encourage waste reduction for

decades, are cheered by this recent widespread move to responsible, environmental citizenship.

When I think back to my childhood, we didn't recycle at all. But, we also didn't make a lot of garbage either. Life was simpler and things were designed differently, and advertising's relentless drive to encourage us to consume more stuff was largely absent.

I do, however, remember the introduction of the three Rs. We were told: reduce, reuse, recycle. Maybe it's time to add a fourth R: refuse. Refuse to take that plastic bag. That philosophy seems to sit well, especially here on PEI where living simply with less and repairing things, and making do with what you already have has been a hallmark of Island life for generations.

The Earth, as we are finding out, has limited resources, and also a limited capacity to absorb our wastes. Reducing, reusing, and refusing are far more effective means of finding that right balance between human needs and comfort and ecological limits.

I am confident that Islanders will continue to make good choices and I applaud both the business sector and individuals, who, without heavy-handed regulations, are voluntarily doing the right thing. Everywhere, there are signs that we are learning to live successfully on this planet. As a friend of mine puts it: As if we want to stay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Responses with Questions Taken As Notice

Questions by Members

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

The oyster fishery is a big contributor to the provincial economy. The landed value of oysters topped \$11 million in 2016. That's according to the Annual Statistical Review.

Oyster industry potential growth sector

Question to the Premier: Does your government view the oyster industry as a potential growth sector?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, yes, we have seen tremendous growth in the shellfish sector, both oysters and mussels, in the province. We are also seeing new and innovative ways to raise those products in a cost-effective and environmentally friendly way. On Prince Edward Island, we're big advocates of the oyster industry.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

PEI arguably produces the greatest oysters on Earth with a well-earned reputation for high-quality.

Dollars from Atlantic Fisheries Fund

Question, again, to the Premier: Do you intend to use dollars from the Atlantic Fisheries Fund to support projects that will grow this industry?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, we do, Mr. Speaker. We actually have a number of applications in and have made some decisions on a number of oyster initiatives that will enhance that particular industry, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Our oyster fishery adds to the wide menu of goods we export to markets off-Island. Our Premier here is well known for speaking about the mighty Island and the food Island.

New markets for Island oysters

While, I respect the insight and the knowledge of the Minister of Agriculture

and Fisheries on his file; I'm very happy to see he's up to speed on something, I have another question to the Premier: How is your government helping the industry to open new markets for Island oysters?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we are always looking at new markets, and in fact, both the Premier and myself and the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism, were down at the Boston seafood show. We were promoting some of the great seafood products here, as well as, some of the lobster products and processing industries that we have here.

I must say that the mussel industry was front and centre at the Canada showcase. We've had numerous meetings with different businesses and organizations while we were in Boston, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Between harvesters, plant workers and spin-off jobs, over 1,000 Islanders earn a living from the oyster fishery. These jobs are, for the most part, are in rural and urban communities right across our province. Again, I'm very interested in getting the Premier's thoughts and perspectives on this subject.

Job opportunities in oyster industry

Again, a question to the Premier: How is your government working with the oyster industry to identify future job opportunities in harvesting, processing and research?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, we, as a Department of Agriculture and Fisheries work with a number of different sectors within the shellfish industry.

We have our oyster growers' association, which I was a speaker at, and we brought in some speakers to talk about the features of

those industries. We work with the PEI Shellfish Association and looking at ways to get them in a more sustainable process. We have the mussel growers' of Prince Edward Island, the PEI Aquaculture Alliance; there is a number of organizations out there that represent various groups in the shellfish sector. Our door is always open on ways that we can seek out new opportunities and create new and innovative ways for these people to be profitable and grow the economy of Prince Edward Island.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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

Our world-class oysters give our culinary professionals an incredible product to display their talents with.

The sight of oyster fishers working on the water in our rivers and bays is an iconic experience for our tourists to see.

Again, I congratulate the minister for being up to speed on one of the files in his portfolio. Well done.

But, again, I'm looking to get a little bit of perspective from the man who goes across Canada, across the world promoting the mighty Island, food Island.

Oyster fishers on water re: tourism product

My question again to the Premier will be: Do you agree that the iconic images of our oyster fishers working the water makes our tourism product iconic?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, is referring to the public fishery, although some of the lease owners can also fish by tongs and some of those different procedures.

Our industry is much broader than that. We have a lot of off-bottom leases. We have a lot of growers that are coming up with new and innovative ways. The Minister of

Finance had mentioned that, you know, there's a number of students out in UPEI that have received funding to come up with new and innovative ways to flip the oyster trays.

There are companies out there, like cage commander that are out there doing contract work in coming up with innovative ways to get the oysters off the bottom and get them out on floating trays and things of that nature.

We're always looking at ways to promote the industry. And yes, the iconic way and the previous ways that we have been harvesting the shellfish, but we do it in many other formats, too, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear from the fisheries minister. He's got a pretty good handle of how the leases work and off-bottom leases.

I want to talk about that because the Premier won't get up and say he supports the industry. He had what, five or six chances here today to stand and support it.

It's funny because earlier this year, him and his government, kicked in \$15,000 to the North Shore municipality to do a study to end the oyster fishery in the Covehead Bay.

Funding of study restricting oyster fishing

Question to the Premier: Why is your government funding a study that will restrict oyster fishing in the Covehead Bay?

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

Mr. Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was at the request of the community of North Shore. It came from the community development fund. It was originally a \$15,000 project. It was reduced, at the request of the community development fund to \$11,000, of which the community development fund provided \$55,000, or \$5,500 of that cost and a 50/50 split from the community development fund.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're well aware that money was given to the community. The question is, the Premier, and it's the Premier's interference. The Premier was at meetings. I have all the proof and the documents that the Premier was at these meetings. I'll table them here, later.

There are a lot of people on Prince Edward Island who earn their living from the shellfishery, right in the Covehead Bay and they aren't millionaires, they're just folks that are trying to get by.

On July 11th, the Premier met with the North Shore community council, himself, and informed them that the province was encouraged that the Covehead Bay was going to be on the roster for review of the, and I quote: physical and social impacts of aquaculture.

Question to the Premier: why do you want to limit these people's ability to earn a living?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I meet with the North Shore council as the local MLA, and it was in that capacity that I was there and it was a much more wide-ranging discussion than the member's question has indicated.

The real discussion in its fullness was about community planning and indeed, it's not surprising to me, and I took part in the creation of the official plan for the North Shore community, that the bay is indeed a central feature of that community and has been from time in memorial.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny that I have from the minutes of one of these meetings where the primary objective was to prevent any off-bottom oyster leases in Cove Head Bay. I'm told

that the Premier is no friend of the shellfish industry out there at all. In fact, when he was running UPEI he threw his weight around pretty heavily to try to get some people to disappear out of fishing in the bay.

Off-bottom leases in Cove Head Bay

Question to the Premier: Do you support, personally, off-bottom leases in Cove Head Bay?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the value of the off-bottom fishery and it has been a feature of Cove Head Bay for many years getting on now well into its third decade and we have seen this throughout our province, the growth in the shellfishery in aquaculture and indeed, this has been a very positive thing throughout our province and in the industry of our province, and in the culinary growth of our province, and I do indeed support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier knows full well what I'm talking about at his time at UPEI. He knows exactly what he did and he knows what he's doing out there today. As a matter of fact, and I hear from many fishers out there that the issue is that it's the Premier's view and the Premier's kayaking that's becoming interrupted out there is why he doesn't want the oyster fishers in the bay.

Appropriate use of power as Premier

Question, again, to the Premier: Do you think that's an appropriate use of your power?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I am the MLA for a district that has a strong community and I have attended various meetings, one with the council cited by the hon. member. I attended some public meetings and those discussions have been much broader and fuller and comprehensive

than has been represented by these questions.

They have been discussions about community development, about the health of the bay, and about the enjoyment of the bay in its fullness. As an MLA, I am happy to take part in those meetings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course as an MLA you're quite prepared to take in those meetings in your community, and as a resident who doesn't want his view obstructed or wants to be able to kayak freely through the Cove Head Bay, I guess you're available to interrupt those, except for that you're the Premier and this is where the problem lies, is you don't seem to understand the boundaries of your own position and you keep walking into things that you shouldn't walk into.

Ten years ago, you walked into the DFO office, I'm told, to try to get people to stop fishing right in front of your house.

Question, again, to the Premier: Do you think that this the appropriate use of your power?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, in my role as an MLA, it is my job to be in touch with what's going on in our community and I support the aquaculture. I support the community in its growth and development.

I have to say, at a time in this House when we've talked a lot about communities, incorporated or otherwise, I'm very proud of the community of North Shore, of its official plan, of all of the elements that it takes into account, of the way that people have built and grown that community, and indeed we are currently in the process of having a further amalgamation that will see the community expanded.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I support that.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know full well that you don't support the industry in the Cove Head Bay because if you did, why would the fishers think you didn't? I mean, being connected with your community is understanding what people are saying, and what they're saying about you is that you're interfering, and that you've been interfering since you've been president at UPEI when you were throwing your weight around, and you know what I'm talking about.

You walked into the DFO office and you tried to flex your muscles, and you're back at it again. But, now it appears you have a complete vendetta against people who stood up against you, which is your signature move and everyone in this Chamber knows it, and lots of people in government, and many at UPEI do.

Use of taxpayers' dollars

Question to the Premier: Do you think it's okay to use taxpayers' dollars to settle your own person vendetta against shellfishers?

Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Premier MacLauchlan: Mr. Speaker, I've said earlier and I'll say again: I am supportive of aquaculture, mussels, oysters, bottom, surface, the native fishery, (Indistinct) and we've seen all of that in Cove Head Bay going back to Lorne MacMillan who was one of the earliest oyster fishers in this province.

I'm very proud of that work and of the industry and of the science and sophistication that is behind it. I am totally supportive of the aquaculture, and I am supportive of our community. I am proud to say that our community is doing well and that our community is currently, and that is the precise piece that's being asked about here, looking at its total development in building around its official plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Well Mr. Speaker, the issue of the right whale in the Gulf of St. Lawrence may result in big changes to both the crab and the lobster fishery right here in Prince Edward Island.

Restrictions on lobster and crab fishery

Question to the minister of fisheries: Do you support the new federal restrictions on the lobster and crab fishery right here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reality of the issue in trying to protect endangered species like the right whale, the industry, Department and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, as well as our department, are always looking at ways that we can become more sustainable, make sure that we can protect endangered species and allow a fishery to thrive and prosper in this province.

There have been protocols that have been put in place and we're working with the industry as well as DFO to make sure that those protocols work as effectively as possible.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DFO protocols to protect right whales

My second question to the fisheries: When did you find out about these changes DFO is looking at?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the protocols regarding the snow crab industry; that has been going on for some time. We were aware of those particular changes that were recommended by DFO, I'm going to say, sometime in late-January, mid-January or something along that line.

As far as the issues and protocols that are affecting the potential to the lobster fishery, I've been notified of that on April 24th, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another question to the minister of fisheries: Yes, the lobster fishermen have to make changes to their ropes. Crab fishermen have to make changes to their ropes and another change that is coming forward is a temporary closing in the fishing where whales are spotted.

Temporary closure during fishing season

My question to the fishery minister: Are you in favour of a minimum of 15-to-30-day closure in the middle of a lobster season and a crab season?

Speaker: the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the contentious issues regarding, if a whale is spotted within a certain area. DFO has developed the Gulf of St. Lawrence into quadrants. They're four kilometre quadrants, and if a whale is spotted in any particular one of those particular quadrants, then the quadrants around it are also blocked off for a maximum of 15 days.

It could be longer than that. It's also 15 days prior to the final sighting of the whales. It is a concern because some of the natural foraging areas of the right whale happen to be up around MacLeod's ledge and a little bit more around the Eastern Kings area. So, it is of concern, but it's a very hard thing to predict where right whales will be found and spotted, and we'll do all the surveillances that we can and try to work with the industry to make sure we protect the fishers as well as the right whales.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These changes are supposed to apply to LFA 24, 25, and 26.

DFO protocols to protect right whales (further)

Question to the minister fisheries: How are these changes this big being drawn up while your government is asleep at the wheel?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, the industry, through the snow crab fishery and the PEI Fisherman's Association – we've all been aware of the right whale issue. It was in fact, actually, a topic of discussion at the annual meeting of the PEI Fishermen's Association and there were extensive briefings on the issues regarding the right whales and the peril that they are in as a species.

There are a lot of factors that go into this. If right whales become endangered, it has impacts on potential trade. We've already lost some of our marine sustainability designations in the snow crab industry and we have to make sure we protect those markets and we'll do everything we can to ensure that we do that.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the fishing season is short for the crab and the lobster fishermen – a fishing season that closes for 15-30 days is shortening up the lobster season and the effects that'll have on, not only the fishers, but the economy of Prince Edward Island. This is one of our major industries right here on Prince Edward Island.

Contingency plan for shutdown of fishery season

What is the contingency plan in place if something like this is shut down?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is very accurate in stating this is a very important industry. There are two factors here: One particular factor if you look at the snow crab industry, that's a quota fishery and I've urged the federal minister of

fisheries to open that season as soon as he possibly can because it's a quota fishery and our fishers in Prince Edward Island come out. In fact, I wrote a letter on Monday to the federal minister to urge him to get our season opened as (Indistinct) possible. In the lobster fishery, it's a little different, it is a seasoned fishery and yes, it is great concern if there's a particular quadrant that might happen to be shut off, then those fishers would have to fish in another area and that would potentially put other stress on those particular areas.

So, once again, we are working with DFO to make sure we'll monitor this. We're hopeful that the whales will go to their natural locations which is the Bay of Fundy, as well as up in the Bay of Chaleur area and we'll watch it closely, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is going to affect PEI as a whole. If the whales are spotted, just spotted, this will affect everyone across PEI. This will affect plant workers, wharf workers, fishers, families; as a whole.

Emergency funding re: closure of fisheries

My question to the fishery minister: Do you have emergency funding in place in case of a closure in the crab fishery and the lobster fishery right here on Prince Edward Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Henderson: I guess the first issue would be is that some of these issues that we're talking about here are federal issues. From our perspective as a province, we are working with the federal government and Mr. LeBlanc to make sure that our fishery comes off as smoothly and successfully as it possibly can – and safely. We are certainly monitoring the whale situation, but we also have to balance that with the potential risk of whale entrapments or death and that can also have some significant impacts.

I would say that in the Nova Scotia side, they have fished within the whale population

for some time and with some measures that have been put in place like this. So we're not talking about closing a fishery, we're talking about fishers having to maybe fish in a little bit different location.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 2018 Auditor General's Report on the social assistance program identified that shelf-to-ceiling rates have not been increased since 2013. I quote from that report: Payments for shelter make up the majority of the monthly benefits provided to social assistance recipients and include rent or mortgage costs plus heat and utilities. That same shelter rate is used across the province and has not been increased since November, 2013.

Shelter allowance rates

We know from the many budget announcements that there has been an additional allocation of \$500,000 to the shelter allowance this year and we're grateful to see that, but I have a question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: Was this funding decision based on the adequacy of ceiling rates and requested via Executive Council as recommended by the Auditor General?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government is committed to helping those with their housing needs and quite evident in the implementation of a housing action plan that we have initiated in collaboration with community partners as well as across government. Shelter ceilings are something that we had in our platform when we were campaigning at the last election, so it was something that we had intended to do. Because we had a good year last year we did increase it and it was included in the Budget this year. Many of our clients have already reached out to us with gratitude, Mr. Speaker, and thanking us for that and we're looking forward to doing much more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Social assistance policy 5.1 states that: shelter ceilings should be sufficiently high to ensure the general availability of an adequate accommodation for applicants. (Indistinct)

Dollars to meet market rental rates

Question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: Is the current investment in this budget sufficient to meet the actual market rental rates in the province?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I already previously mentioned, we have initiated a provincial housing action plan. We have a housing task force that is working in collaboration with a co-design team. That co-design team is made up of many community partners – community partners who are active in homelessness and they are also active in poverty reduction across the Island. We are looking forward to the results of that housing action plan coming forth in June and we're looking forward to implementing the commitments that we have initiated in this Budget, which include \$17 million worth of affordable housing across Prince Edward Island within the next two years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

IRAC regularly reviews rental rates and increased rates between November, 2013 and March, 2018 by a total of 6.75% for the private rental market, therefore, the actual investment required to bring social assistance shelter rates to 2018 levels is at least \$1.5 million.

Increase of dollars to shelter rates

Question for the Minister of Family and Human Services: Will you be announcing an additional \$1 million to the shelter rates as a follow-up to your current budget announcements?

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned in my last answer to my last question, we have committed up to \$17 million over the next two years that will go towards affordable housing and ending homelessness on Prince Edward Island and addressing homelessness on Prince Edward Island. We are doing this in collaboration with community because we all know that we cannot do this alone. Government cannot do this alone. Actually, if I might add, that Prince Edward Island was actually highlighted in the Tamarack Institute's newsletter last month on how we are tackling poverty. We're not doing it alone; we're doing it in collaboration with our community partners and we will continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was very pleased to see the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women table a motion yesterday calling on government to ensure provincial agencies, board, and commission appointments are gender-balanced. This issue is close to my heart as I sit on the PEI Coalition for Women in Government's working group on equity in governance that has been meeting for the past three years – a group that is focused specifically on addressing how more women can be recruited and appointed to ABCs via Engage PEI.

Percentage of women appointed to ABCs

A question for the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: Of all the Islanders who are currently appointed to ABCs, what percentage are currently women?

Speaker: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the objectives that our government had in 2015 in looking at the makeup of our ABC boards was to increase that percentage from just around 30%. Since that time, we actually have come up to over 50%. We presently have 133 men and 162 women that have had appointments since 2015, to bring our percentage up over that 50% mark.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The data that we have from the PEI Coalition for Women in Government and the board I sit on currently puts that percentage at 37% as per the data on their website. Perhaps, we have got a little bit of a difference in how we count, maybe, who are women.

The 2013 Speech From the Throne stated that: Government is making a commitment to achieve greater representation of women on all appointed provincial boards and commissions and achieving overall parity within five years.

Diversity on provincial boards and commissions

Can you explain why we have such a challenge with parity now?

Speaker: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Mr. Roach: Who says parity is better?

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we have made, since 2015, 295 appointments. Of those are 162 women, 23 youth. Eight are Aboriginal. Six newcomers and 57 seniors. We have reached over 50% of our ABC board makeup of different parity, different diversity, and we will continue to work towards more.

Mr. Roach: Great job. Great work.

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

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We already know what needs to be done to achieve gender parity on ABCs. Legislated quotas are internationally proven as one of the most effective and efficient ways to increase the number of women on boards.

Legislation on gender parity

To the same minister: Will you commit to bring forward legislation to implement gender parity rather than a non-binding motion?

Speaker: The hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to advocate for diversity in our appointments, certainly within the Advisory Council for the Status of Women.

There is a formula that specifically targets, I will say, diversity, ability, diversity of work experience, diversity of cultural experience. We will continue, right across government, to advocate for that type of diversity, going forward, presently doing it. Again, to reiterate, out of 295 appointed, there is 162 women.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question today is for the Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy: Minister, whenever anyone of us, and I'm sure most people in this Legislature have, whenever we go to the service station and we want to get a new set of tires put on our vehicle, we pay a tax on our tires in order to cover some of the environmental costs of bringing more rubber into ecosystem.

Tire tax revenues

Minister: What exactly does the revenue from this tire tax go towards?

Mr. Myers: Did you tired tax or tire tax?

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

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) you're not that deaf.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The province did implement the current levy structure in 2012, which does see Islanders pay \$4 per tire for tires up to 17 inches and \$11.25 for each tire greater than 17 inches.

The majority of that revenue goes to Island Waste Management Corporation for the disposal of those tires.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, minister, for indicating that that money goes directly towards our environment and making it friendlier.

Disposal of used tires

My question to the same minister: Since implementing this tire tax, have tires been disposed of in a more careful and environmentally friendly manner?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We want to monitor the amount of tires that are coming into our environmental footprint. Island Waste Management Corporation recognizes it does have a responsibility to dispose of those properly and efficiently to ensure that we continue that that benefits the province.

Legislation does ban tires from our landfills. We have a contractor that picks those up across the Island and takes them to the facility in East Prince and then we ship them off-Island to various tire recycling and processing facilities.

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

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My next question is to the minister, as well.

Increase in tire tax

Minister: In the future, are we going to see an increase in this tax?

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

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) anymore (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. There are no plans to increase the tire tax.

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) first tax (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have had the occasion to witness constituents receive excellent care from Dr. Lecours and her staff. Also, the new Charlottetown facility enables them to provide – to ensure extra care for those who are in their end of life journey.

Palliative care beds in the province

Question to the minister of health: How many palliative care beds are there on Prince Edward Island, and do we have the doctor and staff available to take care of those beds?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

I do appreciate the opportunity to stand today to speak about our wonderful Palliative Care Program on Prince Edward Island which provides, as the member said, wonderful end-of-life care for residents of Prince Edward Island, and indeed, their

families. It's very compassionate care. It's very dignified care by our frontline staff at all of our facilities across Prince Edward Island.

Currently, we have 25 palliative care beds all spread all across PEI. As the member referenced we have our new provincial palliative care facility in Charlottetown has 10 beds. We also provide beds in Prince County, Souris area, and Kings County, as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, do we, obviously, we probably provide medication for those people that are in the facility. I know sometimes the families; they go home for a little bit and back into the facility.

Drug funding for end-of-life patients at home

Do we provide medicine for them if they go shortly to their home and back to the palliative care centre?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

This year, alone, and as part of our balanced Budget, we were able to invest \$0.5 million into palliative care. Not only our Palliative Care Program, but our palliative care drug program, as well, hon. member, and our palliative care stay at home.

So yes, people that are faced with palliative care needs; we do offer assistance on drug funding. We use the Generic Drug Program. We also use the High Cost Drug Program so that those at the end of life situations, we are able to be there to support their needs, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dumville: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, you've indicated we provide palliative care all across the Island.

Expansion of Palliative Care Program

Are you looking at expanding the Palliative Care Program in any way across our Island?

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Certainly, this program is a phenomenal program. There is no other way to put it. Being able to provide 25 beds all across the province. Would we like to see more? Absolutely.

We are investing, as I said, this year alone, and enhancing our palliative stay-at-home program, where many of Islanders want to be during their final years with their families, with their loved ones. We will put in supports with Island EMS to enhance that service that has been an award-winning service on our province, over the last number of years. We'll continue to work on those needs, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Wow. Award-winning.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, during the education minister's budget estimates, he revealed another new assessment. This time, in grade 10 literacy.

This test is not for school credit. It's on pen and paper because technology and connectivity in our schools isn't good enough to conduct it online.

New grade 10 provincial literacy assessment

Minister: Why yet another provincial-level test, one that is not for credit or able to be followed-up on?

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

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

As I indicated when I was on the floor with estimates, this is a pilot project this year. The intention is to be able to take those students that are entering into high school and to be able to determine what we might be able to do for them to ensure that they reached the level that they need to to enter the workforce and we would propose to have interventions to assist with that, that would be coupled with this assessment program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, this government is smothering students with provincial standardized assessments; grade 3 primary literacy, grade 3 primary math, grade 6 elementary literacy assessment, grade 6 elementary math, grade 9 intermediate math, grade 11 high school math, PESA PCAP, and now this new grade 10 literacy.

The minister of education in Ontario has just released a report that recommends an abrupt departure from the current assessment program.

Additional education assessments

Minister: Why is Ontario, the province we modeled our assessment program after, scaling back standardized assessments when PEI is adding additional assessments?

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

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

As we indicated both while I was on the floor with my budget and previously in this House, we will also be reviewing our assessment program. I should say that that's not to say that there will inevitably be less assessments or more assessments. We will be looking at what assessments we do and why we do them and what we hope to gain out of them.

But, let me also say that we would do less assessment right now than most of the other provinces across the country, and in Canada

we do less assessment than most of the other provinces in the OECD, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, a key recommendation from the report is somewhat ironic in PEI's context. The Ontario report recommends moving away from high school literacy assessments just when this minister is introducing one.

Implementation of high school literacy assessment

Minister: Why have you implemented another provincial test when the province your broken testing system is based on is now cancelling it?

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

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

I'm not going to pretend to speak to the Ontario high school literacy assessment, but what I am going to speak to is what the plan is in relation to our high school literacy assessment, and that is that it be coupled with a literacy intervention course. Through a pilot project, we have seen that we can bring up to one-third of the students that were struggling to attain a satisfactory level of literacy back up so that they can graduate with the standard level of academic literacy that we would expect of Prince Edward Island students when they go out to enter the workforce or go on to further study. That's why we're looking to do this program.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, a new question for the minister.

Mr. Minister, the Ontario report also recommends that provincial assessments at the primary or grade 3 level be done away with completely and new supports be provided to teachers to help with classroom assessment.

Minister: Why is your government's position on these provincial assessments different from Island parents, teachers, our PC team, and the government of Ontario?

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

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

I'm not going to purport to speak for the PC team in what their view of the world should be, but what I can tell you is that our assessment program is based on evidence and fact. We're out there to do what's best for Prince Edward Island students and I think that our track record with this assessment program in place over the last decade has been exemplary. That's not to say that it's perfect, but it is to say that we're making huge progress with our education system, and we will continually look to do better.

That does include looking at interventions with our early years literacy program so that our students can do better every year that they go through the system, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque, your final question.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the minister's responses are very different from what my PC caucus colleagues and I are hearing from parents and teachers.

The Ontario report, which I'll be able to table today, supports the position long held by the Progressive Conservative Party of PEI, that supports for student assessment should be at the classroom level, and we should move away from provincial standardized assessments.

The minister shouldn't be spending tax dollars on a review. They have heard from parents, from educators, and from us on this side of the House. Now, the minister has a new report from Ontario, and these all say the same thing.

Dollars spent on standardized tests

Minister: Given the views of Islanders and the new Ontario report, how do you justify spending millions to support standardized tests and on your review when those tax dollars should have already been directed right into Island classrooms to help educators and young learners?

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

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

I will say this: When I became minister, this was something that I will say I had a big interest in, but I didn't purport to know anything more than the average person on the street about and I will say it is an incredibly complex system that works through expert evidence and scientific research to provide the best outcome for our students.

I will say: I recently had a long chat with Andreas Schleicher who's the OECD head of education. It was his thought – and this is his area of expertise – that we need to be continuing to do these kinds of things to supplement the great, professional work that our Island teachers do in the classrooms and to help to understand across each cohort and through our system where we might have weakness and where we might be able to improve and how we might be able to improve so that we can put the proper interventions in place, both through coaches and through curriculum so our Island students can do their very best and so we can succeed as an Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Statements by Ministers

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

Rural Growth Initiative

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, this government remains strongly committed to growing and developing rural Prince Edward Island. Today I am pleased to announce details of a new initiative that builds on that commitment. Our government's 2018-2019 Budget has added an additional \$2 million to

the Rural Growth Initiative, bringing its total amount to nearly \$2.5 million.

The strong economy, together with good governance, and fiscal responsibility, have led to the province's third consecutive balanced budget. That enables us to make strategic investments that continue to strengthen our rural economy.

The Rural Growth Initiative addresses many of the recommendations of the regional economic advisory councils to grow the population and create focused action plans. It does so in a number of ways: It will provide funding to local communities for activities which foster a culture of inclusiveness for newcomers. Some communities have taken steps already to make them even more welcoming communities.

It will provide funding to organizations to develop strategic and organizational plans. This will help them identify solutions to complex problems. It will reduce barriers to economic growth through investing in activities that encourage entrepreneurship. This will be accomplished through activities such as mentorship and the implementation of economic development plans.

Finally, it will provide funding to non-profit organizations and municipalities for strategic investments in infrastructure that are important for rural culture, society, and economic development. These could include projects that support community and recreational activities.

Rural Islanders are innovative, ambitious, and hard working and continue to exceed everyone's expectations – including our own – which helps make Prince Edward Island the mighty Island.

As stated in the Throne Speech, this government has consistently focused on building strong communities throughout our province, providing needed infrastructure investment and supports to allow for strong local leadership to drive development and smart growth.

The Rural Growth Initiative underscores this government's commitment to encourage economic growth and prosperity in every part of rural Prince Edward Island

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It sounds like there's an election coming by the sounds of that. It's great that – and we'll take the \$2.5 million, but don't forget, this is the government – it's a pet peeve of mine they cut the \$5 million rural development fund.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: You cut \$5 million, but you're giving us back \$2.5. Do the math. You always talk rural development. You cut out the advisory boards for hospitals, the boards for our schools, you took our doctors. You always talk rural development –

Mr. Myers: Roll up the payment if they could.

Leader of the Opposition: Took our schools.

Mr. LaVie: A balanced budget. You're telling people your books are balanced. Wait until the blue books come out.

Ms. Biggar: Yes. (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: You guys will get (Indistinct). Don't worry.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct).

Mr. LaVie: The election will be here and gone.

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) \$25 million from HST.

Mr. LaVie: It's great that you stand up and say, yes, it's \$2.5 million. But, you're thinking that the people forget. Well I don't forget when you took the \$5 from rural PEI.

You see the minister of transportation talking about how much pavement we get in rural PEI. Now, she's got the counters, up there in Fortune, on the road in April. That's when the counters are on the road. Put them up there when the tourist season is on and

give the real count of how much traffic is in eastern PEI.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Myers: Yes, sir.

Mr. LaVie: You had them up there last fall –

Mr. MacEwen: Fake numbers.

Mr. LaVie: – to get the numbers. That's why we get no pavement.

Don't forget: PEI is driven by fishery, farming and tourism. And where does that happen? In rural PEI. Let's not forget that.

We have our fishers. Hard working people, which the minister is right; hard working people in rural PEI. We have our farmers. Hard working people of PEI. Great stewards of the land. You have got to give them credit.

And tourism, we call it a season. A tourist season, no. These businesses that are running tourism work year-round. They still got to come up with strategies and ways to make their businesses run in rural PEI.

When the minister stands up and says it's great that rural PEI, we're giving you \$2.5 million, but we took five from you. Don't forget that, minister. I didn't forget that. Until the day I'm in this seat, I'm not going to forget that your government took the \$5 million out of rural PEI, and didn't give it back.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

Imagine, if you had a gift that you really loved and it was taken away from you.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Then, it was wrapped in different wrapping paper and given back to you at half the size it was the first time you got it –

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and we're –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – expected to get excited about that. I'm sorry –

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) million dollars a year –

Mr. LaVie: It's not only me that knows (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: Brilliant.

Ms. Compton: Take away and give a little back.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Rural prosperity, of course, is the foundation of Island-wide success. If you look at the foundations of our economy, here; they're fishing, they're farming, they're tourism, all largely, and in some cases entirely, rural pursuits. We have to look after our rural regions.

I have the great privilege of representing a rural district. Of course, our province is becoming increasingly diverse, not only in terms of culture, but different regions of our province are quite distinct. We are one big community, I absolutely believe that, but economic prosperity and development in Souris, for example, might not look appropriate in the Argyle Shore or in Mont-Carmel.

We need to develop rural communities and economies that are specific and distinct and related to the needs of the region. I think we have tremendous opportunities when it comes to arts and culture. I think we have huge opportunities when it comes to tourism. Each of those distinctive elements of PEI culture and geography could and should be, developed.

It's, of course, I'm happy, minister, that we have \$2.5 million for rural areas. Let's spend it wisely and let's look at sustainable, long-term prosperity and how we can create that appropriately for each part of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Leader of the Opposition: Here we go.

An Hon. Member: Here we go.

An Hon. Member: More good news.

3 Points Aviation and Bombardier

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's no secret that Prince Edward Island aerospace industry makes a vital contribution to the province's economy and employment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: We fly with the best.

Mr. Palmer: The industry also strengthens our exports and represents about 25% of the value of all goods leaving our province to international markets.

Yesterday, an important player in our province's aerospace industry announced that it has entered into a collaborative agreement with Canada's largest aerospace manufacturer, Bombardier.

Mr. R. Brown: Oh, great.

Mr. Palmer: 3 Points Aviation manufactures parts for the aerospace industry, and operates out of West Royalty Business Park. The agreement will see Bombardier assist 3 Points Aviation in acquiring parts manufacturing approvals from aviation regulators.

Those approvals will allow 3 Points Aviation to begin manufacturing parts for Bombardier's Q Series aircraft.

Mr. Roach: Yes, sir.

Mr. Palmer: This is a major achievement for 3 Points Aviation, and one that will, very likely, add jobs and will secure the company's future on Prince Edward Island.

Our provincial government has been very supportive of 3 Points Aviation. Over the years, we have offered the company support through tax incentives, labour rebates and other forms of assistance. These supports have helped the company grow, add jobs

and cumulate exciting new markets for its products and services.

These are some of the traditional ways we support business in the aerospace industry on Prince Edward Island. In our third consecutive balanced Budget –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, great.

Mr. Palmer: – we recently included –

Mr. Myers: It's three now?

Mr. Palmer: – a tax break for small businesses. The Budget also included a business investment grant that will help improve the bottom line of businesses and will encourage investment.

Combined with our traditional supports, these measures will help Island businesses succeed and grow. This is another great example of the qualities that make our province the mighty Island.

Our ambitious, hard working entrepreneurs are exceeding expectations time and time again. I offer sincere congratulations to 3 Points Aviation, and I wish them every success in their new collaboration with Bombardier.

Mr. R. Brown: Great! Great!

An Hon. Member: Jobs, jobs, jobs –

Ms. Biggar: You're not supposed to do that (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know, like the hon. member from Souris, said, it sounds like it's election time, and government is taking the opportunity to take credit for a great business that resides here on Prince Edward Island that is doing great things.

All of – on their own account, and of course, there are labour market incentives that the government has here that are sent down by

Ottawa. They manufacture it, and a few people get hired to hand them back out.

Mr. LaVie: Oh!

Mr. Myers: The Ottawa money that they're using for skills. I don't want to talk about that. I don't want to talk about the fact that government is trying to steal your thunder. Congratulations to 3 Points.

It's fantastic to see an Island company to do well. It's fantastic to see – been able to draw on multi-national interest here, and do manufacturing here on Prince Edward Island. I think that all the credit belongs with you.

Coming from a business family, my parents are here. I know how hard it is to be in business, and the type of challenges that government, sometimes, throws up in your way. I want to congratulate you on the great work.

I think that, from a government perspective, if government wants to do something to help this great expansion, they should look at how they can expand some of these programs at Holland College; how they can expand the Holland College facility down in Georgetown because they cancelled an expansion this summer that was supposed to be done.

There's a great opportunity to use Holland College as a partner for this great expansion, and all Islanders can benefit. Any young person, who wants to come and take up a skill here on Prince Edward Island would be able to find jobs with great companies like yourself. Congratulations.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to take this opportunity to actually personally recognize Dianne Griffin from 3 Points, who I have had the opportunity to spend some great time with in the past in different roles.

One of the things that really struck me about Dianne, the last time that we spoke, it was at a newcomers breakfast where we were meeting with newcomers to PEI, who were

incredibly skilled and experienced and they were trying to find a space for themselves in our community here. Dianne represented one of the companies that saw that opportunity.

I think that is one of the things to focus on. When we have a company like this that is securing its future and bringing in more long-term employment that what that looks like for how we build our communities; it's not just about the money and the jobs, it's about who it is that we can employ and who it is we can value. Having people, who advocate and see that future, like Dianne, is a really key part of that.

It's the people that make companies successful, whether it's the ones that sort of make the HR decisions or the people that they choose to hire. I'm really excited to hear to this news.

I know that – I think the Q Series is also known as the Dash series. When you do those little puddle-jumper flights, those little things, that's what you're looking at.

Congratulations again. I look forward to some future successes. It's great to see you here today.

Thank you.

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

Jobs

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

We know that success of Prince Edward Island's economy comes directly from the efforts of ambitious, innovative, hard-working Islanders.

Now is the time to work hard with businesses, employers, sectors, and industry to ensure to sustain job growth here in our province.

In my department, one of our main priorities is to connect Islanders with job opportunities. More Islanders are working, with more full-time jobs available, including more than 2,500 new jobs over this time last year. We believe that the best way to

support continued job growth is by leveraging the expertise and dedication of PEI community organizations.

Our government's third consecutive balanced budget –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Gallant: – made significant investments in our partners to help continue their work creating opportunities for Islanders to prosper.

Over \$4.8 million in investments will help Islanders find jobs and launch their careers in Prince Edward Island through mentorship, education, training, and connections. This includes job funding for community partners of nearly \$1 million.

We will continue to focus on opportunity areas, broadening sector-focused initiatives such as Team Seafood, which was a very successful program. PEI Farm Team expands the Team Seafood concept to the agricultural sector. Between both programs, we will help more than 250 students connect to employment in seafood processing and agriculture, while providing bursaries towards their post-secondary education.

We have renewed funding for Team Construction and Team Youth Trucking to provide valuable workers while promoting these in-demand sectors to 36 young Islanders. We are investing and expanding the Harvest and Prosper Program that helps Islanders overcome barriers to work, helping over 50 Islanders connect to great jobs in a variety of sectors.

We are also increasing our investment in the successful Graduate Mentorship Program. Over the years, we've tripled the number of student opportunities in this program, helping over 700 students in the past three years.

Also in our latest budget, our first-ever long-term culture plan will invest nearly \$1.5 million in this thriving industry, helping to export the Island's unique culture around the world and create jobs here at home.

As mentioned earlier, in addition, the new Rural Growth Initiative will provide \$2.6 million to community groups to help grow

jobs and businesses as well as attract and keep people in our rural PEI.

Prince Edward Island is mighty because we work together and succeed. All told, these types of partnerships with our industries and communities will help connect over 600 Islanders with great jobs and fill high-demand vacancies to continue our historic growth here on Prince Edward Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. Brown: Great.

Mr. LaVie: Here we go.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was trying to keep up with the announcement there, but I was pretty thrown off by this 'third balanced budget' thing because –

Mr. R. Brown: And 12 quarters.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, oh 12 quarters. You're (Indistinct) – how about three quarters of a balanced budget. Three consecutive quarters of a balanced budget, but no blue book to support any claim that any budget is balanced, but I digress. Like I said earlier, you guys will be long gone by the time we find out the truth.

Connecting Islanders with opportunities is something that has been talked about a lot, and I know prior to going through the school closure initiative, I had numbers flashed in my face in this Legislature for years that said that your population is dropping and we kept saying: Well, we need help. We need job growth. We need government to (Indistinct) you let the shipyard close in Georgetown without even a whimper; watched a national ship building strategy get signed without even walking to the table to talk with the Irvings to try to get any of it here.

We had been saying for a long time that if you want to grow the rural communities, you actually have to have some action. There's a little bit of action, but let's not forget this is skills' money. So, this is the

exact program that Stephen Harper set up. So, he basically you're an extension of Stephen Harper's policy here. This is how this all started. You guys know this. This is how the skills program started.

So, what you used to do when this first started was you took the money from Ottawa and you dispersed it. Now, you take the money from Ottawa and you break it up into the smallest chunks you possibly can, and you've turned into an announcement machine of how you spent the two of the \$300 million you got from Stephen Harper's skill plan here on Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: (Indistinct) so true.

Mr. Myers: How many – you know what? It's a great point that the minister from Montague makes. They gave \$8 million to Kevin Murphy and they're giving \$2 million to all the rest of the businesses here in Prince Edward Island to help them grow and thank you minister from Montague for pointing that out to everyone, because I do think that's a really good point.

Is that, if you want to treat all Island businesses fair, you need to open it up and give them the same opportunity that Kevin Murphy gets; so, if he can get \$8 million, how is it that \$2.5 million can be spread around all the rest of Prince Edward Island to grow businesses and grow skills? There seems to be some issue with fairness and balance here that you guys just don't get, but I think the electorate does and we'll find that out.

Thank you.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: The team programs are a great opportunity for youth, not only to, find some kind of a financial reward through bursary programs to recognize when they have secured full-time work, but it encourages those youth to have experiences in areas that perhaps they have not previously considered.

I look forward to the day when we see the team announcements for team theatre, team

arts and crafts, team music, team tech, and team NGO. Why would we not also want to support people who are choosing those areas of our economic sector as potential future careers and reward them accordingly, particularly where the skills funding is about and rewarding and recognizing youth who are making good choices for their future.

I look forward to those future announcements, minister, and I'm happy to assist should you need some assistance finding your way through.

Cheers, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting and Receiving Petitions.

Tabling of Documents

Speaker: The hon. Member from Kensington-Malpeque.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table findings and recommendations from independent review of assessment reporting from the Province of Ontario and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Belfast-Murray River, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By leave of the House, I beg leave to table the pile of documents I referred to in Question Period today and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Souris-Elmira, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

By Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table a letter dated April 24th to Mr. Mark Gotell of the Georgetown Fire and Rescue outlining his upcoming timelines for work at the

Georgetown Pooles Corner, and further I would table an article dated April 13th titled Roundabout Coming for Intersection of Newton and Scales Pond Road where it references the Mayor of Kinkora, and further as a reminder to the Member from Borden-Kinkora I would table media reports dated September 26th, 2015, titled Father and Son Die in Newton Crash, further as a further reminder to the Member from Borden-Kinkora I would table a media report dated December 9th, 2015, that says Newton –

Mr. Trivers: What does that have to do with (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: – Crash Claims Life and I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the document between the community development program funding agreement between the community of North Shore on the first part, and on the second part the Covehead Bay and area sustainability plan and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Rural and Regional Development.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, by Command of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I beg leave to table the answers to the written question No. 56 by the Honourable Member from Morell-Mermaid and I move, seconded by the Honourable Government House Leader, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Mr. MacEwen: I wait two years for some and he got it back in a day.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Montague-Kilmuir.

Mr. MacEwen: Or maybe it's one from two years ago.

Mr. Roach: Mr. Speaker, by leave of the House, I beg leave to table a letter received from the Women's Institute executive of Prince Edward Island with reference to the *Plastic Bag Reduction Act* and I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Vernon River-Stratford, that the said document be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Reports by Committees

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

Ms. Casey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges, I beg leave to introduce the report of the said committee and I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the same be now received and do lie on the Table.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Ms. Casey: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning, that the report of the Committee be adopted.

Your committee met three times during the time frame covered by this report:

At its meeting on February 1st, 2018, your committee discussed its work plan for the next several months. A number of issues were brought forward for consideration by committee members and members of the Legislative Assembly and as a result of that discussion, your committee prioritized its work plan for the winter months which included a review of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island*.

Your committee also met next on March 1st, 2018 and received an informative briefing on the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of*

Prince Edward Island from Mr. Charles MacKay, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

Your committee also met in camera on April 17th, 2018, to consider its report to the Legislative Assembly.

As a result of its deliberations, your committee is pleased to recommend the following:

1) That Rule 31 of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly be renamed 'Participating in debate' and amended by deleting the following words, 'head uncovered'.

This language is more inclusive which is reflective of the values of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

Your committee would like to provide additional guidelines for the deletion of the words 'head uncovered'. The explanation in the *Annotated Rules of the Legislative Assembly* will still apply:

"In the modern context, hats are not worn in the House at all. Although the rules are silent on other aspects of dress code for members, convention requires business attire."

Hats and other casual head coverings shall be removed; however, head coverings for religious and health related reasons will be permitted.

2) That Rule 48. (b) be amended by deleting the following words: ', or any standing or special committee'.

Rules 48. (b) and 49. (g) are contradictory and this amendment clears up that matter. The referral of any matter (including legislation and motions) would require notice to send to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly; this is the current practice of the Legislative Assembly.

3) That section (2) of Rule 67 be deleted and sections (3) and (4) are renamed accordingly.

As a result of the deletion of Rule 67. (2), Chapter 26 of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island* is

amended with the deletion of the following words:

'After the notice has been in members' books for at least one clear sitting day'; and on line 2. Promoter: 'Pursuant to notice given'.

This would eliminate the requirement for notice to introduce a private members bills. Private members will be free to introduce legislation during their designate time in the House, as government is during the order of business 'Introduction of Government Bills'. As such, the procedure for introducing private members' bills is amended to reflect the change.

4) That Rule 110 be deleted, and the following substituted:

Rule 110. (1) All reports of committees shall be in writing and signed by the committee Chair only.

Rule 110. (2) A minority report shall not be appended nor received by the House.

Rule 110. (3) All reports of the committee shall be presented by a member of the committee standing in his or her place.

Rule 110. (4) The member presenting the report shall first move that the report of the committee be received.

Rule 110. (5) Following a motion that a committee report be received by the House, a motion on the adoption of the report shall be moved the following sitting day following receipt.

Rule 110. (6) Following a motion that a committee report be received by the House, any member may move that the report be referred to a Committee of the Whole House for its consideration and report.

Rule 110. (7) Following a motion that a committee report be received by the House, a motion may be moved that it be adopted, amended, rejected, or referred back to the committee for further examination and report.

Rule 110. (8) The report of a standing or special committee is considered final only after adoption by the House because, until

then, the House can refer it back to the committee with instruction to amend it in any particular.

Rule 110. (9) A written executive response shall be tabled in the House during the next seasonal sitting following the adoption of the committee report.

Rule 110. (10) It is a breach of privilege for anyone to publish or make reference to the content of a committee report prior to its presentation in the House.

These changes to Rule 110 pertain to committee reports, creating a new subsection 110.(5), renumbering the following subsections, and updating the new subsection 110.(9). The effects of the two new subsections are:

1) Rule 110. (5) Introduces a requirement that a certain amount of time occur between the motion of receipt of a report by the House, (which makes the report a part of the Legislative Assembly's record, and as a result, a public document), and the motion of adoption of the report. Debate is permitted on the motion for adoption of the report; however, members are often speaking to reports that they have not yet had an opportunity to read. This requirement would allow for all members of the Legislative Assembly to familiarize themselves with the contents of the report, prior to substantial debate taking place. As is with other rules, Rule 110. (5) may be dispensed with unanimous consent of the House.

Mr. Speaker, after I just read that rule change of course I'm presenting this rule change, but it will come into effect on adoption of this report.

2) Rule 110. (9) would formalize the response to committee reports, introducing a requirement that government respond formally to the report under the ordinary daily routine of 'Reports by Committees'. Under the current rule, executive responses must be made in the House; and often times, responses are made to reports in an informal manner. For example, responses can come in the form of a Ministerial Statement, during oral questions, or through the introduction of a Motion or Bill. This new process would formalize the process of an executive

response, which would be kept in the Legislative Assembly's file, specifically as a response to a committee report.

5) That the changes to the Rules of the Legislative Assembly be effective as of the adoption of this report.

Your committee wishes to advise that this is an interim report on its review of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island*. As a part of its upcoming work, the committee intends to publish a White Paper on the review of the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island*.

This White Paper will suggest ideas for change to the *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island* and areas to modernize the Legislative Assembly, and will include the following topics:

Ways to update the legislative process; committees and how they function in the Legislative Assembly; petitions and potential for electronic petitions; and the sitting hours and parliamentary calendar of the Legislative Assembly.

These are a few of the ideas the committee will touch on in its upcoming work. This White Paper will be made available to the public in advance of future public committee meetings of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges. Your committee welcomes comments from all Members of the Legislative Assembly in creating this working document.

I would like to thank Emily Doiron and Ryan Reddin for their support and advice to their committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That sounds interesting. I was able to watch the presentation that the rules committee got on some of those changes and I look forward to reading the report to weigh in on it.

I do want to comment, though, that I believe

that the rules committee has a missing report out there. I believe it was a year ago almost to the day, within a week anyway, that there was a report that came forward that I had asked, probably a year and a half ago, about putting a timeframe on written questions, answers to written questions. I forget the exact wording of the letter, but basically it was you'd get an answer within 45 days or 30 days or something like that.

If it was going to take longer than that, then a note back to the person asking the question saying: Excuse me, hon. member, it might take a bit longer to get that information for you. And then you'd at least know, or you'd have an idea and that was to help spur on some of the stuff.

What happened was the report came back and it talked about limiting the number of questions that myself or any of the members in here could ask to 15, and I kind of thought that was ridiculous. We had a bit of a debate on it here, but that kind of fell flat, so we never did see that final report. So I'm curious to get an update on what that is.

I still think it's taking way too long to get written questions back. I got one back today, looking forward to seeing it. I know myself and I know many other members use our written questions. It's great research. You're able to get constituency issues figured out. It's able to help you with oral questions here. It helps you with your bill preparation. It helps you with your motion preparation.

I'll give you an example last year. We were in the spring of the year. There were a number of people coming forward to me with PNP concerns and questions. So I had submitted a number of written questions on it to get some research and background because I didn't want to fly right into Question Period that spring and ask questions that I didn't have the research on. I still didn't even have that time in back for the fall sitting of the Legislature, those questions.

Lo and behold, the government announces a brand new program. They did offer us a briefing on the morning they were announcing it; but if I had had that information ahead of time, I could have asked good questions in the Legislature on it. That was just one example.

It reminds me of the missing report from – you know, the shut-down Brown report from the committee on democratic renewal, still never seen that report.

So I'm going to ask that committee and the chair here today to please put written questions – not limiting my ability, but probably putting a time limit on it with a reasonable expectation if it's going to take longer, let that member know. I would like the committee to put that back on the table and get a much more satisfactory answer when they do this review of the rules of the House. I would ask the committee to look at that, and I look forward to reading this version of the report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to the committee report?

Shall the report of the committee carry?
Carried.

Introduction of Government Bills

Motions Other Than Government

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to call Motion No. 44.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Motion No. 44, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters moves, seconded by the hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald, the following motion:

WHEREAS the current government is determined to force amalgamation upon rural areas of our province;

AND WHEREAS a binding referendum held during an election campaign violates the principle of Parliamentary sovereignty;

AND WHEREAS a resounding majority of residents in all parts of the proposed Three Rivers area voted against amalgamation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly urge the current

government to honour the vote and not proceed with forced amalgamation.

Speaker: I will call on the mover of the motion to speak to the motion, the hon. Member from Georgetown-St. Peters.

Mr. Myers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know we had this motion on the books since day one, so I've kind of been chomping at the bit to get up and talk about it; but for me, this goes back a long ways further than this. I'm going to tell you a story about Three Rivers amalgamation and prior to – I'm going to take you right up from what I know – which isn't necessarily the whole story – right up until today, and including the vote for unincorporated areas.

Back – Wes Sheridan would still have been minister. I think he was responsible in some capacity for the municipalities part of communities, anyway, at the time, so I know he was involved with an initial pot of funding for the Three Rivers area to kind of get them on ground because there was kind of talk around.

So when I was approached by Paul MacNeill, he kind of floated the idea by me and he said: You know, it's something that I would like to take to community councils and get their agreement to kind of do a little study and see what it would look like. I said: Okay, what do you need from me? He said: I just want you to stay out of it. I'm like: Okay, you just want me to stay out of it. He said: I don't want it to be skewed politically, we want to allow people to have the opportunity to bring this forward without –

I very much accepted that, and I totally understood, from not only my capacity as the local MLA, but being an opposition MLA and kind of what the job charges at the time. I even went so far as, I went to the council meeting in Cardigan whenever he was presenting it and the councilors there who would be friends of mine asked me my opinion. I said: You really should join in, what can it hurt, it'll show what some of the possibilities are and it may open up a pathway for the area down the road if it's what people choose to do.

So I said: Anytime that government comes to the table with funding to do any sort of a

study or a plan and you're halfway interested, you should explore the ideas because those opportunities don't come along every day.

In those areas, we've dealt with outmigration for a number of years, and I know from the community that I live in, Cardigan, during the whole school debate last winter I had talked about – you know, just privately, but I might have even said it here, I don't know – but I talked about the change in demographics of some of the areas.

When I was a kid, when I first started in Cardigan school in like 1980 – or somewhere around there, somewhere in that vicinity, maybe a little bit later, it doesn't matter – there was five school buses came to the school and the school buses were filled, but when the school started there were six. The school opened I think in 1969 or 1967, in the late 1960s anyways. It was part of the Alex Campbell –

Ms. Biggar: Before you were born.

Mr. Myers: – consolidated schools.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. Myers: Well before my first birthday, yes. But when the small schools closed and amalgamated into the consolidated school model, Cardigan was represented by numerous of those schools and there were six buses that came loaded right to the gunnels every day in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By the time I finished Cardigan, there was four buses.

We can blame a lot of things, but one of the primary reasons were the families were much bigger, and as the generations renewed the families were much smaller. I came from a family of four. My dad came from a family of eleven. There are probably lots of reasons, but one of them had to do with the job function of being a rural Islander. There was a lot of farming and fishing families, or in some cases, dual, where they farmed and fished both.

It was more of a survival lifestyle versus a corporate mentality of making a lot of money. It was how are we going to feed ourselves and what can we do to get through

the winter and what can we grow or fish to sell to get money to buy the things that we need to get us through the winter? In order to do that, there were large families to help out with the chores and the things that went on in those communities.

It's funny. Growing up, I listened to my dad's brothers, one in particular telling a story one time that he never really liked farming because my dad who was older than a lot of the brothers that were on the farm at the time always got to drive the tractor and they had to walk and do all the heavy lifting. It's probably a testament to the lifestyle at the time and why the families were so big and there was a lot of manual labour on those areas.

Take one particular area; because it's enclosed it's the Launching loop. If you leave Cardigan and go towards Cardigan North, the Launching loop will take you all the way out through Newport, St. Georges, Launching and it comes back in through the other side of St. Georges and it'll take you right out to the Seven Mile Road. There was a bus filled in that loop, that one loop that took you through Newport, Launching and St. Georges at one point, now it would be just part of a very long bus run, and the buses would show up at the schools not filled.

I guess from an amalgamation standpoint, it's why I reject the idea that some mega-municipality will somehow save us, or somehow grow the population in those areas. It's a misnomer that everyone kind of left. The demographic of a family changed and it's one of the things that seldom gets mentioned when we talk about rural communities across Canada.

Rural communities changed mostly because what the makeup of a family consisted of changed. Having two kids of my own, I can't imagine trying to raise a family with 11, 12, 16 children in it today because of the cost that's associated with raising kids.

Back to my timeline –

Ms. Biggar: I digress.

Mr. Myers: I digress. I way over here, but I'm going to come back.

When we talk about this process in Three Rivers, so there came a point where they created a group. I never really heard anything about it again. Robert Ghiz resigned. Wes Sheridan resigned. The Premier became the leader of the Liberal Party. We went to an election. A whole cycle renewed itself. No, it was before your time – the whole cycle, kind of, renewed itself and I never really heard a whole lot about it again.

Probably, in the summer of 2015, I had started to hear that there – report that was being done was quite a bit more in depth than what I had ever envisioned. It had become a much bigger thing.

Some of the key players, and I had approached and straight up said to them: you're going to have an issue with the unincorporated areas of Three Rivers if you don't talk to them now. This is 2015. This is way over a year that this group had been working. I can't even remember when that initial meeting was in Cardigan, when I spoke to the people and said: You should follow this.

People really weren't getting a great feeling that there was stuff going on. I kind of put the warning shots out and I left it alone. But the story was starting to bubble then. The story, itself, started bubbling and people were starting to ask questions.

I think it was, probably, this time last year they added the unincorporated voices to it and had a public meeting. Very few people showed up and there was a show of hands and some people got selected.

My understanding, and I wasn't, certainly, in the room, but my understanding is, is that when those people came in, they were told that they weren't allowed to go back and look at any of the previous decisions on how we go there. They really weren't allowed to ask questions. They had to sign an agreement of confidentiality that said they wouldn't speak about it outside the room.

The fire really started burning at that point because some of the members that had joined as unincorporated Islanders were very distraught that the very people that they represented by doing that, that they couldn't talk to and tell them anything about.

There was a meeting. It was in the summer. It was in the summer, last year and it was called by a couple of the people, who were unincorporated representatives on that steering committee and it was down at Brudenell and the Leader of the Third Party was there and the member from Rustico was there. The Leader of the Opposition was there. I was there. I'm not sure who else, at the time. Anyway, there was quite a bit of political representation there. There were a lot of questions asked. There really wasn't a whole lot of answers, but the questions were collected with the intentions of being answered.

That actually fanned the flames even more because there became an even bigger conspiracy growth that there was some secrecy around this; that the questions couldn't get answered. There were probably like less than 30 questions asked that night. Of them, there was really 10 that couldn't be answered in any substantive way. So – was there more than that? There were ones that they were able to allude to. Either way, the frustration kind of grew out of that.

Then, I'm going to jump forward to the fall of last year. The steering committee announced that they were going to have these public meetings, which I attended. One was at the high school cafeteria in Montague and one was in the Kaylee Hall in Pooles Corner. They were consecutive nights, or they were all in the same week, at any rate. I went to both of them.

I was particularly distraught that night over it because I had felt like, maybe, other people felt like I was running the gambit on it and interfering, but I certainly wasn't. I was as far out of it as the local MLA could possibly be. I was trying to let the local leadership, kind of, lead the charge on it.

The night, the chair of the – night one in Montague, I'm standing, leaning against the vending machines – member from Montague – so I'm leaning against the vending machines in the cafeteria in Montague, so you know where that is. That's way out of the action. You couldn't be further away from the middle of it. I was standing way at the back of the room; completely out of the action, and basically minding my own business.

There was a petition from my area circulating around the room. I wasn't even really – I had no involvement in that, even. Other than, at that point, I had met with the individuals, and said: If you're going to fight this, you have to start mounting some charge. I wasn't leading the charge, I was giving advice, which, I still believe would be my job, as the MLA, for the area, especially, when an issue of this nature comes to my attention.

That night the chair of the steering committee, when asked by people, who lived in unincorporated areas: How would I have my say? said: well that's up to your MLA, or it was some variation of that. It was your MLA, who had to be your voice; that you didn't have any other elected representation. I think, it might have happened a couple of times in the Montague meeting. I kind of let it pass, but I got to say, I wasn't happy. I wasn't happy to – considering how far out of their way that I stayed.

The following meeting, which was at Kaylee Hall in Pooles Corner, again, I was standing at the back of the room. I was standing next to the canteen in Kaylee Hall. If you know where that is, it's, again, as far out of the way as you could possibly be, I wasn't up in the fray, at all. I was standing with a friend of mine from high school, talking to him, is what I was doing during the meeting.

At one point, when the questions started, the same types of questions were going. That night, there were way more people from unincorporated areas there, and they happened to be people who I represented. Not that that matters, but that's – as part – as by way of the story, it kind of does. As the people were asking the questions, they were getting very similar variations of the answer that it's up to your MLA; that if you're going to have a voice, it has to be through your MLA. If there's going to be a vote, that's up to your MLA and all these things.

I'm like, are they turning this on me, are they trying to point their guns at me; because I certainly didn't do anything to inhibit their growth as a steering committee. I didn't do anything to hinder the financial contribution they got from government in this whole process and I helped them bring some of the people to the table. Up until that

point, that was my only contribution. One way or another was, I agreed to let them see where it goes.

There are two things I didn't know. I didn't know this was going to turn into a full-scale amalgamation effort, number one. I didn't know that the rules were going to change midstream; that we're going to give way more sweeping powers to the minister. This is initially when I helped Paul MacNeill get people to come onboard. I didn't know that the rules were going to change so substantially that government would, at the end of the day, have the full say on it. Which, I must say, I'm still quite disappointed about.

As a Conservative, who believe strongly in less government decision-making and more grassroots type decision-making; that's another aside.

I walked to the microphone and I was like, I will have to address this because I had been continually, by the chair of the steering committee, I felt like I was continually put on the spot over my involvement as an MLA. I walked to the mic and I said: The people in the unincorporated areas want a vote. I'll organize one. And an unincorporated vote on amalgamation was born.

What I did, and it's important that this part of the story is told because there has been – not so much lately – but there had been a lot of initial talk about whether or not the vote was valid, which bothers me on a principle of democracy because we seem to spend more time questioning the validity of votes lately than we do just straight up honouring them and moving forward – so there's that component.

There's a lot of distrust out there about people that their voice doesn't matter, even when they vote. I can speak from the area I represent: The vote is a sacred thing and people take it very seriously. That's why they turnout in such high numbers and this is the middle of the winter we're holding the vote. So, in the middle of the winter, we gave them three days and we had these votes, but, before I get there –

So what I did was I had found a few people who were vocal at those meetings so there

were people who were vocal at those meetings that I kind of – I grabbed some of them and I'm like: Would you help organize this vote? And I was like: Yes, I'll help. What will this entail? And I'm like: I really don't know. It depends on how you want to do it.

So I went down to the first meeting of the group that was pulled together and for my part, I discussed things like what the areas would be – that you need to go down to the Sturgeon area because we didn't really, at that point, have a representation from that side of Montague like they do now. I said: They're going to question the validity of your vote. I guarantee it. They're going to question whether or not it was valid or not, so you need to have rules and you need to determine that the people that are voting are from that area. There has to be rules around how the whole thing operates and something that you can stand by. I said: At the end of the night, you need to release results and have a statement – a canned statement of some sort about what the results said with no editorialization at all. And I said: Basically this group shouldn't fight against amalgamation. This group should just be a group who's fighting to put a vote on the table and nothing more.

Then, I basically didn't meet with them again. They organized themselves, they required very little. I helped hook them up with things like ballot boxes that I would have access through, through our party, but that's basically the sum total of how I was involved in it.

I take exception with the fact that people had said – and Paul MacNeill was one of the leaders in saying it – that a vote organized by people that were against it unsurprisingly gave the result that the people wanted. So, I'll tell you: 1174 people voted 'no' and 76 people voted 'yes'. So that statement is outlandish and irresponsible at best. It's insulting. It's insulting to the over 1200 people who showed up. I don't think there's many more actually there. I'm not really sure that there are people who didn't vote. I can't imagine that – we didn't have the official enumerated list, so I'm not sure that there's many more who didn't vote.

If you take out Georgetown and Montague and Lower Montague which would be some

of the big incorporated areas in that whole area, I'm not convinced that the unincorporated part of Three Rivers didn't show up at the plus 80% turnout rate. There was no – the ballots were there for anybody to see – anybody who wanted to become involved or scrutinize and I guess it's much easier to scrutinize things like that after the fact than it is to be on the spot and scrutinized while it happens. From that point forward, I was motivated to have that vote honoured.

I think that, for me, it's very important because it's the clearest indicator of the residents of that area that I have. I don't have anything else – well, I do – I have the total vote for the whole region which was 1,429 people against and 431 for. I think the region has spoken.

I'm not sure why suddenly now we have to recharge the batteries and load up and send thousands of appeals to IRAC, because that's what's going to happen. There'll be thousands of appeals to IRAC. I don't know why government wants this for us. It makes me wonder sometimes if – and I've wondered this often over the years – I often wondered, even about the media – when I was younger and involved with community organizations, the only time you'd ever catch the attention of the media is if something was going bad in the rural areas. It was never – if you had a great story, no one seemed to want to run out from Charlottetown with a camera and shoot it, but the first time something went bad, they were the first ones there on the spot.

It's kind of how I feel about the government. It's almost like it's more convenient for them if we're fighting amongst ourselves, because if we're fighting amongst ourselves, we're not able to hold their feet to the fire for the numerous things that we need in our communities – like a new hospital for Montague that the member from Montague had brought up here recently. That's something that I had been asking about a couple of years ago when the manor was on the table is: Can we put them together so that there's not a cost associated with ambulance drives to take people that are in the manor to get things like x-rays and outpatient care and blood clinics and the stuff that they currently have to go to the

hospital for. Maybe there's still an opportunity because I know there's still a big field in behind and I'm not sure if the junior high uses it or if it's used for anything – if government just owns it outright, but there still is an opportunity to do those things. It's a great opportunity for something that we could be expelling our energy fighting for.

The shipyard in Georgetown, which had opened last week and closed as quickly, was something that since I've been elected I have been fighting for. It takes my attention away from looking for government to give us a response on the shipyard in Georgetown because instead we're fighting a battle about amalgamation and even a battle amongst ourselves that is completely unnecessary.

The member from Rustico had brought forward changes to the municipalities act which would take away the power of the government – the unreal power that they have – and put it back to the grassroots to allow people to have their say. Government is so against it if you listen to any of the debates here. Government will have none of it because they keep saying: Well, what if somebody really wants this? What if somebody really wants it? How can they get it? Well, if 431 people want it and 1,429 people are against it, you can't have it, but that's how a democracy works, right? That's how I was brought up.

I was brought up to believe in government. I was brought up – and I had some great provincial government leaders to grow up and watch. Bennett Campbell was from my area and Bennett was a premier; he was an MP; he was a well-respected, very, very solid politician for our area and he had the respect of the people because he never misused that respect and he always did what was right by the people. Peter MacLeod, who I've talked about here before, was the MLA who had first got me interested in politics when I was 10 and he was a guy who had a great amount of respect from the people and it's because he always worked for the people and always concentrated on what the people wanted.

Everyone here knows it's not always easy to know exactly what the big part of your district wants. The district I represent is quite large and I've talked about this before,

it has a varying amount of issues and there are different towns and different areas and a lot of differences from one end of it to the other.

Sometimes what one end of it wants, the other doesn't and vice-versa and that's just the nature of this business. But, when you so clearly have a result set that you can use to say: people have spoken I don't know why you wouldn't honour it.

The minister had talked here about: What about the people who spent three years working on this and how disappointing it would be for them that if they didn't get their way? Well, I'll tell you. This is seven years for me trying to get that side of the floor. I think I've worked pretty hard, do I get to just go over there?

An Hon. Member: Pretty soon.

Mr. Myers: Yeah, pretty soon.

But, that's the thing. Sometimes you can put an incredible amount of effort into things and bring them to the public and they don't work.

The Startup Zone and the minister of economic development could talk about some of the startup people – they work really hard and they try to bring their idea, but sometimes it doesn't work. It's not their fault. No one blames them and says: You didn't do things right. Maybe the timing wasn't right. Maybe there were components that just didn't fit to make it work. No one is saying that the people didn't work hard on an idea. The issue came because the idea didn't have it out – they got so invested in the idea that they were defending it for themselves.

That's great that you have access to a whole bunch of information that the rest of us seemingly don't have, but it makes it really hard for us to compare it at the same level if we haven't been given the access, and I haven't been involved with it for three straight years. I don't think anybody faults the people.

The fault I would have with, right now, is the way some of the people who are in favour of it (Indistinct) treating people who aren't in favour of it. I have emails sent to

me that came from members of the steeling committee and I'd have to wonder how it is that those people can't see clearly that democracy is being infringed upon.

There's been a lot of things that, when you talk to Islanders, that bother them about politics and the political process, and that type of thing. This is one of those cases where, if the people who voted continue to be ignored, I don't know how this Assembly and any government can ever win them back. It's to the point where you've become so good at disregarding the vote – the turnout wasn't high enough. Well, that's what we heard about the plebiscite, that you guys called, and all of a sudden the turnout wasn't high enough.

Lower Montague, that was their playbook; the turnout wasn't high enough. Lower Montague vote was 96 people were against, and 46 were for; pretty clear. I've got a pretty good picture of what people want based on that. There were two questions – it was only one question and there were two answers: Yes or no. There wasn't any lack of clarity in what the issue was.

The community of Valleyfield, they also decided to move forward. I'm not sure if they used government's terms of there wasn't enough evidence, but 37 were against and 17 were for; again, quite decisive in a result set.

I don't know how government let this spiral out of control. There are a lot of people, myself, included, who feel completely disregarded by this government, that their voice suddenly doesn't matter, that the importance that we have placed on our community doesn't matter. I'm not even going to talk about the merits of amalgamation, because to me, that doesn't even matter anymore, that the merits of amalgamation don't mean anything to me anymore because people have spoken and now my job is to get them what they wanted. I could talk for hours alone about the values that I would hold that are completely against amalgamating and are completely against bigger is better, but, I'm not because I don't have to, because everyone already voted.

My only job now, and the only this of this Assembly is upholding democracy. This isn't about amalgamation anymore. This

isn't about whether or not the people who organized it are saving us all. It has nothing to do with that. It's that the people have spoken, and it's very clear what they've said.

I don't know, I have kids that are growing up that are going to be less trusting of government than the generations that are already out there, and that's scary. What happens when people stop voting? What happens when it doesn't matter anymore because at the end of the day, they don't get what they want? You don't have to look too far to see what happens when people stop voting. You get low turnouts like you do in the States, is that what you want? I mean, you're chasing people away from democracy and the very action of doing that is going to open up the doors for things that aren't necessarily good for Prince Edward Island.

Democracy is important and I'm not sure if we can get government's ear anymore than we've tried. We've tried really hard to kind of draw their attention to this. I think I've been pretty calm about it. Anybody who's around for the school debate knows that I don't have to be, and I can be equally effective if I'm not. But, this is important. This is the entire basis for democracy.

Someone needs to stand up and say: I will stop it because the opportunity is there for government, because they left themselves the sole proprietor of democracy in the *Municipalities Act*. Right today government can uphold democracy. Polling period starts next week. Maybe that's the announcement for next week during polling period, which I'll even be fine with if you want to use it to try to boost your immunity for an election, then go ahead because all I'm really looking for at this point is – I'm not looking for any brownie points. I'm not looking for any accolades. I'm looking for respect for rural Islanders and I think that's something that easily, based on this motion, everyone should get behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise today to support this motion No. 44: Urging the current government to honour the vote of the Three Rivers unincorporated plebiscite.

When I read this motion, I know it's specifically about Three Rivers and it's about honouring the plebiscite that was held there, the plebiscite that the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters fought for and was able to hold under his own devices because the government would not come forward and hold a plebiscite.

But, I think it really speaks to municipal amalgamation, especially annexation, or what is referred to now as part of restructuring in the *Municipal Government Act*. In a broader sense, and really, it speaks to the fundamental workings of democracy here on our Island.

The Three Rivers process was started under the old Municipalities Act, which of course has since been repealed. In fact, I can't find a copy of it online right now because it was removed. That's another topic about openness and transparency and keeping information available for discussion, but that would save another one.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: The Municipalities Act, the old act, is no longer online or available.

So, it was started under the old act and so really, there were not a lot of strong processes in place. There was information about public consultation, and those were followed. But, there were amendments brought in to the Municipalities Act as well, specifically, to allow projects like the Three Rivers process to move forward.

Anyhow, the key criticisms that were brought into place when the *Municipal Government Act*, the new act, the MGA, the one that we have right now, was brought into place were that, the unincorporated areas did not have enough voice and it was as simple as that.

We produced a great flowchart of the process in the new *Municipal Government Act*. This is the act, of course, that is now governing the Three Rivers process, although it didn't start under that. When you

go through that flowchart, a proposal can be issued and the unincorporated areas don't have to be included. This is when the minister or municipalities initiate a proposal, but the proposal, of course, can include unincorporated areas. They can go through, and they can work for years to develop the proposal. They can come up with it.

This is, sort of, what happened in the Three Rivers case. Then, eventually they come to a point where IRAC reviews the proposal and at that point, finally, after potentially years of work, which we saw in Three Rivers, it's at that point when all areas, unincorporated areas, are invited to put forward an objection. This is the fundamental problem with the process. This is why Three Rivers felt they needed to have a plebiscite was because the process went on for years, and they weren't consulted.

Then, finally they were brought in. Because, as the former minister likes to say, of course, they're going to consult with the unincorporated areas, it only makes sense, you know. I am the minister and of course, I'm not going to do anything without involving them. But, as we've seen, if it's not in legislation, if the process isn't well, really well thought out, and it isn't really well laid out, then, unincorporated areas aren't given a voice early enough.

What we're looking at here, is trying to try to improve the municipality – the *Municipal Government Act*, pardon me. That's why, sort of, related to this motion, I brought forward Bill No. 111. The idea here is to use tools like a plebiscite, like was used by the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters, and the unincorporated areas, to try and determine what the public will is.

Their idea is to use this earlier in the process, potentially. Now, in fact, the Bill No.111, which amends the *Municipal Government Act*, talks about starting off the process by engaging the unincorporated areas right off the bat. Not by going to fire districts and talking to people, not by holding a public meeting that few people are potentially interested in, and then picking a couple of people to sit on a closed-door committee, but actually requiring that a petition has to be signed, by 30% of people in the area that is to be annexed.

That makes a lot of sense, because then, whoever is proposing the annexation, the restructuring, as it's called, has to go out, and they have to actively engaged the people in the unincorporated areas; there's no two ways about it. In this existing *Municipal Government Act*, that's exactly what the act says has to happen in unincorporated areas when they're the ones that initiate any sort of restructuring, like to create a municipality.

It's completely in line with the department's thinking and it's completely in line with what the unincorporated areas have to do, so why shouldn't that be what the minister and municipalities have to do if they also want to annex unincorporated areas?

That's why we're proposing that a petition is used at the very beginning of the process to go out and engage unincorporated areas. No one is going to argue that annexation is a difficult process. There will be pushback, but by having this petition and engaging unincorporated areas, it really forces anybody, who is putting a proposal together to really get their ducks in a row and really articulate the benefits of any such annexation if they're going to 30% of the people to sign it.

When I talk to people from Three Rivers, who went through their process about amending the *Municipal Government Act* to make it better for future processes, they thought 30% wasn't even enough. They thought it should be, at least, 50 per cent-plus-one. I said: No, the Department of Communities, Land and Environment worked long and hard and they felt that 30% threshold was good enough. I strongly believe it is.

The next things is once you've got a little bit of support of unincorporated areas, you've worked hard, you've articulated the value of doing the amalgamation, the restructuring that includes the annexed areas, then, you get that proposal and you can submit it to IRAC.

Once it goes to IRAC – this is in the current process – now, IRAC has to go and post some notices out in the community, and in the newspaper, to make people aware that they have 30 days to go and place an objection to the proposal. At that point, if

you've already engaged them to get 30% of the people impacted in unincorporated areas on a petition, they're going to know that proposal really well. There's going to be, at least, 30% of the people in favour, so you should have some momentum going and know any objections that would have potentially come up. With only 30%, there are 70% that, potentially, could object. I fully expect there would be objections that come forward.

The next change that we're proposing to the *Municipal Government Act*, and it's a change that, I think, the Three Rivers amalgamation process would like to see – in fact, they're in that phase, right now, of that 30-day period of when they can put in an objection. Instead, of having an optional public hearing, it's a mandatory public hearing if there's any, even a single objection.

Right now, if the people, who are opposed to the Three Rivers amalgamation, object, there does not even have to be a public hearing. That's an issue. That's a problem. That's not democratic.

Again, the former minister, now the Minister of Health and Wellness, can say: of course, no minister is ever going to go through and not have a public hearing. I mean, that would be crazy, that would be wrong. The point is; it's not mandatory. If there was an unscrupulous government, they could push it through without a public hearing.

I fully expect that the current Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, when objections are received, I'm 100% positive they will be received, we'll have a public hearing and I think that would be the right thing to do.

You have the public hearing, but public hearings are not necessarily a great measure of support for any particular initiative. They're good. You've got people who like to come out and they like to speak in public and fight for what they believe. If you really want to take the temperature of the support for a proposal, I believe, and I know the Member from Georgetown-St. Peters believes, and I know everybody involved in the Three Rivers amalgamation believes, a plebiscite is a good way to go. Not a binding referendum, mind you. You can't do that. I

think that's in our motion, refer to that, but, a plebiscite to really gauge what is the public support for this proposal.

That's what we're saying in our Bill No. 111, as well, is not even have a mandatory plebiscite. We're saying if the minister feels there's enough public interest, and in the Three Rivers case, I mean we're talking about thousands of people, who came out for the quote-on-quote 'informal plebiscite'. If the minister felt there is public interest, then they should hold a plebiscite. That's all we're saying in Bill No. 111 and it makes a lot of sense.

The initiative in the Three Rivers amalgamation showed that people will come out and they will vote in the plebiscite and they will express their opinion. Now, again, I think, if the Three Rivers process had actually followed a procedure that engaged the unincorporated areas from the beginning, I think we would have seen a much different result, potentially, in the plebiscite. When I talk to people there are definitely people, who are 100% against amalgamation, but there are people who said: I'm not necessarily against amalgamation, I just feel like this whole thing was sprung on us and we didn't have input and our voice wasn't heard.

That's why it's so important to engage them with a petition right off the bat. That's also why a plebiscite needs to be in the *Municipal Government Act* as a tool if the minister feels there is enough public interest to gauge exactly what that public interest is.

The Three Rivers amalgamation held a plebiscite and they have some clear results, and that's what this motion is all about; is really to honour that vote and take into account the will of that unincorporated areas when they are determining what happens with that proposal.

Again, when we were debating the *Municipal Government Act* on the floor of the Legislature, here in the official opposition we proposed to amend the act back when it was on the floor and I just want to finish this thought –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: We proposed to amend the act because there is one elected representative that does represent the unincorporated areas everywhere across the Island, and that's the elected MLA. We thought that MLA should be engaged with a debate on the floor of the Legislature to represent their constituents.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: With that, I'd just like to adjourn debate for now and bring this back a little later.

Thank you.

Speaker: Okay, hon. member.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Glad we extended the hour for him.

Speaker: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Mr. Speaker, I request that motion No. 58 be now read.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Motion No. 58.

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

WHEREAS homeless women are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, physical and mental abuse, and unsafe situations;

AND WHEREAS the only women's homeless shelter in Charlottetown (Grandmother's House) closed in 2012 due to lack of funding and operational oversight;

AND WHEREAS the only women's homeless shelter in PEI is in Lennox Island (Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Shelter);

AND WHEREAS a community-based group (Blooming House) is currently working on securing a property to provide an emergency shelter for women in Charlottetown;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urges government to provide financial support for an emergency homeless shelter for women in Charlottetown.

Speaker: The mover of the motion, the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to start talking about women's shelters by talking about startup weekend. For those who haven't heard of startup weekend, it's a 56-hour project where participants bring an idea for a project or business they're passionate about and pitch to the other participants, with the top ideas going forward and even getting funded. The participants then choose which ideas they want to work on with a lead, building a team, conducting market research, and pitching their concepts with a basic business plan to the group.

It's something I'm a big fan of. I have mentored at two startup weekends here in PEI and pitched at one in Ottawa. But you may wonder what this has to do with homelessness in Charlottetown.

At the last startup weekend at the Startup Zone earlier this year, one of the pitches that made it through was to fill the gap for a homeless women's shelter in Prince Edward Island, not perhaps what you would expect, but one that speaks to the passion of the presenters and the problem they identified that needed to be solved. And this is indeed a problem.

This is by no means the first time that this need has been identified and discussed. We saw this gap back in the news in January of this year, and heard then from women's advocacy groups who spoke to this as a serious and significant issue that affects many women in PEI.

Jillian Kilfoil, executive director of Women's Network PEI, said at the time: There are groups providing shelter and support to Island women experiencing abuse or addiction, but there is still a gap when it comes to providing emergency shelter for women who simply need a safe place to spend the night. I think that there are people who aren't necessarily battling addiction or

experiencing domestic violence but still are not able to find safe and reliable housing, Kilfoil said.

As the vacancy rate in Charlottetown continues to shrink and the cost of housing rises, the need for temporary emergency shelters will only grow.

So what is the current availability for emergency shelter for women in Charlottetown?

The Family Violence Prevention Services provide emergency shelter for women and children in cases of domestic abuse via Anderson House. Anderson House is a provincial emergency shelter for women and children who are in need of safety because of violence in their lives. Located in Charlottetown, Anderson House services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and include emergency shelter, safety planning, advocacy, childcare services, drop-in support, follow-up support, referrals to outreach services and second-stage housing, and information pertaining to resources such as lawyers, housing, stay-away orders, transportation, childcare and even pet care.

The recently announced RFP for transitional housing for victims of family violence will build on this essential service. It is part of the continuum of care approach that recognizes the need for support and services, not only for emergencies, but for follow-up and second-stage housing. The ongoing operation of this housing service will be added to the mandate of the Family Violence Prevention Services organization, ensuring consistency and good operational management and oversight, as well as integration of service delivery for those who need it most.

Lacey House provides a 24-hour supervised therapeutic, safe and structured home-like environment to assist women in maintaining a chemical-free lifestyle in a long-term, residential setting. Residents there receive information on methods to confront chemical dependency and also learn life skills, healthy relationship building and parenting skills. Residents are provided counselling for women's issues related to the challenges of coping with life and to develop skills in relapse preventions.

These two well established non-profits are filling a critical need in our community, offering programming and support services, not just a safe bed. They also demonstrate the importance of working collaboratively with community-based organizations to address issues that, for many are not seen, and often not discussed.

On a personal note, I would like recognize that the issue of family violence not that long ago was an issue that many believed did not actually even exist in PEI. It took the concerted efforts of a number of dedicated women working in our community. In fact, in partnership with the WI, with the Women's Institute across the province to speak openly about the issue of domestic violence and violence against women to even get to the point where something like Anderson House could exist and that was not that long ago. That actually happened in the early 1980s, and one of the people that worked on that was my mother. I remember very clearly and closely her going out night after night across the province talking people into believing that domestic violence even was an issue in PEI. So, to be able to have that conversation and have a space now that we recognize as a critical part of our care is something that we should not take for granted.

(Indistinct) to homeless women, it is actually really difficult though at this point because it is something that we don't talk about as openly, so to assess just how many homeless women there are in PEI, though data from community partners including the food bank and the soup kitchen indicate that there are even just in Charlottetown at least 25 to 30 homeless women at any given time in the Charlottetown and greater Charlottetown area.

It's important to note at this point that the Family Violence Prevention Services maintain two beds for women who need shelter in their space, if that space is available, but priority must always be given to their mandate for protecting women in domestic violence, so the shelter cannot guarantee availability even of those two beds.

There is also an emergency shelter on Lennox Island, offering five beds with the potential of even more if people double up.

While this service is welcome and is used, it presents a logistical challenge for those who need it here in Charlottetown. Who do you call? How do you get there? How do you get back? Without access to a phone, the Internet, friends or contacts, even the offer of free transportation by the shelter doesn't often work in reality and in a crisis, and we have heard that there is very little, if any, uptake from Charlottetown women in need.

The only emergency shelter for homeless women in Charlottetown closed in 2012, leaving a gap for women who need help but do not meet the specific criteria of substance abuse or domestic violence.

Without a fixed address, homeless women cannot get an ID card, cannot access social assistance services, cannot get a bank account, or apply for a job. In fact, 'why don't they just get a job?' is a common statement from those speaking from position of their privilege. Those of us with a home, food, a phone, and a car, the safety of family, and the support of the community around us – but when someone does not even have a safe place to sleep, we cannot and should not expect them to pull themselves up alone. Homeless women are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, physical and mental abuse, exposure to the elements from sleeping rough, and exposure to unsafe situations couch-surfing.

What are some of the things that we could do to improve the health, dignity and well-being of these vulnerable women? We can provide access to emergency shelter support for homeless women that provides, at minimum, a 12-hour, overnight safe space and ideally provides a central point for access to further community-based services. We can provide access to flexible, short-term emergency supports including: food, clothing, and personal expenses specifically for those who have no fixed address. And we can think about a transitional approach to empower women to move from homelessness to social assistance to independent livelihood.

I am sure some of these items will be, and are currently, being discussed in the poverty action plan and the work that's going on with the great group of people from the community who are advising that plan. But

this is a need that has been, as I've stated, in place for much longer.

At the beginning of my statement, I spoke about the Startup Weekend. That group that came out of that weekend have not lost their passion for this problem and they are actively working to solve it through a new non-profit organization called Blooming House. This grassroots group has a business plan, a website, and a long-term vision and I am so proud to speak today knowing that there is already something in motion towards providing security and dignity for homeless women in PEI. It is a huge task. This group needs to find or build a property that is safe, secure, and suitable for seven women to seek emergency shelter, staff it, and provide a drop-in service and support role for this community. They also need to secure then ongoing operational support, (Indistinct) it with the complex needs of the service to be provided. They are, however, committed and are open to any and all partnerships and support that they may get from this community and it is here that we, as a government, can do our part.

The province currently provides financial support of \$78,500 annually to Bedford MacDonald House, the emergency homeless shelter for men in Charlottetown operated by the Salvation Army. It is also investing in a range of housing initiatives to specifically address gaps in the continuum of care in our community. It is time to address the gender-based gap and I am therefore calling on this government to immediately address the six year gap in the provision of emergency shelter for women in Charlottetown by working with Blooming House and any other community partners to see this dream become a reality. We have an opportunity here with dedicated individuals, committed to serve the needs of homeless women who see them for who they are and the potential that they have and I hope that not just the government, or the members of this Legislature, but all Islanders will come forward and stand up for the dignity and security of their fellow Islanders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

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

I want to start by thanking my colleague from Charlottetown-Parkdale for her very passionate and thoughtful remarks on homeless women in our community and the specific challenges that they face and the lack of supports that they have here.

All of us have walked around the downtown streets of Charlottetown and we've seen the people there who are the visible homeless in our community. I think most of us also know that there are more – there are many more, sadly – who are also homeless here and do not present as visibly as those that we see on Queen Street, or Grafton Street, or University Avenue.

There's a particular concern, as my colleague mentioned, for women – women who are vulnerable in ways that men are not: for sexual exploitation, economic exploitation, and in other ways.

I keep hoping that our society will move past our tradition – long-standing, sad tradition – of misogyny and patriarchy. I was really saddened – I think it was yesterday I first heard about this – the man who killed 10 people in Toronto earlier this week by driving a van onto a city sidewalk is the member of a group known as incel, which is – this was all brand new news to me. I knew nothing about this – a group of predominantly, almost exclusively male heterosexuals who – an incel is short for involuntary celibacy and they have this manufactured hatred for women and they display that in increasingly violent ways. It was just another example of how far we still have to go in terms of our society treating everybody with equality.

I think my colleague captured all of the concerns that we have – made a very distinct ask of government as to what we should do to protect Island women who are homeless and I think we need to, again, celebrate the fact that PEI is a community where we look after each other and the traditions that we have here of caring for each and every one of us, particularly the most vulnerable in our society – is something we take very seriously. I hope that this House responds to this motion with unanimous support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise, as well, today. I'd like to start off with an amendment to this motion and I do have copies for the members of the House.

Do I read the motion, Mr. Speaker? Do I read the amendment and then I'll speak to the amendments?

Speaker: No, just hold on for a minute while the copies of the amendment are passed out.

Ms. Mundy: Yes. Okay.

Speaker: Hon. minister, do you have a seconder for the amendment?

Ms. Mundy: I do; the hon. Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Mundy: Ready?

Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms. Mundy: Mr. Speaker, I would like to add the section:

And whereas government has met with community groups that are working for the establishment of an emergency shelter for women in Charlottetown and is awaiting proposals from these groups;

Also I'd like to add:

And whereas government is currently working with other levels of government and a number of community partners to develop a provincial housing action plan in response to a range of housing needs, including vulnerable populations.

And then replace:

Therefore be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urges government to continue to work with all community partners to consider the needs of homeless women in the development of a housing action plan.

Speaker: Okay, you can now speak to the –

Ms. Mundy: Amendment?

Speaker: – amendment.

Ms. Mundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this amendment.

Our government is committed to supporting Islanders who need it most and we recognize the importance of supporting those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. We also recognize that there are women experiencing difficult situations that may lead to homelessness or that arise as a result of homelessness.

My department recently met with the community group Blooming House and another community group who are both interested in establishing a women's shelter in Charlottetown; neither group was aware of the other, so we recommended that they collaborate on this project and develop a plan and a proposal that government can assess. Government is excited and encouraged by this initiative shown by these two community groups and we look forward to receiving and reviewing their plan.

Anderson House in Charlottetown encourages any woman in need of shelter to reach out to them for help and they will provide support to those who need it. We also encourage any woman in need of shelter to reach out to the Chief Mary Bernard's Memorial Women's Shelter in Lennox Island. Community collaboration and innovative approaches are keys to helping address housing challenges, including homelessness. Housing for those who need it the most is a priority for our government, which is why our 2018-2019 Budget announced investments of \$17 million over two years, as well as the creation of 1,000 new affordable units in the next four years.

A housing action plan is also being developed in collaboration with a housing supply task and a co-development team. The co-development team is a committee who have members from the status of women, the PEI Council of People with Disabilities, PEI Family Violence Prevention Services, and a community advisory board on Prince Edward Island

delivers the funding on behalf of the John Howard Society and that community advisory board is also made up of several community groups and representatives from various departments, including our Department of Family and Human Services.

A number of innovative approaches will help to address housing challenges across Prince Edward Island. We know that government alone is not capable of responding to all needs and we must work together on renewed and innovative approaches to housing. Government continues to collaborate with municipalities, private developers, and communities to meet the current and future housing needs of vulnerable populations and all Islanders, not only today, but into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like once again to encourage any woman in need of shelter to contact Anderson House in Charlottetown or the Lennox Island shelter. I believe the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women will also have some remarks that she would like to add.

Ms. Biggar: Call the hour.

Speaker: The hour has been called.

Hon. members, this House will recess until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

The Legislature recessed until 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: You may be seated.

Orders of the Day (Government)

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. 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 consider the grant of supply to Her Majesty.

Hon. members, we're on page 36, at the top of the page. The section hasn't been read yet, so I'll be doing that.

Hon. members, just a friendly reminder to focus your questions to the section that we're discussing, and then if you happen to ask a question and it's on another section, we'd ask you just to politely hold that until we get there.

Thank you.

Permission to bring a stranger on the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Mr. R. Brown: While he's getting ready, last night there was a question about Strathgartney, and you were right. There was an old car down or old equipment down there. They went down today, inspected it, and they're going to get it out of there ASAP.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Chair: Great minister.

Mr. Trivers: Good MLA (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, good.

Chair: Perfect.

Mr. R. Brown: Okay, the minister of tourism helped.

Some Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Myers: Did you get the jetty open?

Mr. Palmer: The jetty open? I was too busy helping him.

Some hon. Members: [Laughter]

Mr. Myers: Next on the list.

Chair: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: You get that in Hansard?

Chair: All right, Members. Let's welcome our stranger to the floor; if you could just introduce yourself and your title for the record.

George Mason Director: George Mason, Director of Finance.

Chair: Welcome, Mr. Mason.

Water and Air Monitoring

“Appropriations provided to administer and issue water well and air quality permits; conduct air quality and hazardous materials transport monitoring; undertake groundwater and surface water quality and quantity monitoring; and prepare groundwater and surface water reports.”
Administration: 10,500. Equipment: 28,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 47,500. Professional Services: 66,900. Salaries: 853,700. Travel and Training: 58,000. Grants: 100,000.

Total Water and Air Monitoring: 1,164,600.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Just a quick question regarding the lab testing for water samples: It looks like it's being done in New Brunswick. Research and Productivity Council, is that correct? Do we not have a testing centre here?

George Mason Director: They would use the lab here if it had the right services, but we don't offer all the services that the Research and Productivity Council would offer.

Ms. Bell: Okay. So better (Indistinct) services, so that's paid for as a professional service or –

George Mason Director: Yes.

Ms. Bell: Yes. Okay, that's it.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you.

I don't know if this is the actual section for it, but when people put in businesses or companies that use large volumes of water, what dictates whether or not they need to have a treatment facility or something like that?

George Mason Director: (Indistinct) the next section (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: It's the next section.

Mr. Fox: Is it the next section? Okay.

Chair: Appreciate you holding that.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Drinking Water and Wastewater Management

“Appropriations provided to administer approvals/regulatory compliance and protection related to drinking water and wastewater systems and for the administration of the Water Well Regulations, including approvals for high-capacity wells; water quality investigations; and other related services.” Administration: 3,000. Equipment: 9,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 10,700. Professional Services: 7,000. Salaries: 323,400. Travel and Training: 34,600.

Total Drinking Water and Wastewater Management: 387,700.

The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: So the question would be if a facility is using a lot of water in either the production or cleaning or running of that facility, what dictates whether they need to have a waste water facility or something

before they discharge that water out into a brook or a stream or whatever?

George Mason Director: That's really dictated by regulation. So if they meet certain criteria, then they would have to apply for a permit and there would be a screening process and approvals and the normal regulatory sort of thing.

Mr. Fox: Okay. That's fine.

Chair: Okay, thank you.

Shall the section carry?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Chair?

Chair: Oh, sorry.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's all right.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm just wondering how the implementation of the *Water Act* will, if at all, affect the operations of this division.

George Mason Director: I guess I've got to say it will affect it quite a bit because it governs all of the actions on the water side of this particular section, as well as the one we just passed. These two sections are quite integrated with the *Water Act* and all the new regulations which are yet to come into place.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: And therefore do you expect that there'll be a budget increase necessary once that happens?

George Mason Director: There is a small budget increase in the other section we just passed for a staff member. Looks like, at least in this year's estimates, over this year and next year there'll probably be two or three employees added –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Extra.

George Mason Director: – as a result of the *Water Act*.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Beyond that extra manpower, you don't expect any other

budgetary increases to comply with the *Water Act*?

George Mason Director: Not that I'm aware of. Nothing major, anyway.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, that's great.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Microbiology and Chemistry Laboratories

“Appropriations provided for the microbiological and chemical analyses of drinking water, surface water and wastewater.” Administration: 34,000. Equipment: 15,800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 124,300. Professional Services: 14,000. Salaries: 635,100. Travel and Training: 2,900.

Total Microbiology and Chemistry Laboratories: 826,100.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Agricultural Outreach

“Appropriations provided to administer pesticide management programs and the Agriculture Environment Officer Unit.” Administration: 4,800. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 15,500. Professional Services: 2,000. Salaries: 240,600. Travel and Training: 27,100.

Total Agricultural Outreach: 294,500.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Environmental Land Management

“Appropriations provided for to administer and co-ordinate the environmental assessment and sub-division review process; environmental permitting; contaminated sites; oil spill response; and to administer watercourse and wetland protection regulations. Administration: 11,200. Equipment: 13,200. Materials, Supplies and Services: 34,600. Professional Services: 39,000. Salaries: 712,600. Travel and Training: 44,600.

Total Environment Land Management: 855,200.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I have a case; it's on Route 13 in Mayfield at the Houston Road where there's approximately, I'm told, about 300 acres of farmland. Generally, it doesn't have a cover crop over the winter. Sediment comes down and it plugs the ditches there, and flows through one of the home's yards. I've been told this has been going for about 50 years.

Would this – now, I believe, the department of environment has been notified. But, I was wondering under environmental land management, as opposed to just cleaning out the ditches every year when it fills with sediment, how do you approach farmers to help mitigate this from happening on a long-term basis?

Mr. R. Brown: Is there a watershed group there?

Mr. Trivers: Yeah. I contacted the watershed group. They contact the department of environment.

Mr. R. Brown: You contacted the department of environment?

Mr. Trivers: I don't have an issue with how it's being dealt with, necessarily. I think it's going through the right channels and everything. But I wanted to know, because, I talked to people in the area, and they said it has been going on for like 50 years. Whether, in this section there is responsibility in budget, to recommend to the farmer, ways they can mitigate that sediment run-off, whether that be – maybe they have to engage ALUS to try and take the land out of production, or add in buffer zones or whatever it takes. I'm just wondering if that happens.

Mr. R. Brown: You send me an email and we'll contact – we'll get together with it.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

I mean, at a more abstract level is there – is that part of the scope of responsibilities to

look at that long-term, or is it just like on a one-off –

Mr. R. Brown: We usually work through the watershed areas. They do a tremendous job communicating back and forth with the farmers in the area, in their particular areas. Then, we have the ALUS program that helps out with the watershed areas to incent farmers to mitigate any stream flow and stuff like that.

Mr. Trivers: All right. I'll connect. I don't think the farmer is doing anything necessarily wrong –

Mr. R. Brown: No, but just to improve it–

Mr. Trivers: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

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

Ms. Compton: Thank you, Chair.

I'm not sure if this is the right section, but I'll ask anyway. I've had a number of calls and concerns about derelict cars and the possible contamination from those cars being left on a supposed garage area that's not really operated as a garage.

I'm just wondering what the rules and regulations are around having derelict cars. If a vehicle is not registered for a certain period of time, does that come into play?

Mr. R. Brown: We had a great discussion yesterday on this.

Ms. Compton: Oh.

Mr. R. Brown: A number of your hon. members all hon. members were talking about it –

Ms. Compton: Oh, okay.

Mr. R. Brown: I've asked the staff to prepare something for all of us about the rules and regulations. The member from Borden was talking about a big lot and how many vehicles are in it and are they leaking

and that. Although, they're permitted, we have to monitor them a bit more.

Ms. Compton: Even – sorry, Chair.

Chair: That's okay.

Ms. Compton: One of's or a couple of cars or half a dozen in someone's yard, and whether there's any regulations around that.

Mr. R. Brown: Sorry about that?

Ms. Compton: I'm just wondering also, on a residential property, someone who has three or four or six cars in the yard. They never go anywhere. They're not registered. What the rules and regulations are around that. One of the big issues in the district also, is derelict properties and that plays right into it.

Mr. R. Brown: We had quite a discussion yesterday on that.

Ms. Compton: I'll go back and look.

Mr. R. Brown: We're looking to something similar to the city. What they do is, they go out and, first of all, work with the landowner. If the landowner doesn't want to cooperate, we could go in and do it ourselves and put a judgment against their property. Once that happens, they clean her up pretty quick.

Ms. Compton: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: I do have good news for you, today.

Ms. Compton: Good.

Mr. R. Brown: We met with a group today, the Belfast watershed group –

Ms. Compton: Yes.

Mr. R. Brown: – is getting approved. It is approved. That will bring the province – 97% of the province watershed areas will be covered by a watershed organization.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. R. Brown: We're going to have find that last 3%.

Ms. Compton: I really appreciate that minister. I want to thank the former minister of communities, land and environment –

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) the former minister (Indistinct)

Ms. Compton: – he was integral in that.

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct) wanted to thank you. You can thank the former minister.

Ms. Compton: For all the work you did for the watershed group in Belfast. I really appreciate it. It's going to make a huge difference in our community. I want to thank your department for that.

Mr. R. Brown: Thanks.

Mr. Trivers: That's okay. He brought in the *Municipal Government Act*.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thanks, Chair.

I'm curious, minister, how much actually Crown land is there in the province?

Mr. R. Brown: I know there's 75,000 acres of woodland, I was told today.

George Mason Director: It was always 10% of the province, but I don't know what that –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: Okay, talk woodland, then –

Mr. R. Brown: About 150.

Mr. Fox: 150,000 acres?

George Mason Director: Yeah.

Mr. Fox: How much of that 150,000 acres has been either clear-cut, select cut, thinned or anything like that?

Mr. R. Brown: I was meeting with a group of individuals today from the different organizations, and that is being worked on.

There's a number of organizations have come together; the Island Nature Trust, the Island nature conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and they're doing a tremendous job in putting together a wildlife habitat plan.

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: I think when that comes forward, I think, it's going to be great moving ahead.

Mr. Fox: What I'm wondering –

Mr. R. Brown: They're getting us all – I'll get you back that information.

Mr. Fox: What I'm wondering there, is any land that has been cleared in the past, has that been reforested?

Mr. R. Brown: It's the policy of the government to reforest that land.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I had somebody ask me today where Island Nature Trust would get their funding from? Can you answer that question?

Mr. R. Brown: They get a small grant from us.

Ms. Biggar: Okay, but we don't fully operate Island Nature Trust?

Mr. R. Brown: No, it's a non-profit organization.

Ms. Biggar: Do you have an idea how much we give them in your grant?

George Mason Director: We'll find that for you.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. R. Brown: We'll get you that.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: They do a tremendous job –

Ms. Biggar: Oh, yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: – and we're all working together, right now, in order to take advantage of the new national program that's coming out, the conservation purchase of land, so we all got together and see how we can maximize that.

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Inspection Services

“Appropriations provided for the operation of Inspection Services including electrical, boiler, liquefied petroleum gas and plumbing; elevators and lifts and amusement rides; building code; petroleum storage tanks and ozone-layer protection.”
Administration: 43,600. Equipment: 6,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 19,400. Professional Services: 20,000. Salaries: 1,562,800. Travel and Training: 96,500.

Total Inspection Services: 1,748,300.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

How is the implementation of the National Building Code coming along?

Mr. R. Brown: It's to be implemented 2020. I'm trying to speed that up to 2019.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. Before the next election.

The timeline, before the next election?

Mr. R. Brown: It'll be – we're working towards that.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great –

Mr. R. Brown: Getting it implemented.

Mr. Trivers: Great.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Beverage Container Management

“Appropriations provided for operation of the Beverage Container Program including

administration and regulation of the *Beverage Containers Act* and Regulations; collection of containers; payment of refunds and handling fees; and program promotion and operation.” Administration: 1,000. Equipment: 6,000. Materials, Supplies and Services: 5,948,300. Salaries: 152,200. Travel and Training: 9,400.

Total Beverage Container Management: 6,116,900.

Total Environment: 11,993,800.

Total Communities, Land and Environment: 35,034,000.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm just wondering, obviously there's an income from this program from the beverage container program, as well. I'm wondering how the income and expenditure balance out.

George Mason Director: The income goes into the Department of Finance. But their budget, this year, is about 6.5 million in beverage containers and they also sell some of the aluminum and what have you for about 750,000 for 7.2 million in revenue.

Our expenditures are budgeted at 5.9 million this year so there's a profit, if you like, of 1.3 million.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, sure.

Do we have any sense, or can we extrapolate from that what percentage of those beverage containers get recycled? I mean, that sounds like a very high percentage to me.

George Mason Director: It's usually around 80%. I think it might be 81% this past year. It has been as low as 79%, so it's in that band.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That's very impressive because some other jurisdictions is way, way lower than that. Like 20%, 30% in some other places. I guess it's like our voting: 80%. Fantastic.

Are there any plans to expand this to other containers? In some other jurisdictions there

is a levy on coffee, disposable coffee cups, for example, or plastic bags, even.

Mr. R. Brown: You know, there is a big discussion going on in plastics all around the world right now. A lot of places have banned plastic bottles. I've talked to a company there, a bottling, wash company, that maybe we could get them back – get them over here and start recycling some of the beer bottles. Working on it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That would be reusing rather than recycling –

Mr. R. Brown: Oh yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – then, minister. Yeah, right.

Any chance we are going to go back to reusing glass bottles, and get rid of the cans?

Mr. R. Brown: No.

We won an election in the can. Hey, we won an election the cans.

Ms. Biggar: We want to stay here forever (Indistinct)

Chair: You're good?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm good.

Thank you, Chair.

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

Mr. Myers: Thank you.

Mine are kind of in along the same seams. Some of it is answered already. If memory serves me correct, I think I recall, or I thought I recalled, at the time, when you were changing over, that you were creating a fund with the deposit money. It was like a 5% that you were kept, and 3% went to – but there was a parcel of that money that government was going to have and it was to be injected directly into environmental projects and that.

Can you explain that?

Mr. R. Brown: The commitment, at the time, when the can law came in and the

beverage container legislation came in here, the commitment, at that time, was all the money would go to the watershed groups.

Mr. Myers: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: And we made \$1.3 million. That basically goes to the watershed groups. It's not – it goes into general revenue, but the commitment is still there; that money from the can deposits will go to the watershed groups.

Mr. Myers: That is continued –

Mr. R. Brown: Yes.

Mr. Myers: – today. Okay.

If I had somebody – I had this question, recently and I tried to pull the recall the best I could, but I knew it was going back into environmental aspects of Prince Edward Island or projects that were happening, but it's 100% to the watershed groups?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. If there is a little surplus, or anything over and above the watershed groups, we give it to nature trust and things like that to purchase property. We get funding out of that.

Mr. Myers: If there was any local groups in some of the local communities who wanted to do green ventures, or protect some property of their own, or any number of clean up things that would match what the watershed groups do and what nature trust does in that, is there any opportunity for them to put an ask in for government on that fund?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Mr. Myers: Okay.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Biggar: Minister, I just want to make note of the conservation licence plate and for the great work that your department does in partnership with mine to raise funds for that particular watershed fund, the wildlife fund.

I just want to congratulate your department, and appreciate the partnership that we have to promote that through our highway safety. I just want to congratulate your department on keeping that going.

Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

This is more a question about general recycling, I suppose, but we spend a lot of time and effort on PEI with our great recycling program, splitting out recyclable containers including plastics. Reasonably, the market for selling those recyclables to China, of course, has, sort of, tanked.

I hope I'm not repeating a question somebody else already asked, but my understanding is that most of those plastics are incinerated now and burned on the Island. I was wondering if there are any plans to, first of all, actually, can you confirm they're burned, and is that bad for the environment and are there any plans to do something different with them so that we're not burning plastic and sending the bad stuff into the air.

Chair: The Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy.

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Actually, hon. member, those are through the Island Waste Watch plant. They had them baled and they did have some that were burnt through the energy for waste this particular winter. There are markets opening up, now, again, for those so they're starting to be shipped again.

There have been some other markets, so they are starting to ship more. But, there were some that were burned through energy for waste.

In answer to your question about burning them, it would go through the whole system that energy from waste has, in terms of, reduction of their emissions, at that plant. So that's where that particular status of that is at the moment.

Mr. Trivers: So, most of the harmful chemicals are taken out during that process?

My question is: Where are the new markets opening up?

Ms. Biggar: I'll bring that back to you. I'll have to go back to Island –

Unidentified Voice: Waste.

Ms. Biggar: – Waste Management to get the details on that. I know, in my conversations with Gerry Moore, we have had those conversations because it was a concern with the number of bales of plastic bales that were there. We had those discussions. Things are moving. We burnt some.

I'll get you a further update on that.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'm wondering, there have been a few articles recently on using plastic, melting plastic down and using it as a road surfacing material; is that something that's (a) being considered here, or (b) applicable for our climate and road conditions?

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

I am familiar with that process. It's used mostly in India. I know our chief engineers are always – they always attend the international – they're part of an international group. That has been something that has been discussed, but the process that we use here, it wouldn't be applicable to what we do here, for our particular types of roads. It wouldn't adhere properly.

I know they do it in India, but they have a different climate. Certainly, different techniques that they do for their road construction than perhaps our standards are, I think, higher, perhaps, than what they use for theirs.

That is something I am aware of; something our department has, certainly, had information on. It would not be applicable. There's nowhere in North America, I don't believe, that's doing it.

Mr. R. Brown: There are a couple of companies in Europe that have a technology –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: – to put it back to oil –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: We've called a few of them and they said they're so busy over there, they've got no time for North American markets, yet.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks.

I wasn't aware that India was the main market, or maybe the sole market. I thought I remember reading, because I had wondered, maybe, it's just not right for our climatic conditions here. I couldn't swear to it, but I'm pretty sure there were some other countries with similar –

Unidentified Voice: (Indistinct)

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – yeah. I was going to say Scandinavian countries with similar climate to ours where they were using it. I'm wondering whether that's something we could look into further –

Ms. Biggar: But we have. We have.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – and you're saying it's not appropriate?

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

Ms. Biggar: The way the process is, they chop it up and mix it in with the aggregate, the black tar aggregate, and so it just melts it down. It doesn't add any value to it in the way the process is, under the types of processes that we use to do our roads here.

I know it is something we've looked at, and had information on, I mean. But what we're

actually doing is using our chip tires to put on some of clay roads to help with drainage. We are using that technology to chip them up and put them on a clay road that perhaps is muddy. We're doing some testing on that; how we can use those tires that way. But in terms of the plastic, I've had the discussion.

But thank you for the question.

Chair: Are they related to the beverage container management because that conversation that was just going on is great information, but maybe that could be a sidebar with the minister of transportation.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure. I just have one final comment on it (Indistinct)

Chair: Sure, the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I appreciate the answer, minister, and I just recently bought one of the environmental plates that you were talking about and I know we have blue jays and lady slippers, and the one I have has a fox on it. I'm wondering whether next year it will have a fox or a cow on it.

Chair: Thank you, hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Is that a serious question?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Depends how the bill goes.

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

Ms. Biggar: Well, we also have the blue jay. I myself have the lady slipper. I'm sure if there are others – I think it's more or less conservation of those particular, whether it's conserving the lady slipper, the fox, the blue jay, the trout. So, those are – but who knows? Once the consultations are over for that particular discussion, we could end up with a cow.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Shall the total carry? Carried.

Shall the Total Communities, Land and Environment carry? Carried.

Thank you, minister; thank you, Mr. Mason.

Chair: Hon. members, I invite the Minister of Health and Wellness to come to the table.

We're going to be starting with Health PEI and it's around page – it's on page 93.

Permission to bring a stranger to the floor?

Some Hon. Members: Granted.

Mr. Mitchell: An expert.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: An expert, not a stranger.

Chair: Yeah, an expert.

We'll allow her to get set up.

Hon. members, we're now going to start the Health PEI budget.

Could you please introduce and your title for the record?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Denise Lewis Fleming, Chief Operating Officer.

Chair: Welcome to the table.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Chair: Do you have handouts for the group?

Mr. Mitchell: We do have some handouts, but I'll be giving a bit of a brief opening.

It's good to be at the table tonight to present to each of you the budget estimates for Health PEI. This is my first time with the Health PEI budget book, but obviously, Denise is no stranger to this area. I think, together, we'll probably be able to answer most questions and with that said, we do have some handouts so I guess we'll proceed with the handouts off the get-go.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Three documents to table; the employee salary listing, the grants and professional services, and the physician fee-for-service and contract payments.

Mr. Mitchell: With that, we'll just begin.

Chair: Thank you.

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Health PEI

Corporate Services and Pharmacare

Corporate Services

“Appropriations provided for operation of the Office of the Chief Executive Officer and for the provision of corporate services in the areas of planning and evaluation, policy development and analysis.” Administration: 68,200. Equipment: 13,900. Materials, Supplies and Services: 26,600. Professional Services: 312,300. Salaries: 1,777,100. Travel and Training: 75,100.

Total Corporate Services: 2,273,200.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Welcome to the floor, minister. I was going to ask you a question on the *Municipal Government Act*, but I'll save that (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Okay, I can do that tomorrow.

Mr. Trivers: No, I wanted to know if you have complete org-charts for the Department of Health and Wellness, including Health PEI.

When I say org-charts, I mean not just lists of people and salaries but actual chart structures; hierarchical charts for, again, for the Department of Health and Wellness as well as Health PEI.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I can't speak to the Department of Health and Wellness. You would have to hold til that piece comes to the floor.

We can provide – and I will have to bring back – organizational charts, but it's going to be at a higher level because with nearly 6,000 people, we wouldn't be able to create an org-chart that lists every person. So, we could have all of our executive level and senior level management on those org-charts.

Mr. Mitchell: Would that suffice hon. member?

Mr. Trivers: One thing that, I mean, I've talked about it a lot in the past and I'm sure you've heard lots of people talk about is the ratio of frontline workers to administration, and that's really what I'm trying to figure out.

As long as the org-charts are actually – it was easy to clearly able to identify the number of people who are frontline workers as opposed to the number of people that are working in administration.

Mr. Mitchell: Well as Denise said, there are 6,600 employees under Health PEI. Most of those, the vast majority, are the frontline workers at the facilities all across PEI.

To get that broke down for you to determine the, I'll say, the LPNs, the RCWs, the RNs, the BNs, or even the nurse practitioners –

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I would be able –

Mr. Mitchell: – it's a fairly daunting task.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I could provide a summary by union group, which would give you an idea of at least how many are in UPSE or how many are in the RN group, how many are in IUOE and how many are in the excluded group, which usually represents most management by-service area. It would give you that – I believe the information you're looking for.

Mr. Mitchell: I think, though, for what you're looking for, if we did that upper layers of, say, their administration management team and then numbers, as Denise said, that would give you a good understanding of – I think you're trying to develop ratio kind of frontline to –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, but back in the mid-1990s I worked for Deloitte's out in Winnipeg and I was involved – it was management consulting – and we took the government of Manitoba's, one of their departments, and broke it down by org-structure. I realize it's a lot of work, and then looked at ratios of management to the number of reports right through the hierarchy, not just frontlines as well.

Those are the sorts of things that are telling and they give information on the organizational structure, and it's the sort of thing you hear out on the street and people wonder how much administration there really is.

Would you consider maybe putting some funds into a study like that?

Mr. Mitchell: You know what? I'm not opposed to that.

Based on my short time in that role and my visitations throughout, I think once – if we could kind of even do what Denise is suggesting here would bring fairly good clarity to you that we're not top-heavy, as they say.

It's a fairly streamlined group at the top end that's kind of steering the thing, but obviously the frontline staff is the significant number doing their fine work every day. So I think it would bring, even if we did the limited part just to give you that first bit, would bring you some clarity. But, I'm certainly not opposed of looking at something if we need it – if after you got that and you still had questions, which I don't think you would.

Mr. Trivers: That would be great, minister, if you could.

I think just having that kind of information available to the general public would put some concerns to rest, as you say, and just give people that extra confidence. I know that one of the concerns that's sometimes –

I think just having that kind of information available to the general public would put some concerns to rest, as you say, and just give people that extra confidence.

I know that one of the concerns that sometimes people have is are we really getting the full value for the money we spend; because we spend so much money on health care, and it's not a reflection on the frontline workers at all, they just wonder with the amount of money spent, how come we don't see necessarily that full care coming out the end of the pipe, you know?

Mr. Mitchell: I'll tell you, to your point health care expenditures are complex and comprehensive. But it's not staff that's – they're all doing their roles and doing them well. So can we make an agreement that we'll go ahead with that upper layers –

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: – with numbers of what's underneath there for you to look at first to say: I'm okay with or let's have a look deeper or something. You okay with that?

Mr. Trivers: That's fair. That's fair.

Mr. Mitchell: Okay, appreciate that.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Financial Services

“Appropriations provided for administration and operation of financial accounting, auditing, materials management, financial reporting systems, financial planning and analysis.” Administration: 969,800. Debt: 248,600. Equipment: 29,100. Materials, Supplies and Services: 214,000. Professional Services: 210,800. Salaries: 6,689,400. Travel and Training: 56,100. Grants: 4,000.

Total Financial Services: 8,421,800.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Health Infomatics

“Appropriations provided for operation of the Chief Information Office including record information management, *Freedom of Information* and *Protection of Privacy Act*, health information, as well as coordination and strategic planning for health information and computer systems.” Administration: 6,700. Equipment: 1,000.

Materials, Supplies and Services: 800. Professional Services: 92,900. Salaries: 1,467,200. Travel and Training: 23,400.

Total Health Infomatics: 1,592,000.

The hon. Leader of the Third Party.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

I'm wondering how much this section and the following section as well work with ITSS.

Mr. Mitchell: I would say closely but I'll let Denise explain that a little bit better probably.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: This section has some interaction with ITSS. This is mainly our information analytics group that works with that, as well as our health privacy information management group as well. The next one on CIS they work very closely with the ITSS and ITSS has part of the staff that help operate the Clinical Information System.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks. I'm wondering if there's ever been any discussions about consolidating this, or is there a reason why you keep the medical –

Mr. Mitchell: We're actually in the process of that now and looking at compatibility and obviously – actually, we're doing a pilot. Right now there's a pilot going on. That's (Indistinct) the same –

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Sorry, different pilot; but to your point, that's what we're trying to obtain, everything being compatible and everybody being able to interchange (Indistinct) work with things.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: That's the road we're heading down, hon. member.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

So what computer systems are used to track the patient registry?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: That is, I believe, an Access database.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. Because, I mean, that's one area – and I've received one complaint in particular where they thought they filled out the forms, they thought they were in the system, they called back and then they said: Oh, you're not in the system. They thought they were in the system again, but they wouldn't put them back to the first date when they first called.

Actually, it makes a little bit of sense to me if it's an Access database, because of course, most Access databases, you can actually duplicate the database and put it on multiple machines and get out of synch, and you can end up with cases where data is not managed very well.

I have a lot of concerns about that with the patient registry, and I was wondering if you can put my concerns to rest and tell me a little bit more about how the patient registry is managed and assure me that indeed there's not the case where you have that Access database existing in multiple places, people's names getting lost.

Mr. Mitchell: Unfortunately, hon. member, that – well, it's not unfortunate – that section could be dealt with in the primary care section a little further down the road. But –

Chair: If you can hold that question, it'll be great.

Mr. Trivers: This is the one I'm talking about, computer systems though, and that's really what my question surrounds.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: The primary care division is responsible for the operation of the patient registry.

Mr. Mitchell: The registry.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Not this group. They're not responsible for operating it.

Mr. Trivers: Would this group, if there was a better system than Access to use for the patient registry, would this group manage it?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: No.

Mr. Mitchell: I would say no.

Mr. Trivers: No? Okay, thanks.

Chair: Shall the section carry? Carried.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Interoperative Electronic Health Record

“Appropriations provided for development, implementation and support for the integrated electronic health record.”
Administration: 41,100. Equipment: 56,800. Materials, Supplies and Services: 2,854,400. Professional Services: 158,600. Salaries: 2,095,700. Travel and Training: 60,200.

Total Interoperative Electronic Health Record: 5,266,800.

The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

How much of this is year over year maintenance and support fees? Just for the software.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: For the –

Mr. Mitchell: Not the infrastructure pieces, not the hard –

Mr. Myers: (Indistinct) financing –

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: There's a combined piece. We break it into hardware maintenance and software maintenance. So the software maintenance year over year is 940,800.

Mr. Trivers: How much is the hardware maintenance?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: One million, eight hundred and ninety-five thousand, eight hundred.

Mr. Trivers: What sort of specialized hardware is required for this?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: It's a hosted agreement so it doesn't fit into the traditional hardware versus software. It's a hosted option for what we do. Cerner

provides the technical servers, the connection points, in order for us to operate the system.

Mr. Trivers: So you're saying that you pay the software and hardware fees separately, but in fact the software and the hardware all resides and is controlled and looked after by a third party company?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: And so these are essentially rental fees for the hardware and the software?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: They're an annual licensing fee, yes.

Mr. Trivers: How often do you receive updates for hardware and software for this system? Is it done on a yearly basis, multiple times a year? Any ideas?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: So if you are aware and have looked at our capital budget, the five year capital budget for Health PEI, every two years we get upgrades to our code for the Clinical Information System.

Mr. Trivers: Every two years?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Every two years.

Mr. Trivers: What company is it that provides this service?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Cerner Canada.

Mr. Trivers: Cerner Canada. Okay.

Were there any on-Island alternatives that provide this similar service?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: For Clinical Information System?

Mr. Trivers: Well, (Indistinct) electronic health records.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: To my knowledge, whenever the RFP was held for the Clinical Information System, no, there is no on-Island –

Mr. Mitchell: This is not a new contract.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: No.

Mr. Trivers: Would you mind providing the breakdown of software and hardware costs and the different systems in this section, like as a handout? I'm having trouble putting the full picture together in my mind of what's included there. Because it's called Interoperative Electronic Health Record, but you're talking about the Clinical Information System so I'm a little confused, is that the only one exists, or are there multiple systems?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: The interoperative record includes the registering and scheduling of patients; the ordering of lab results and diagnostic imaging results; and the capturing of notes, clinical provider orders – those are all components of the system. The licensing fee does not break out by each of those components, but I can give you a list of all the components in our operative health system that we use.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. Trivers: Even a handout with that breakdown that you're giving me would be great to have –

Mr. Mitchell: We'll have to bring that back for you hon. member. We'll make a list of things you want to be brought back.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks. Much appreciated.

Chair: Thank you.

Shall the section carry? Carried.

Pharmacare

“Appropriations provided for delivery of provincial drug programs on PEI. The provincial drug programs are mainly delivered through community retail pharmacies or in the case of Provincial Pharmacy delivered programs, directly to clients.” Administration: 39,100. Equipment: 4,500. Materials, Supplies and Services: 34,900. Professional Services: 1,517,800. Salaries: 1,511,200. Travel and Training: 6,100. Grants: 33,370,500.

Total Pharmacare: 36,484,100.

Total Corporate Services and Pharmacare: 54,037,900.

The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, there's been significant amount of discussion recently about a universal pharmacare program, particularly at the federal level.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Ms. Bell: Does this government support the concept of universal pharmacare programs?

Mr. Mitchell: I think it'd be certainly fair to say we support the concept, but it doesn't come without hurdles or challenges.

Obviously, we're having a FPT meeting in June that this is an agenda item to talk about. There's a movement afoot, but that doesn't mean that we all don't have some issues that we're going to bring to the table. Obviously some provinces are more aligned than others at the moment, so it's about equality and balancing and what part of that process the federal government is wishing to come and talk about. I'll have a better handle on it after those June meetings as to the overall consensus, but in some cases some jurisdictions will have much more work to do than others, so that's where we are at this time. Notionally, certainly we're not opposed to taking a good, hard, firm look at it.

Ms. Bell: That's really good to hear. One of the things that we're hearing from constituents and we've talked a couple other topics around pharmacare – is with a number of different programs and all the different pieces, it can end up being very complex. Not just for the administration and delivery, but also for those on the outside trying to navigate it and find their way through the system. Could you kind of clarify what the – I know, in general, what the process is to get particular medications or programs under pharmacare umbrella. Could you speak to that process?

Mr. Mitchell: So basically right now in every jurisdiction which you have your own formulary in place at the moment, so

particular provinces – we're all at different levels on our formulary. In order to get one consistent formulary for every province, who establishes that? There's the first question, right? What's the cost associated with that? What drugs that are on certain formularies now that would be replaced or equal – that do the same amount of work? Those are the conversations that I believe we'll be having at the table in June to see what kind of consistency we can get to and how much effort it would be for each individual jurisdiction to do that. Obviously there's been some work already done on it, which is helpful, of course, from my point of view because I'm new to the chair. I'll be, probably, one of the newest ministers at that meeting, so it's great to have that information at your fingertips to have that valuable discussion.

Ms. Bell: Okay. Chair?

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, what are some of the decisions that kind of influence or impact how things end up on the provincial pharmacare formulary? Because obviously you can see some things in here are large programs, but there's also been some (Indistinct) –

Mr. Mitchell: So I guess as far as how do we identify what goes on our provincial formulary? Is that what you're asking?

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: There will be a need requested. It could be through physicians or public or whatever, so there are two commissions that they have to go through.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, there are two that they have to go through so Denise will explain them.

Ms. Bell: Sure. Thank you.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: As you may be aware, in Canada first they have to have Health Canada approval and that is our very first parameter before we consider anything

coming to the provincial formulary. Then there are two national bodies that the drugs work their way through. One is through CADTH, and there's either through the pan-Canadian or oncology review committee, which they review all the cancer drugs and assess it for efficacy also how much improvement it offers over other treatments that may be available – what it does to improve quality of life, those types of things. There's also a common drug review for all other drugs, i.e. other than cancer. Once it completes through those cycles then there is a pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, which is all the provinces that have come together to then pull their resources and negotiate with the pharmacy companies in order to achieve a better pricing by pooling their resources. Once those are complete, then there's a recommendation from those committees to the provinces about whether to consider listing the drugs, listing them with restrictions, or not listing them because maybe the price is just too high considering the incremental benefit that may be offered by the drug.

Once PEI receives those, we do have a number that are still waiting in the queue. We have a Provincial Drugs & Therapeutics Committee that then prioritizes and looks at: What are the gaps between our formulary and our neighbors' – in particular, it looks at Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, which are the ones that are most important to our population to fill first and they provide a clinical perspective and help provide us with a prioritized list to consider for new drugs to be added. Once they provide those recommendations then it's provided to the department for the minister's decision on supporting moving forward to add to the formulary.

Mr. Mitchell: If I might also just add to that: Denise did a super PowerPoint presentation recently at the standing committee in regards to the drug program. If you would like a copy of that we should actually send it along to you.

Ms. Bell: That would be (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: It's very well put-together and does a lot of explanation of the whole pharmacare program.

Ms. Bell: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I would really appreciate that. Thank you very much. Because my –

I have another question, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale.

Ms. Bell: What is the – I mean I understand, certainly, particularly when you start to talk about some of the cancer treatment drugs that are incredibly expensive or are specifically addressing a very particular outcome, but is there a tip-point as sort of the number of requests that come in, or is it one request is enough to trigger off this process?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: We try and create a little bit of structure to it and we ask the Provincial Drugs & Therapeutics Committee to provide us with a periodic report throughout the year so it's not a first past the post –

Ms. Bell: Yes.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: So we try and structure it throughout the year to –

Mr. Mitchell: And you're constantly taking a look at it that way too, right?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Yes.

Ms. Bell: What's encouraging with that is it sounds like there are already some great structures in place in terms of that kind of negotiation, and purchasing, and working cross-jurisdictionally, which is really encouraging.

The other question, Chair, I have on that to the minister himself is: Does this expand beyond drugs to things like, for instance, insulin pumps, which have been included underneath the diabetes program? Do those come under the same kind of jurisdictional controls?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: So there are procurement of other medical supplies or pieces like that. It doesn't quite follow the same structure, although I will give a general comment that for Health PEI, we participate in what's called a group

purchasing organization and that allows us to pool our ask with other health authorities in Canada. New Brunswick also participates in that and there's a number in Ontario, so it allows us to garner that benefit. The insulin pumps, in that case, we actually partnered with Nova Scotia in order to achieve those pricings.

Ms. Bell: Okay. That's good. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I want to follow up on what the member from Charlottetown is saying and the member from Souris was talking about the other day and that's the pharmaceutical alliance and the savings that most governments, or especially our government, are going to see with the generic drug program, right? We're talking about a 40% cut in generic drug prices?

Mr. Mitchell: You mean like this year? Are you talking about right now?

Mr. MacEwen: April 1st.

Mr. Mitchell: That was the pan-Canadian. That's more of federal jurisdiction where they address that periodically. I'm not really sure on how often.

That's, basically, a federal framework that they put down to, you know, every pharmacy across Canada.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: I don't think 40% is quite accurate.

Mr. MacEwen: Twenty-five to 40%.

Mr. Mitchell: Twenty might be more accurate.

Mr. MacEwen: Media reports are saying 25 to 40 and, of course, the pharmacies are saying every bit of 40.

This reduction of 25 to 40%, that's saving our provincial government money, right?

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: Because that's – you're buying the drugs –

Mr. Mitchell: Right.

Mr. MacEwen: – and then it goes out to the pharmacies and whatnot, right?

The other day, in the House, it's, obviously, difficult to debate that in Question Period (Indistinct) when you said you're saving Islanders money –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Mr. MacEwen: – it's – you mean, Islanders as in taxpayers, it's the government that's saving money –

Mr. Mitchell: I (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: – when I go to get my prescription filled, I'm not saving money.

Mr. Mitchell: No. I guess what I meant by that was, back a number of years ago when we took it from brand to generics, that was a significant save for Islanders, right? So, we're continuing on with that.

I have to be corrected here in what I suggested here a moment ago, it is running close to 40% but only on about 68 drugs.

Mr. MacEwen: That's right, yes.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm not quite correct (Indistinct) on average, I think they were talking 20%, so sorry about that.

When we went to the generic drugs and really rocked the prices so that we were able to see savings there. With this recent Canadian framework that does allow some dollars to flow back to the province, but every one of those dollars translate back into our formulary. We have drugs that we're waiting to put on that list. There is no secret. What that brought back to the province was close to \$1.8 million, which is going right back into the formulary.

Families that he spoke about and you and I both know and every member will be able to have some access to some more drugs that they're waiting for that we're not able to find the dollars to get the money.

This is where those dollars go. When I say that cost savings, those get reverted right back on the new drugs, and some of those are generics to keep the cost down low so we can run all of those programs that we spoke about at that standing committee recently.

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah, I know, minister and that's a hard argument to go against, obviously, when the minister says, you know what, because every one of us in here has talked to a health minister about a drug that a constituent needs, feels they need; desperately need, and it's not on the formulary, or it's not on the catastrophic drug plan or something like that.

I get why you're saying that; you're putting that all back into that, but government has a giant pot of money, too. Do you know what I mean? That's the only money you're allowed to put onto the formulary. You can pick and choose.

I say that because it's a difficult thing to do. The member from Souris talked about it. He's got two small pharmacy spots in his place, right? There is a small pharmacy in our constituency. I get when it's easy for people to stand up and say: oh, for gosh' sakes, you're in the pocket of the pharmacies. They're making tonnes of money. They're doing – they're rich. Would you rather give them the money back or would you rather put it into the formulary for drugs? I get that argument. I can't say I wouldn't make the same argument if I was in your shoes.

But, you also have to think that these aren't mega, giant – this isn't the Shoppers or the (Indistinct) with crazy overhead. This is a tiny little corner spot in the back street of Morell that we're very lucky to have good health care services provider, a health care provider.

We don't have a physician. We have a nurse practitioner for a half-a-day a week. There are so many people that use that for so many different services.

It was the message that the member from Souris and I got loud and clear down there. I know you had a conversation with the Pharmacists Association here in PEI, as well, on this. What do you say to them when they talk about their, oh, what's the right word? When they purchase drugs with a certain supplier, they get money back from that and that's basically what they do to offset the lack of payment for services they provide that's not just filling prescriptions. And you know what I'm talking about when I say this.

If they were making 100 – if they're providing or selling \$100,000 worth of drugs and they get 40% of that back, now that \$100,000 worth of drugs actually only costs \$17,000, which is good for the province. It's good for taxpayers, but for that local, small pharmacy, they're only getting 40% of that \$17,000 back. That's quite a hit to their bottom line. We had pharmacists in across from us, they're not making what a pharmacist probably should make elsewhere, even PEI or the province.

That hit home to me just because of, especially when they talk about that, is the service provider in my own personal community, as well. I get that that's going to be the first place to be cut if they have to make cuts.

You can call it a big pharmacy. You could say they're making tonnes of money. We can say that, oh, no, are we going to give that to the rich pharmacy, or are we going to give that to the drug formulary?

I think that there is common ground there. I know we're in constant negotiations with the pharmacists to say, do you know what, we can – the flu shot was an example. We'll let you do the flu shot. That's a slight income there. We know they're not coming to their full scope of practice.

They could be doing a lot more. They gave us examples in a meeting. I know they give you lots of examples. If we're not willing to negotiate on costs, what are we willing to negotiate on services provided? There's no doubt they can offset a lot of wait times and trying to get into doctors and clinic times, all that when you can go and get – I know the pharmacist in Morell is giving a tonne, a tonne of medical advice.

Where are we with the negotiations of making that the trade-off, of giving them more services because we know they're going to be making a lot less money?

Taxpayers are going to be saving money. Not at the cash, but in the money that the province saves. Where are we at with the negotiation of giving them more services that they can actually turn a profit from because they are the front service provider in some places, most of the day?

Sorry, for the long, but I wanted –

Mr. Mitchell: No, and that's great. I'm just going to put my response in a bit of an order form that kind of comes back to the same way that you asked your question.

To your point, how do we decide or how do we pay for drugs in a formulary? Obviously, we are at \$710 million in the department now. It's rising. Right?

Mr. MacEwen: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: We were able to invest \$32 million in the health file this year as new investment, right? Put that in perspective, that's like a 4.8% increase for Prince Edward Island. To the best of my knowledge, that's unprecedented across Canada. No other department of health in any other province in our wonderful country saw increases like that.

We have lots of pressures. Lots of pressure points. \$4 million that was invested in mental health this year; 2.5 that were invested in palliative care. These are just a few numbers. It's really a balancing act and it's always a struggle to find the dollars to put them to the best use for Islanders' health care, right?

I, as you, have sat down and had discussions with pharmacists from Prince Edward Island, from the association. I, like yourself, I want to work with the pharmacists. I want to come to some agreement that we're all content with. I realize that their scope of practice was expanded a number of years ago when we went to the generics. I'm looking for ways too, and options to do that.

We're hoping to get back to a table, again here, real soon, and we'll bring as many in as needs to be there, to say: okay, here's

reality, folks. What can we do together? If there is pain there should be pain on both sides right? I'm okay with that.

We do have to have that conversation –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: – we'll continue on, on that path to expand their scope. I saw some numbers yesterday about the immunizations. Because they're doing them in the pharmacies, the uptake has been over double since that time, right? That's good. Anything that we can identify as services they can provide, hopefully, it brings more business through their doors. Hopefully, it puts more money in their tills. Let's sit down and figure that out. There's really no sense in them going one way mad, and us, kind of, waiting. We might as well get it figured out. I want to work with them. I want to – they provide a very valuable service in those rural communities as you spoke of. Yours for one. Tyne Valley for another. All across PEI, we know where they are.

Yes, people come in and they do that – they do ask all of those questions. They do provide a fair bit of service, so let's talk about that and see what options are available. There are other things that we've talked about, but nothing has been nailed down.

We're up for discussion. The new pan-Canadian framework, which is not – I'm not stepping back and saying I have nothing to do with, but it is a federal issue. It did bring us significant – well, a small amount of dollars in that we can increase our formulary size. That's the reality, and any opportunity that we can scrape up a few bucks to put on the formulary, that's what we're going to do with it because that's where we're seeing those (Indistinct)

If you can treat people and let them have affordable drugs, that keeps them out of the QEHI, or PCH, or O'Leary, or Souris, we've got to focus on prevention, right? I don't know if that answers your question as well as you wanted, but we will continue talks.

Chair: The hon. Member from Morell-Mermaid.

Mr. MacEwen: No, and I understand your position because I'm not going to lie, before I understood the financial breakdowns (Indistinct) that simple example that was explained to me as well, I would probably have said the same thing: Well, okay the province is saving that money. Yeah, the pharmacies can swallow that and we can use that money towards something else in government, there's no doubt.

But then when I started thinking about – it's different when you're in a major urban centre versus –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, and I get that.

Mr. MacEwen: – the back corner of a small community.

The pharmacists – continuity of care; of course you've heard that quite a bit since you became minister when you have your meetings and stuff, and being able to see that same person over and over again, it's difficult. Unless you've got a family doctor for a long time, we know doctors are retiring quickly. We know people are coming in, and more and more going to walk-in clinics. You don't have that continuity of care. That's another thing that pharmacists talk about, how they catch a lot of this stuff because when people are going from doctor to doctor to clinic to clinic, you're not always getting that full history or something might be missed and they catch that stuff.

But with your pharmacist you do have, for the most part, a continuity of care, especially in a rural area. I get what you're saying. I know there's no – there's a commitment to keep negotiating and talking with them, but I really want to make that point that I didn't realize that started, and I didn't think Islanders realized that because I know the first thing I would have said too was: That pharmacy, they're probably well off. They can swallow that, and let's spend the money elsewhere.

But, the more I look into them and the more I think about it is it's a pretty important service out there and if the province is, I don't want to say not willing to step up, but if the province is – you know how we kind of say that we lean on our fire services probably too much, their services are gaining and gaining, I feel like that's what's

going on perhaps with the pharmacies in this rural area and because, as you know, the pharmacists in a rural spot, they're not going to say: Sorry, I can't tell you that because I actually have to charge for that.

That's not happening right now, so that's why I think I would try even harder to find a service that we can cover or we can do because –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, well it's like I said in my conversations, I want to be at the table and I want to look at now and I want to look at near-future. What can we do that we can all walk away happy with this?

Mr. MacEwen: Are there services that, for example, if you've got someone going to a pharmacist and they say: No, sorry I have to charge for that – then they immediately just turn around and go to the doctor to get a prescription, for example, I'll go to the doctor and get a prescription for free where I've got to get charged at the pharmacy, right? Not for free, but our tax dollars pay for it at the doctor, and this is my ignorance probably of the subject, but is there federal – are there things that the federal government would pay for, or services that we're lobbying for that – additional services the pharmacists could do that would actually be covered by the federal government and not by your government if you're saying that: No, now is not the time to increase the scope of practice of our pharmacists.

Mr. Mitchell: No, and I just verified this with Denise and well.

All healthcare is provincial-driven, federal regulated, I guess, is how you would put it.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: In some ways, but it's all up for (Indistinct)

Mr. MacEwen: That's right too.

So, that means we're paying for it so if we're paying for it at the doctor anyway, why can't we let the pharmacists (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: I do not argue your point, hon. member. That's why we've got to figure out that go-forward, what is the value – what do you think the value is and what

are we able to pay? It's pretty much that simple, so we've got to sit down. It's a negotiation, like anything that you're going to do, we need to hit that point of reasonability and say: You know, that's what we're going to do and we're going to work together and off we go.

That's where we got to get to, right? I'm not disagreeing with what you're suggesting. Yes, people come in to the pharmacies every day probably in – we were talking more rural – but in my neighbourhood, the two pharmacies that are out there; they talk to the pharmacists. They give them the great information and probably kept them out of the doctor's office. I understand that, so let's sit down and re-talk about that value and come to some agreement.

Mr. MacEwen: Is there pushback from the medical society on that?

Mr. Mitchell: From whom?

Mr. MacEwen: The medical society.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I didn't talk to them about it.

I'm sure the medical society, they will want to do their part of the work and pharmacists want to do their part of the work, and that's the same with nurse practitioners or anything else, right? There are things that we have to work through there, so that's part of the process. We want everybody to be happy.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you.

We could keep going on this all night, but I want you to try to not just –

Mr. Mitchell: I'll try my best.

Mr. MacEwen: – we're going to talk about it. It's a solution. I know that there's probably territory that, as you know, it doesn't matter what kind of health professional it is, there is territory that people want to hold onto. But, it's a solution for rural areas to provide – they could provide services.

They're not nine to three, Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.

Mr. Mitchell: No.

Mr. MacEwen: They're open every day.

Mr. Mitchell: I get it. At the end of the day –

Mr. MacEwen: They're there for us.

Mr. Mitchell: – too, part of reality is I can't tell the patient: Just because you went to the pharmacist, now you can't go to the doctor.

We've got to be reasonable, right? That's what the overall goal is; get back to a table, get talking. No sabers out. We're just there to do the right thing and that's where we got to get to.

Mr. MacEwen: Thank you, minister.

We'll keep on this for sure –

Mr. Mitchell: Absolutely.

Mr. MacEwen: – because it is a solution, for sure.

Mr. Mitchell: Well I know if you won't, the hon. member from Souris will.

Mr. MacEwen: He's probably on the list.

Mr. LaVie: We've got two minutes here.

Chair: The hon. Member from Rustico-Emerald.

Mr. LaVie: Two minutes.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Just because they were just talking about it, I wanted to echo the comments from the Member from Morell-Mermaid, and this is definitely an issue that has been brought up to me by pharmacists within District 18 and across the Island, so keep that dialogue going and see if you can find that solution, would be good.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah, that's' what I'm looking for.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, I do have a question.

While we're still here in the corporate services section, I was wondering if there

are any plans to expand
skipthewaitingroom.com to other clinics –

Mr. Mitchell: Oh, good question.

Mr. Trivers: – than what's just one in
Downtown Charlottetown?

I'll give you an example. I've got a
constituent, they're getting old; an older
couple. Right now they go to Hunter River
and they have to go to a doctor's
appointment. There's only 12 spots at the
clinic, and so there are people arrive there at
7:00 a.m. The clinic opens at, I believe, it's
8:30 a.m. and there's no way to take a ticket
or a number and if you really want to keep
your place in line you actually have to wait
out, literally, in the cold in line to get your
12 positions. It's crazy, right?

There's got to – even if it's not
skipthewaitingroom.com, there's got to be
other solutions as well. I think I sent you an
email on this, minister.

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: I'm not sure if I heard back
from you on that.

Mr. Mitchell: You haven't, actually.

Mr. Trivers: I was hoping you could
probably answer it today.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: I guess it's fair to say there
hasn't been any expansion done. Is it
something that we should, could, possibly
look at? Probably, yes. I don't know exactly
how much is involved in that. I think it was
a significant (Indistinct) to get that launched
and all the things done.

I'm going to let Denise kind of handle a bit
of a word on expanding it.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: It may not be
Skip the Waiting Room because that was a
piece of software that was developed by a
company here on PEI working directly with
one particular centre here in Charlottetown.
But, looking for ways in order to allow
patients to call in and get access to those
pieces without having to show up to your
mention of a walk-in clinic, it's something

that I know primary care is wanting to look
at and how do we improve the ability of
patients to do some of that online access; it's
just we don't have any concrete plans right
now, but it's in something that we're
investigating trying to figure out how we
can move it forward.

Mr. Trivers: A couple of questions.

First of all, I might as well ask: Are you
planning to do anything to improve the
waiting experience outside of any fancy
systems? Even if you had one of those ticket
– you know? Where maybe you open it up at
8:00 a.m., you can come and get your piece
of tape and then you can go wait in your car
instead of having to wait outside or
something like that? Are you looking at
that?

Mr. Mitchell: I believe they sign in now.
Like, if you're signed in as number six,
you're number six even if you go back to the
car.

Mr. Trivers: There's no sign-in in Hunter
River.

Mr. Mitchell: There's not?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: There are in
some clinics.

Mr. Mitchell: Some are. Ours does that.

An Hon. Member: Sherwood does it.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, we do it in Sherwood.

Mr. Trivers: Should I go and talk to them
directly, or should I go through you or?

Mr. Mitchell: I don't know (Indistinct)

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: If you want
to identify the walk-in clinic site and you
can send it to ourselves at Health PEI, we
can identify if it's a site that we run, if it's
not, we can forward the information to the
clinic if it's one of the privately-owned
clinics.

Mr. Trivers: So who exactly at Health PEI
do I send it to?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Send it to
Marilyn Barrett.

Mr. Mitchell: I think Parkdale does it; Sherwood does it, and Polyclinic –

Leader of the Opposition: Stratford does it.

Mr. Mitchell: Stratford does it too, yes.

Mr. Trivers: So I'm just wondering, so skipthewaitingroom.com, there was some government funding involved in that project, right?

Mr. Mitchell: I don't know how much it was, but there was.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I don't have it right here in this section. It's –

Mr. Mitchell: We don't have that. That was like two years ago.

Mr. Trivers: I'm a big fan of homegrown solutions, local companies, entrepreneurs. If they developed it for one site, I don't know why we couldn't take that solution and expand it to multiple sites. I don't know why you're going to go and consider some different solution where you might purchase the software from off-Island. It's not computing – your response there, so are you considering taking a local entrepreneur – even if it's not the original developer – and letting them expand this solution.

Mr. Mitchell: Are you talking about our EMR, emerging medical records – are you talking about that?

Mr. Trivers: No, skipthewaitingroom.com.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO:

Skipthewaitingroom.com is one way in order to allow people to self-register for appointments. It is also a component of an electronic medical record – some physicians – which is an electronic system that physicians have within their office. There's currently a Canadian initiative going on. It's being sponsored by the Canada Health Infoway and currently looking at how we can use patient portals in order to allow that piece. So, there is work that is going on right now jurisdictionally and there's an Atlantic access group that has been set up in order to evaluate how we can pool together and get these technologies to help improve the patient experience.

Mr. Trivers: Chair, this is the sort of, how would you say – inefficiencies of big government that people complain to me about. You see a solution, you know it works, and I'm sure the solution that you're working towards with all the boards and the different groups in consideration and going across Canada is going to be a good one, but I'm not very confident it's going to be in place very soon. You guys talk a lot in government about made in PEI solutions. You talk a lot about getting things done, well maybe you don't. You talk a lot about forming groups and doing studies, but I would like to get things done. This is such a massive opportunity. This is not an extremely complex system. I know it doesn't link with the other systems you have and there's a federal initiative and everything, but maybe you should just consider just grabbing the bull by the horns here and getting this done because it will have a direct impact on waiting times of people.

Mr. Mitchell: I think, hon. member, what's most important is that what we strive to achieve is compatibility with everything so that it's streamlined, it's efficient. I'm not suggesting that there isn't an Island company that can do that. Right now we're in discussions with a couple of different entities that are at process of working through that – we're running a pilot project on some of our things right now at a collaborative healthcare measure to say: How does this look? It's challenging and that's a fairly bigger system. So, we're trying to achieve compatibility. So this 'do one offs' is not the best way, but –

I don't have a really good explanation of: Is that the one that we should put everywhere else? Maybe it isn't, but maybe there's something new that's out there that is compatible with everything that we have that we should be looking at better.

Mr. Trivers: I know it didn't take long to develop skipthewaitingroom.com and it did not take a lot of money. How long and how much money do you think it will take to come up with this Cadillac-standard solution?

Mr. Mitchell: Go ahead.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I'm not going to say that it is a Cadillac solution, it's an inter-jurisdictional definitely and they do take a while, but we are doing a pilot to try and test to see how it's doing. That pilot will end in September, so we will get a good sense this fall of how quickly it's going to be able to move forward. The amount of effort right now that we're putting into it is there's staff that are committed to working on it and we'll have more results in the fall.

Mr. Mitchell: There are burdens that come when you're trying to implement new systems, right? So thanks to the staff for working through some of those things to give us some clarity on things that we need to address. I do appreciate that.

Mr. Trivers: Where is the pilot being done?

Mr. Mitchell: We're piloting it at the Summerside clinic –

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Harbourside.

Mr. Mitchell: – Harbourside – the collaborative process there and up at the Murphy's Pharmacy, the collaborative doctors that are there are also doing the two pilots.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Geriatricians.

Mr. Mitchell: Do you know where I mean when I say – the new Parkdale Pharmacy where the doctors, they have that kind of system in there with several doctors, and geriatrics, and the primary care, and diabetic nurse in there and everything. I don't know the name of their clinic. I'm sorry.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: The hon. Member from Souris-Elmira.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Questions on this section, right?

Mr. LaVie: Questions are on this section.

Chair: Awesome. Thank you.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Chair: Okay. You're on the list, hon. member.

Mr. LaVie: Actually, I'll go back to the – now that you mention it – I'll just go back to Morell-Mermaid's questions.

You say you met with the pharmacy association.

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: How many times?

Mr. Mitchell: I've had conversations twice.

Mr. LaVie: Twice?

How long ago were these meetings?

Mr. Mitchell: Within the last three months.

Mr. LaVie: Can you narrow that down a little more, minister?

Mr. Mitchell: I met with representatives in my office – I'd say probably a month ago likely.

Mr. LaVie: A month ago.

Mr. Mitchell: It was prior – it was probably mid-March and the pan-Canadian changes were happening April 1st, so it was probably mid-March.

Mr. LaVie: So I'm guessing that's about the same time we met with them and I'd say they met with us because they couldn't negotiate with you. When's the next meeting you're planning on having with the association?

Mr. Mitchell: I sent them a letter this week. I expect that probably by the time the Legislature closes, we'll either meet then or prior to if we can arrange something.

Mr. LaVie: I hope it's before we close.

Leader of the Opposition: I don't know if they can wait that long.

Mr. LaVie: I'm guessing you're having multiple meetings – you can't come to any negotiation.

Mr. Mitchell: Pardon me?

Mr. LaVie: It sound like you're not giving them what they want and they're not getting what they want, but it sounds – what you were saying to Morell-Mermaid earlier.

Mr. Mitchell: Last year there were at the table negotiations that did not get completed because agreements weren't struck. So, hence a change of ministers and I need some time to get my feet under me and before we get back to having those discussions. I've had brief discussions on that and as I said to them that day about getting back to the table. So that's where we are, hon. member. We're not dragging our feet and we're not at lagerheads in negotiations, we just haven't got back to that part yet.

Mr. LaVie: It almost sounds like you need a mediator. You want to make –

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – how did he put it, leader?

Mr. Mitchell: As – (Indistinct) – so they don't have arbitration rights. This is us sitting at a table and figuring it out.

Mr. LaVie: Yes, I know and you want to figure it out.

Mr. Mitchell: I want (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: You want to do what's good for both sides.

Mr. Mitchell: I want to come to the solution that provides available medications for Islanders that need it and I want them to be maintained, stable – they're businesses and they've got to maintain a business and they've got a service that they can provide.

Mr. LaVie: Exactly.

Mr. Mitchell: So, let's figure out what can make us all happy.

Mr. LaVie: Exactly. I know that that's what you want, but it's not happening.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, I mean, I haven't had a chance to do that, yet, right? I'd like to take that opportunity and to do it in a respectful manner for both sides, and see if – I don't know if we can, to be honest with you, hon. member, but I'm going to try. At the end of

the day, if the door flies open and we both leave in two different directions, I've got another thing that – something else; another direction that we have to figure out to go in.

I don't foresee that. I think we can come together. We all have the best interests of Islanders in mind to provide medications to keep them healthy. That's at the root of the department, the pharmacists, and every medical person on Prince Edward Island, right?

I think we'll have an opportunity to have those discussions, and see how things go. I, quite honestly, I don't need to sit at the table of the association because I can talk to pharmacists every day, and I have been, kind of, planting seeds and developing relationships and mending fences and things of that nature. That's kind of where we're at.

Mr. LaVie: Just one more question; more of a statement, I guess. I've been in pharmacies in Souris. I've been in pharmacies in Montague. I've been in pharmacies over here in Sherwood, in your district. All of these pharmacies are the same. They all provide excellent service.

Mr. Mitchell: Absolutely.

Mr. LaVie: The pharmacists there, they take you aside and they talk to you and they give you good service. You hate to lose that service. That's a free service that they provide out of their pocket, right? This is extra time every time they talk to a patient, it's their time. It's a great service.

Sometimes, it's like, it's like when I was at the rink. We have a bowling lane, right? But we don't make any money with that bowling lane, but it's a service we provide, right?

Mr. Mitchell: Sure.

Mr. LaVie: Actually, you don't make money with a rink, it's a service you provide. You know, you can't – people couldn't –

Chair: Do you have a question –

Mr. LaVie: – afford it –

Chair: – (Indistinct)

Mr. LaVie: – I'm getting to a question, yes.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. LaVie: It's a service. Sometimes, you have to – it cost you to provide a service. I know, you're doing your job, you're saving the taxpayers' money. That's your role to do. But sometimes to get a good service across PEI from these pharmacies, you've got to give a little, right?

Mr. Mitchell: Right on.

Mr. LaVie: You got to – just think of that when you're negotiating with them. It can't be –

Mr. Mitchell: If I'm at one end of the spectrum and they're at the far end, we're never going to get it done. If we get to the middle –

Mr. LaVie: No, but – with our cutbacks on our doctors and our, you know, all our cutbacks in health care. They provide a real nice service to the people. Let's not – think about the service that we get when you're negotiating with them. It can't be all about us making money, do you know what I mean? With that, I'll just leave it at that. Just think about the service.

Mr. Mitchell: Thanks, hon. member.

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

Ms. Biggar: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, is this the section where the Generic Drug Program is in, and –

Mr. Mitchell: It would be –

Ms. Biggar: – the Catastrophic –

Mr. Mitchell: – yes.

Ms. Biggar: – Drug Program –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – I'm not sure if you discussed that or not.

What kind of uptake are we having on that

Generic Drug Program and how much have we spent on that, this year?

Mr. Mitchell: The uptake on that, the generic program is phenomenal. Of course, you know, families going in and paying \$19.95 for prescriptions that before could have been \$200, \$300, you know, lifesaving for those families. Some of them, very low-income, as well. The \$16.95 on the seniors generic program, phenomenal. Denise has the numbers. She's going to share –

Ms. Biggar: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: – them with you now.

Ms. Biggar: Sure.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Three years ago, we started the Generic Drug Program. In that first year we paid about 22,200 claims under the Generic Drug Program at an amount of about \$309,000.

In this fiscal year that just ended, 2017-2018, we paid 66,200 claims –

Ms. Biggar: Wow.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: – approximately at nearly \$949,000 –

Ms. Biggar: Great.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: – in support for those individuals.

Our Catastrophic Drug Program has also increased substantially since its first year. Last year, it had 4,183 individuals registered –

Ms. Biggar: Wow.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: – and also paid out, we estimate to pay out nearly \$911,000, as well.

Ms. Biggar: Wow. Great.

Mr. Mitchell: Take for instance, a young family; two children even, one with diabetes, one requiring a puffer not able to provide that, unless, only for this program, right?

Ms. Biggar: Absolutely.

Mr. Mitchell: That's the result of work that happened a number of years ago to be able to –

Ms. Biggar: Direct that money –

Mr. Mitchell: (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: It's – they're just phenomenal.

Ms. Biggar: I know there was mention of cuts. I don't –

Mr. Mitchell: I didn't dispute that, but yeah, cuts –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – they're not cuts. We're –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah, I know –

Mr. Mitchell: – making enhancements and –

Ms. Biggar: Absolutely –

Mr. Mitchell: – improvements, but I didn't –

Ms. Biggar: No.

Just looking at that grant section, what's that made up of?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: In the handout for the grants and professional services. I'll just highlight some of the largest –

Ms. Biggar: Sure.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: – amounts –

Ms. Biggar: Yeah.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: – in the grant section for Pharmacare.

The Seniors' Drug Assistance Program, our budget in that area for the upcoming year is nearly \$7.9 million. Our Financial Assistance Program for those people that are receiving support through the family and human services program is nearly \$6.5

million. Another \$6.5 million in supports for High Cost Drugs program for individuals that have diseases with particularly high-cost drugs like Crohn's and certain arthritis, and multiple sclerosis.

Our Diabetes Control program is approximately \$2 million. We also have, as I mentioned, our catastrophic drug, we're forecasting, for our budget for the upcoming year of nearly \$1.4 million. We continue to see that growing. And approximately \$1.1 million for the Generic Drug Program.

Ms. Biggar: Just one more question. This is a very detailed question. Would you have, or, probably, be able to get a total number of Islanders who have accessed, in total, all of those programs?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I will. Actually, what I will point the members to will circulate is the presentation that was mentioned earlier –

Mr. Mitchell: We should actually –

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: – from the standing committee.

Mr. Mitchell: – do a mass email out to every member –

Ms. Biggar: Okay, that would be great –

Mr. Mitchell: – of the Legislature –

Ms. Biggar: – if you could.

Mr. Mitchell: – it's a great presentation to really wrap your head around –

Ms. Biggar: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: – those are phenomenal numbers –

Ms. Biggar: Great –

Mr. Mitchell: – since it came in –

Ms. Biggar: Thank –

Mr. Mitchell: – (Indistinct)

Chair: Isn't it great –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Ms. Biggar: – how many we're reaching.

Thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: We should do that. We'll do a mass email out there –

Ms. Biggar: Thank you.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: To the best of my recollection, what the members will see when it's circulated is approximately 47,000 Islanders access any one of the particular drug programs that are offered through Pharmacare.

Ms. Biggar: Fantastic.

Thanks, minister.

Chair: The hon. Member from Borden-Kinkora.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Chair.

Going back to what the Member from Rustico-Emerald was talking about there. How many different computer systems would we have operating within Health PEI?

Mr. Mitchell: It's not necessarily systems. It's –

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: You need to understand a little be more clarification of what you mean by computer systems. Do you mean the clinical systems that are operating in a physician's offices or –

Mr. Fox: Yeah. Like, I take it the pharmacy one would be different than the one in the doctor's office –

Mr. Mitchell: Different than the one in the ER and different than the one on the floor, is that what you're –

Mr. Fox: Yeah.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: So, within the hospital system, our QEH, PCH and our community hospitals, they all use the same clinical information system. It's uniform across the province. We also have a drug information system, as you mentioned that is a provincial system that all the community pharmacies feed into.

The community pharmacies have their own individual systems. We don't mandate. That's an owner-operator decision on what their system is that would feed into the drug information system.

The –

Mr. Fox: So, Denise –

Chair: Hon. member, could you let her finish before you –

Mr. Fox: I want to –

Chair: – jump in?

Mr. Fox: – you're too far down the road, there.

Denise, with that, I understand what you're saying there, but are these systems not, like, if we just look at the one in the hospitals and the ones in the pharmacies and the one in the doctor's office. Are these linked so that they see what's being prescribed or – yeah, prescribed would be the word, I guess – from the doctor to the pharmacy, what's being received. Would there be that link within those systems?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Physicians can choose to access the drug information system. They can have a log onto it. Are they, as the minister mentioned earlier, interoperable? No, not all of them are interoperable right now.

In the hospital, they can log onto the drug information system and look to see what has been prescribed to an individual. At the community pharmacies, they can also log on and take a look and see what's there. They do have access to the information.

Interoperable means that it's automatically fed and that does not currently exist.

Mr. Fox: Why wouldn't we mandate it that if you're going to be a doctor on PEI then you've got to be on that system so that we know, so that doctors know and see what drugs are being prescribed by whatever?

Mr. Mitchell: We don't typically mandate the physicians in the nature of that type of thing. There are some physicians that use it with open arms and there are some that, you

know, that's not what they – the method they like to work with.

If we could get a compatible system which is first of all easy to maintain, the most modern dropdown box type of thing like that, which is what we're looking at, I think uptake – we could probably achieve that over time; but it's got to be today's standards. It's got to be modern. It's got to be able to be compatible, and that's kind of the vision, I guess, that we're working towards; but it's a bit of work to it.

Mr. Fox: What's to stop me going into – like, I thought they were linked. What's to stop me going in to see you as a doctor and get prescribed some type of narcotic or drug or whatever and then going over to doctor B and getting the same prescription or another prescription so that doctor doesn't see what the first guy's given him?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: If it hasn't been filled at the moment, you would be correct that they wouldn't see it. However, as soon as the prescription is taken to the pharmacy, there is a flag that fires off to the pharmacist and the pharmacist would then call the physician who issued it and make him aware that there is an overlap.

Mr. Fox: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Mitchell: To your other point too about mandating physicians to do things, they're kind of – their standards are set by the college, so that was –

Mr. Fox: Which I have no faith in.

Mr. Mitchell: Well, that would be something that we'd have – you know, it would be a negotiation process, too, so they set their standards. That's the box they work in. It would be more of a: Let's design a good system that's easy for you to do and come on in with us open.

Mr. Fox: So you talked about the college for a second. Who are they accountable to?

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: Who?

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Mr. Mitchell: They're responsible to themselves.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct)

Mr. Fox: No, that's it. Yeah.

Chair: Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition.

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

I have some questions. I want to make sure that I am in the right section, though. Just with regards to the Catastrophic Drug Program, would that fall in here as well?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Yes.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

So my questions with regards to this section, then, would be: Quite often I'm reached out to or contacted by individuals across PEI that are facing a very serious illness, and quite often it's a cancer diagnosis. They've been prescribed sometimes a newer type of cancer drug that's had tremendous success in other jurisdictions, but yet they're not covered under the Catastrophic Drug Program.

Can you tell me the last time that we've actually added drugs to the Catastrophic Drug Program here on PEI?

Mr. Mitchell: One thing which came to – and I agree with it myself – out of discussions at the standing committee, the Catastrophic Drug Program is terribly named. Some of the drugs which you'd be talking about would fall under the high cost drugs, right?

Leader of the Opposition: Right.

Mr. Mitchell: The catastrophic drugs basically means what you're able to afford, I guess, so we've got to change that name. First thing you think about is: Catastrophic, it must be a terrible disease –

Leader of the Opposition: Yeah.

Mr. Mitchell: – before that (Indistinct) so we've got some work to do and we actually

committed to do that, I think, hon. Member, that day that we look at renaming that.

But to your point, I think there were 17 drugs.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Actually, I believe there were 22 drugs –

Mr. Mitchell: Twenty-two.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: – added last year to our provincial formulary, and so as soon as they're added to the provincial formulary they are included under the catastrophic drug –

Mr. Mitchell: Any (Indistinct)

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Except for narcotics.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

So out of these 22 drugs that were added to the provincial formulary that could potentially fall under the –

Mr. Mitchell: Yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: – Catastrophic Drug Program, how many of those 22 drugs would be classified as high cost drugs?

Mr. Mitchell: Well, that just depends.

As Denise went through the process of how we get drugs added to the formulary, first of all they've got to be approved by the federal sides, but we do have our provincial committee that has to say: That's a drug that we think needs to be added on. Cost doesn't really come to bear with them. They say that's the drug that needs to go on, that's the drug that goes on.

So it's not really related to costing, but some are more than expensive than others. There's no denying that. Currently, we have some drugs that we'd like to get added on and some of them may be higher-cost drugs.

Leader of the Opposition: So if my understanding is correct, there's a committee; and I believe there's at least one of the medical professionals –

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, there is.

Leader of the Opposition: – oncologists from the –

Mr. Mitchell: There's an oncologist on it.

Leader of the Opposition: – cancer treatment centre.

I think the executive director or somebody with the Canadian Cancer Society also sits on that panel.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: The structure for that particular piece, the provincial drugs and therapeutics, they actually have two subcommittees. One is the oncology, on which sits a representative from the Canadian Cancer Society, and there are pharmacists as well as physician representatives on that group.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

So as of, I want to say, maybe six months ago, I was told that there had not been a single high cost drug added to the provincial formulary in a four-year period.

Is that correct?

Mr. Mitchell: I don't know what the cost is, but I know there was one last year for certain. I don't know how high the cost was, but there was one for certain.

Leader of the Opposition: Could the minister bring back the name of that drug or do you have that information here that you could provide?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: That particular high-cost drug was Soliris.

Leader of the Opposition: Soliris? And what would be the cost for that drug?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: It depends upon the weight of the individual, because it's a dosage based on weight, so it would vary. Yeah. It could be anywhere from \$250,000 to \$500,000. It just depends upon the dosing they need.

Leader of the Opposition: So \$250,000 to \$500,000 per year, per month, per week?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Per year.

Leader of the Opposition: Per year? Okay.

Can you tell me how many of these high cost drugs that are currently being looked at by the panel or –

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: Usually the list that is considered by the committee ranges in the range from 20 to 30 drugs, just depending upon the prioritization as I mentioned earlier to the hon. Member from Charlottetown-Parkdale. I believe there are more than probably 60 high-cost drugs on the list. It's just they need to prioritize and then focus within those.

Leader of the Opposition: I know that there is a demand, and we have oncologists or medical professionals, specialists, that are prescribing drugs here for their patients. I guess I'm just wondering where the communication process is, because I've heard of several circumstances where – and again, I'll go back to typically it's a cancer patient that has reached out to me or a family member of a cancer patient, and what has happened is they'll be on a regimen of a particular drug or drugs and they don't seem to be having the effect and the outcome that the oncologists had hoped for, so that they'll change the prescription and they'll prescribe one of these newer drugs. They'll go – the patient, the family will go to get this drug, only to find out that it's not covered.

I can't imagine the level of emotions that an individual would go through and why we would have an oncologist prescribe a drug when they know that it's not affordable for this individual to purchase it. We have health care professionals, specialists in their field that are working hard to treat Islanders and to give them a better quality of life, and to prolong their life and to help them fight the disease that's afflicting them.

Is there some kind of program that we can look at? Because I understand \$250,000 to \$500,000; that is an extremely high-cost drug. I agree, because I've heard some instances where I've been contacted by family members saying: Look, we've been prescribed a particular drug and it's \$7,000 a month, and we just simply can't afford it. Then when you look at 250 to 500k per year, who on PEI could afford something like that?

I know, and I realize, that there are some instances, if you apply to a pharmaceutical company, there is some compassion programs in place, but that's far and few in between, so I guess I'm just looking for an opportunity where we can actually look at a wider scope of how we can help individuals that are fighting a life-threatening disease.

Mr. Mitchell: To your point, the situation that you just spoke about, I get calls like that every second day –

Leader of the Opposition: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: I'm sure the former minister, the same thing, right?

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

Mr. Mitchell: There's no good answer. I know – that's why oncology has its own half-section of kind of being part of the process of developing priorities for what gets added to the list. Obviously we have pressures on available dollars – \$1.8 million does not go far on the formulary list when we talk about \$500,000 drugs. So, it's about making those priorities.

When you talk about communications, I already know that the people that I'm talking to say: The doctor told me to call you. But we're all on the same boat. We're trying to develop those priorities, which is why they're a big part of that – why there's two committees to do that. I don't have a good answer for: Why does that occur? It does occur.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: It occurs every other (Indistinct) in my world. It's about trying to get those ones identified as priority, the dollars defined to get them on the list and to get sick Islanders that need those medications into their hands as quickly as we can.

Leader of the Opposition: I want to shift gears just slightly. I want to talk about the methadone program for a minute.

Mr. Mitchell: Sure.

Leader of the Opposition: Would the methadone program fall under the pharmacare section as well?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: The component of providing the drug component of it would fall under this piece.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Could you tell me currently how many Islanders are on the methadone program?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: In total, the number of individuals on the methadone program – or on methadone, I'm going to say, on PEI – there's 942 as of December, 2017 – is the numbers I have here – 942 on methadone and 152 on suboxone.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, perfect because I was going to ask about suboxone next. Can you tell me what the price difference is between methadone and suboxone?

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I would have to bring that back. I don't have that right here with me.

Mr. Mitchell: Suboxone – there are characteristics of suboxone that are quite different than methadone, obviously.

Leader of the Opposition: Oh yeah. I can explain them to you if you'd like.

Mr. Mitchell: I have them as well, but there are cases where methadone is more effective for the particular individuals. That's why they have that option right now and certainly some have weaned off methadone and are now on suboxone and doing well with it, but in some cases the methadone just works better. It maintains what the individual needs, but most of the new – I understand – most of the new people that are coming in are being presented with suboxone.

Leader of the Opposition: I guess my understanding is slightly different – talking to people with regards to the methadone, you can actually still use while you're on methadone and a lot of cases, individuals are using their drug of choice while also using methadone and some individuals get to the point where they actually – they don't have

to consume the methadone in front of the pharmacist, they can actually take it home in their lockbox and there's a market on the street for methadone and methadone is being sold and then the monies are being used to purchase the illicit drugs that is their drug of choice.

Whereas suboxone, even though it might be a little bit more expensive to prescribe and to use, suboxone has characteristics such as a pill that some people might be aware of called Antabuse that was prescribed to alcoholics years ago, where if you were on that medication and you consumed alcohol, you would get so violently ill that you would not – you'd definitely not want to take another sip of alcohol. That's one of the pros of Suboxone.

But what one of my fears is right now with methadone – and we've got 942 Islanders on methadone right now – Dr. Ling did yeoman's work for years as essentially the only physician here on PEI handling the methadone program and then we had some docs downtown that opened up the methadone clinic, which was great because it was difficult for some individuals to get out to Mount Herbert to be able to access the services of Dr. Ling there, plus he was also looking after Summerside too.

But one of the concerns that I've been hearing repeatedly over, and over, and over again is it's almost like we're putting people on a shelf or warehousing them and there's really not a great program in place for methadone withdrawal – that people are on methadone, in some cases they're on it for years, and years, and years and in some cases, some people might be on it for the rest of their life. I'm not saying that methadone is a terrible program. It is a good program, but I think we need to have better controls in place to be able to wean people off it and assist them with moving forward in their life.

Can you tell me what the current cost is to prescribe or to have an individual on methadone?

Mr. Mitchell: We're going to take that back to you.

Denise Lewis Fleming COO: I was indicating I will bring it back. I just have the average of the two together.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: If I could, though, just to your point. Obviously the numbers that are presented to you – who are on methadone and then suboxone today – those numbers have probably almost tripled since 2013 probably

Leader of the Opposition: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: Which is – that's a positive, I'll say, because if you look at trends of other things have gone down because of the methadone and suboxone program; how individuals – with other use of opioids, interactions with the law, all these types of things.

So the program itself is very successful. I understand – what you suggested about methadone users who go and take their methadone home and selling it. I haven't had anybody say that to me, so you're the first since I took the chair.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

Mr. Mitchell: But what I am of the understanding of: The process from when you walk in the door to begin your methadone treatments to the time when you're considered – here's your methadone to take home – is a rigorous process to decide this person, this individual is capable and ready to do that. I think there's a fair amount of rigor involved in that and the doctors and the pharmacists that provide that, I think, would probably defend that from their end as well.

What you're suggesting today is shocking to me – it's news to me tonight. So, I'll have to look into that a bit. But I do know you're right. Methadone, if you're on that, it's very difficult to wean off. There's a strong probability that you're on it for many, many, many years.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes.

Mr. Mitchell: And that's why suboxone is now – I understand the method that those that are supplying – that's the first choice for

them on new clients. I think that's worthy. But I do understand that anybody that's been on methadone for a number of years in the past, it's difficult to get them off. There's a lot of sickness involved. There's a lot of anxiety, hypertension, all these other things that create other problems so we're trying to work the best of that. But the process before you're able to take it home, I'm under the consideration that it's a rigorous process. You just don't get to come in in a week and you're taking your methadone home. So (Indistinct)

Ms. Biggar: (Indistinct)

Leader of the Opposition: No. I can't believe it you don't have any topics so –

Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Biggar: I already asked my questions.

Leader of the Opposition: A topic so –

Chair: Do you have any more questions.

Ms. Biggar: Excuse me. I already asked my question.

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, I do.

Chair, do I have the floor?

Chair: You do.

Mr. J. Brown: Call the hour.

Chair: The hour has been called, hon. members.

Minister, I'm going to get you to –

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

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

Chair: Shall it carry? Carried.

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

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

Mr. Mitchell: I move, seconded by the hon. Member from Tignish-Palmer Road, that this House adjourn until tomorrow, April 27th, at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shall it carry? Carried.

Enjoy your evening.

The Legislature adjourned until tomorrow, April 27th, at 10:00 a.m.